

At Belle Isle marathon Freewheeler forges through rain

Let's just say the Farmington Freewheeler almost made it. But the rain, wind and dampened spirits of his fellow riders were too much of a punishment on his quest for completing the entire 300 mile trek of the Belle Isle Popular Welfare Bike Marathon last weekend. Harsh and cloudy conditions prevailed prior to the start of the celebrity lap at 8:30 Saturday morning. When the marathon officially got under way 30 minutes later, a fine drizzle blanketed the island. Yet those wet conditions didn't deter more than 1,000 riders who braved the threatening weather to enjoy the five-mile island course, which was closed to traffic all weekend.

Even though the crowds were smaller than in the past, the event provided the same excitement that draws riders from all over the country every year.

The Farmington Freewheeler's pack headed out shortly after 10 a.m. and rode in the rain until their first break 25 miles later.

DURING THIS noon pit stop, the four middlemen made a group decision. By 2 p.m. they had packed up their bikes and headed home, disgusted with the rain and depressed that they were unmotivated to continue riding.

The Farmington Freewheeler's master plan had anticipated it in his group. Late Friday night, however, he received calls from the Adrian contingency, saying they were forming a bike club in Adrian. They had a demonstration Saturday morning and weren't able to attend.

Thirty minutes later that night, the Farmington Freewheeler received a message from four other persons who said the rainy forecast changed their minds.

Then the Farmington Freewheeler began worrying about starting the marathon solo, as he did the year before when his freewheeling friends came up with other plans.

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FREE WHEELING
with ron garbinski



since the early '60s, making this event an annual affair. At 4 p.m. approached, a lot of riders called it quits. Many headed up to get patches for riding 25 miles in three hours or 50 miles in five hours. Hundreds of others still kept riding, ignoring the puddles and mud that made braking almost impossible and riding sometimes unbearable.

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