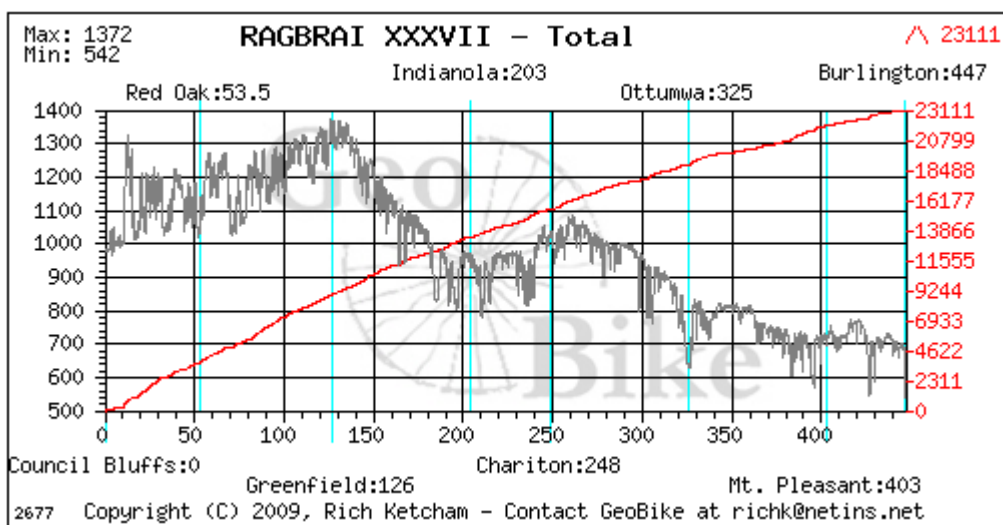


# The Hills Are Alive on RAGBRAI XXXVII

By now you have probably heard that this year's RAGBRAI is going to be quite hilly. In case you don't live in Iowa, you will discover that Iowa is not flat. This year's route travels through the southern half of the state which is actually quite rolling. We don't have mountains, but the constant up and down terrain, combined with the distances you will be riding, will begin to wear on you. Below is a chart of the climbing throughout RAGBRAI this year.



As you can see there is 23,111 feet of climbing. This is a little more than four miles straight up! However, don't let this scare you. In this article I will give you some tips for training for hills so that you will be able to successfully complete this year's route.

1. To ride hills more proficiently, you need to practice (train) riding on hills. I often get questions from cyclists about how to ride up hills better, but when I ask how often they ride hills, they say they try to avoid them! Like everything else, practice makes perfect. This includes riding in hills. A lot of cyclists don't like hills and I can't blame them. Hills are hard and not necessarily fun, and we ride bikes because it's fun. However, hills are part of cycling, so accept that fact and let's work on it.
2. If you live in an area where there are hills, here some ways to practice your hill climbing ability. If you have a gradual hill, stay seated and select a low enough gear to spin up the hill at a cadence of 80-90 rpm. Push yourself a little more than usual. If you have a shorter but steeper hill, there are a couple ways to train on it. One way is to stay seated and push harder at a lower cadence, such as 70-80 rpm. This will help build leg strength. Or, you can stand up and ride up the hill standing, again pushing a fairly hard gear at 70-80 rpm. You should notice that when you are standing, your heart rate may rise more than seated. Some people prefer to climb hills sitting down, others prefer to ride hills standing. Practice both ways. Most likely you will need to use both techniques depending on the length and steepness of the hill you are riding.
3. If you aren't blessed with hills where you live, you can improvise by using a headwind and your gears. Most likely you have windy days wherever you live. On a windy day when you may not otherwise want to ride, go out and find a level stretch of road facing into the headwind. Select a

gear that is harder than you usually use, and pedal into the headwind between 70 and 90 rpm, pushing hard on the pedals. Ride a couple of minutes then turn around and spin easily back and repeat. Like riding hills, pushing hard into a headwind can build leg strength.

4. Riding hills is often as much a mental effort as it is a physical effort. As a matter of fact, some people defeat themselves before they ever get to the hill. Have you ever ridden along, turned a corner and seen a hill ahead and get a defeated feeling, "Oh no, look at that hill!"? Well, you just lost the battle before it began. If you train by intentionally seeking out and riding hills, when you get to a hill on RAGBRAI, hopefully rather than feeling defeated by it, you can tell yourself that you have trained on hills and you can handle this. You may even start to see them as challenges to see if you can get up the hills without stopping, or getting up them and feel stronger all the way up.

You may never come to like riding hills, but with some training, both mentally and physically, you should be able to successfully conquer the hills of RAGBRAI.

To see more maps, elevation profiles and accumulated climbing and headwind statistics of individual days, refer to this site on GeoBike: <http://www.geobike.com/geobike/gbevent.php?P=37>

If you would like more cycling training information, check out my website [www.CyclesportCoaching.com](http://www.CyclesportCoaching.com) where you will find numerous free articles.

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