

Bike team prepares for coast-to-coast pedaling

A two-man, two-woman team from Lancaster is preparing for bicycling's top event, the California-to-Maryland Race Across America.

Lancaster New Era

Published: Feb 16, 2008

11:38 EST

Lancaster

- [Article](#)
- [Photos](#)
- [Map](#)
- [Related](#)
- [Share It](#)

Don't Link Tags

By BERNARD HARRIS, Staff

For mountain climbers, there is Mount Everest.



Two members of the local team train for the [Race Across America](#), scheduled to be held in June.

1 of 1

For triathletes, there is the Kona Ironman.

And for some bicyclists, there is RAAM.

And for the first time, a Lancaster-based team will attempt the most famous ultra-distance [bicycle](#) race, the coast-to-coast [Race Across America](#).

The two-man, two-woman team will be led by Lancaster [bicycle](#) advocate Mike Ridgeway in what he expects will be a non-stop, seven-day push from Oceanside, Calif., to Annapolis, Md., in June.

Related Stories

- [Beleaguered bicyclist ...](#)
- [Fast times in city](#)
- [Peddling pedaling](#)
- [Cyclist: 'I'm giddy ab...](#)
- [Another big bike race ...](#)

Team CycleSmart is an outgrowth of Ridgeway's Dream Ride Projects, an organization that organizes local charity [bicycle](#) rides and youth cycling programs.

The youth program and the rides, which range from the 10-mile tour to the 178-mile Nightmare Tour, are

about challenging oneself, Ridgeway said.

Doing RAAM, Ridgeway said, is the ultimate challenge.

"For the people in this room," Ridgeway said at a team meeting last Saturday, "this may be the most challenging thing that they do as a bicyclist or as a crew person."

Related Topics

- [bicycle](#) ▾ (38)
- [bike](#) ▾ (25)
- [bike race](#) ▾ (14)
- [Race Across America](#) ▾ (2)

Ridgeway speaks from experience.

He became the first person from Lancaster County to do RAAM last year.

With the Harrisburg-based TeamEndeavor, he pedaled half-hour intervals, alternating with Bob Ansell, of Greensburg, Pa., near Pittsburgh. Every two hours, they switched with another two men and caught what sleep they could in a following recreational vehicle.

The rookie TeamEndeavor placed sixth in its division. The team averaged nearly 18 miles per hour over the 3,043 miles of the race.

Ansell will ride with Ridgeway again this year. They will be joined by Robin Smith, of Mount Gretna, and Denise Stone, of Long Valley, N.J.

Smith, a regular rider on Lancaster [Bicycle Club](#) rides, said she had never thought about doing RAAM until Ridgeway mentioned it to her.

But, she said, she was looking for a challenge.

"I think it's the nature of cycling," she said. "Every time you go out, you think you can do a little more ... and before you know it, there's RAAM."

One of the lessons Ridgeway took from his experience last year was the importance of the riders' crew. While the riders trained for their two-hours-on-two-hours-off sleep and riding cycles, the crew members did not. By the third day, there were sleepy divers at the wheel of support vehicles, tempers flared and people did not know how to address problems that arose.

"If the crew fails, it puts the team in jeopardy of not finishing," Ridgeway said.

There is really no way to train for being a crew member, Ridgeway said. It's not realistic to have people get up in the middle of the night and drive for four hours. But, he said, there can be clear expectations and responsibilities. And crew members can be empowered to solve problems.

At a meeting Saturday in Southern Market Center, Ridgeway distributed copies of the crew's race schedule — four months in advance of the race.

One thing that Team CycleSmart is doing is using the crew positions as a chance to expose potential future RAAM riders to the race. Among the 10-member crew are alternate riders this year and people who might be riders next year. This year's riders are also obligated to be crew members for others within three years, he said.

Each person participating in the team is also expected to solicit donations. Team CycleSmart — as with all Dream Rides — is first a fundraising effort for charity.

The goal for the team is to raise \$180,000. All but \$30,000 is slated to go to a list of local, national and international charities.

The \$30,000 is the cost Ridgeway believes will be needed for the team to compete in the race. Of that amount, more than \$24,000 has already been raised, he said.

The team already has some corporate sponsors, including Pfizer, Kellogg's and Herr's snack foods, he said.

All RAAM teams are encouraged to raise money for charity. Team CycleSmart is one of nine four-person mixed teams and 37 teams overall that will be competing beginning June 11. Another 25 riders will be competing solo, meaning they will ride each mile alone.

Some Team CycleSmart riders would someday like to compete in the solo category, Ridgeway said. He'd like to help them do that.

For the foreseeable future, he'd like to have a Lancaster-based team compete annually.

"Our ambition is to promote a team every year and our ambition is to promote multiple charities and multiple riders," he said.

CONTACT US: bharris@LNPnews.com or 481-6022