**Team “Mixed Nuts” – Fleche 2018**

*Mr.S*

Fleche is a French word that means arrow. Every year in Korea, there is a cycling event called Fleche. Teams start from all over the country and meet in Gwangju 24 hours later. Each team needs to cycle more than 360km. This is the story of our team, Mixed Nuts. This year started in the rain. We had some mechanical issues before we got to the first check point. There were some interesting roads on this ride. There were many problems but our whole team completed the ride.

This year’s Fleche had some bad weather. We left Dangjin, our starting location, in the rain. There was more rain farther south. About 5kms into the ride we had our first issue. A headlight fell off Darnell’s bike and broke. Luckily he had a spare light. A little farther down the road we made a left turn. The GPS file I made said that it was a road but it looked like a park. Amazingly, it turned into a cute little road. The road was pretty but rough and my bike got a flat tire. My teammates helped me to replace the tube. We had to be careful because there was a lot of dirt on the tire.

We started cycling again and I noticed there was a problem. The tire felt bumpy. I talked about it with my team and we thought that maybe the new tube was twisted. It would take a long time to fix, so we just kept going. My tire would feel bumpy for the next 300km. While we were changing the tire Jake started getting very cold. He was shivering and the other guys were also cold. The temperature was around 8C. I had packed a lot to stay comfortable, but my teammates didn’t bring as much. So, at the first control point, Jake bought some leggings and construction gloves to wear. He said he felt a lot warmer. While we were at the control point, the rain stopped. The roads were still wet, but we started to dry off.

The route was beautiful. The morning mist from the rain also provided a wonderful landscape. The road beside Boryeong Lake was amazing. The view was a little boring near Gunsan, but farther south, there were some nice areas. I hope to go there during daylight some time.

After the rain stopped, the wind started. Luckily, it was a tailwind. It was a fairly strong tailwind too. Usually at this time of year, the wind is coming from the opposite direction. It made things a lot easier for us but was very difficult for teams coming from the south. Our course was also pretty flat, which made things easier. The only thing holding our team back was my slow pace. The other guys on my team were much stronger than I was. But what I lost in physical ability, I made up for by having the only correct route on my Garmin. This combination did provide some laughs during the night. Sometimes the guys would ride ahead, which is fine, but they missed the turns. I think they did 10km of extra cycling because of this.

The last 30km before the 22hr control were interesting. First, Jake and I had to wait for James and Darnell to come back to the route. Then, the road was very rough and dangerous. I knew that it would be a bad road until we got to the bike path. Unfortunately, I didn’t know that the bike path was under construction. The earlier rains had made the mud soft and slippery. We tried, but it was too difficult to cycle there. We needed to find another way. Jake did a great job finding a new route to Naju. But before we got there, the tire that we fixed earlier broke again. I am surprised that it lasted 300km. The tires were very muddy, so we needed to clean them before fixing. Luckily James and Darnel found a free water pipe. We cleaned it and replaced the tube. That 30km section took 2.5 hours! It should have taken less than half of that time.

We took a well-deserved break at the 22hr control. According to the rules, we couldn't leave until 7am. This way all the teams will arrive in Gwangju at the same time. We rode in to Gwangju on some REAL bike paths, but we weren't finished yet. About 7km from the end, we were forced to do some last minute mechanical work to that tire. We made it to Gwangju and met with the other riders. Korea Randonneurs also provide brunch at a buffet. We ate heartily and headed home our separate ways.  It was a great ride and a few good stories.