

RAAM 2010 – Recap - Part 2

The Teams

RAAM earned its reputation as “*the world’s toughest bicycle race*” based on the epic struggles of the solo racers. No doubt the transcontinental journey produces a string of highs and lows culminating with the coveted solo finish. Only half of those starting solo RAAM finish. They become members of a very small club.

But, team racing is where the fun is. Racers get to make the same transcontinental journey, but they get to share the work load and the experiences with friends. Racing on 2-, 4- and 8-person teams relay style results in much higher finishing rates. Moreover, raising money for charities enhances the satisfaction.

This year the teams were blessed with great weather conditions. As if to underscore the struggles of the solo racer, the solo field had to make the better portion of their transcontinental journey within a major storm system. On the other hand, the teams, having started three days later, had the good fortune of being able to follow along behind the frontal system in beautiful weather for much of their journey.

On June 12, 2010, 39 teams consisting of 198 racers ranging in age from 13 to 68 and their 600+ crew members lined up in Oceanside to begin their transcontinental journey. Unfamiliar passersby may have confused the team start with a rock concert as the parking lots surrounding the Oceanside Pier in Southern California filled with decked out RVs, support vehicle’s covered front to back with RAAM signage and sponsor logos, and hoards of people milling around simply taking it all in.

Taking control of the team race from the start was Team Type I (T T1), back for their fifth effort. TT1 was created in 2005 with the belief that anything is possible since many of the 24 million Americans living with diabetes have been told otherwise their entire lives. Each member of TT1, however, is convinced this is wrong. In 2005 the team specifically chose RAAM – *the world’s toughest bicycle race* - as their platform to dispel that myth. This team has won the 8-person team division 4 of the 5 years they’ve participated. Every racer on the team lives with Type I diabetes. Myth dispelled.

TT1’s goals for 2010 were simple—break the current 8-person record and cross the USA on bicycle in under 5 days. First, it should be pointed out that TT1 set out to break their own record: 5d9h3m. Second, in order to cross the country in under 5 days, the 8 cyclists would need to average approximately 25 mph while moving 24 hours per day. Although the teams had good weather for this race, TT1 was unable to break their current record set in 2009 but still finished with a remarkable time of 5d10h48m (22.97).

Also in the hunt for the 8-person title were Team 4Mil and Team ViaSat. The race was so close for the first third of the event that these three teams were separated by less than a time station for much of it. Unfortunately, Team 4Mil's 2010 RAAM effort was cut short when their RV was involved in an accident between Durango and Pagosa Springs. Team and crew members inside the RV at the time of the accident sustained injuries. Fortunately, ultimately, the injuries proved minor and all members were treated and released. Although the team considered rejoining the race, the loss of the RV combined with the number of injuries, led them to make the decision to withdraw from the race. Team 4Mil was racing in support of the Wounded Warriors Project. Team ViaSat continued on to finish in 2nd place with an impressive time of 5d15h22m (22.24 mph). ViaSat has also raced every year since 2006.

We have since spoken with many of the Team 4Mil racers. They are already making plans for the 2011 race.

Finishing in 3rd place in the 8-person team division was Convicts of the Road. Heralding from the UK, this team of cyclists not only finished with a very respectable time of 6d6h44m (19.94 mph) but they also managed to raise well over \$300,000 for their charities. Rounding out the top five positions in the 8-person team division were DurhamCares finishing in 6d13h14m (19.11 mph) and Team Ochsner recording a time of 6d11h55m (18.91 mph).

Allegiant Travelers made a very credible showing, finishing in 6d18h39m (18.48 mph) while racing with only six team members.

Sir Steve Redgrave Crew, an 8-person team from the UK led by 5-time Olympic Gold medal winner Sir Steve Redgrave, finished the Race in 7d3h42m (17.4 mph), this after a relatively serious accident involving team leader Redgrave. Our understanding is the accident was the result of a front tire blowing out during a high speed descent a mere 300 miles from the finish. Redgrave sustained two broken ribs, a broken cheek bone and broken wrist. According to a team member, "Even lying on his stretcher, Steve urged the team on."

Amongst the 4-person divisions, it was the women who made their mark. Kalyra Women's Race Team, racing in their 2nd RAAM, entered the race with the goal of breaking the current women's 4-person (50-59) team record set in 2001. This group of women did exactly that. Team Kalyra won the women's 4-person (50-59) division, finishing with a time of 7d10h35m (16.83 mph). These ladies destroyed the old record, crossing the country two days faster than the previous record holders.

In the men's (under 50) 4-person team race, it was a battle of the "unknowns" with three rookie teams finishing 1-2-3. The top three 4-person men's teams finished the race with a mere 7 hours separating them. Winning the division was Bandwith.com of Durham, North Carolina, the sister team to DurhamCares, which finished 4th in the 8-person division. Bandwith.com finished in a time of 6d2h39m (20.49 mph). Our next division finisher was Team Doc2Doc, a group of

physicians, philanthropists and, apparently, very good cyclists. They rode to a solid 2nd place finish with a time of 6d6h59m (19.9 mph). Finishing in 3rd place in the men's (under 50) 4-person team division was yet another newcomer, Bent Up Cycles. This recumbent team finished the race in 6d9h35m (19.57 mph). Filling in the top 5 for the division were Team Sharp4Prostate of the UK (6d15h7m) and Team Commerzbank Hamburg of Germany (6d18h15m).

Men's (under 50) 4-person team, COANFI desafio ASPANOA (Spain), was forced to withdraw when team member Diego Ballesteros was involved in a serious accident. Please see separate story.

The teams continued to impress as the men's (50-59) 4-person winning team also finished with a fast time of 6D15h29m (18.84). Building Future's Now, racing in their first RAAM beat out contenders Equipe Schwarz of Germany (7d6h20m) and Georgia Chain Gang of the USA (7d9h37m). Georgia Chain Gang may not have finished 1st in their division, but this returning team broke their goal of raising more than \$100,000 for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

It was a battle for 'Seniors of the Year' honors between the Hoosiers of the USA and the Aussie Oldies from Down Under in the men's (60-69) 4-person team division. None of these gentlemen seemed to be out for a leisurely bike ride either as the Hoosiers set a division record with a time of 6d16h44m (18.7 mph). The Aussie Oldies finished their race in 8d8h29m (14.99 mph).

In the mixed team divisions, All Wheels for Fibromyalgia won the 4-person (under 50) team division with a race time of 6d5h21m (20.12 mph). While RAAM team veterans Team JDRF won the (50-59) 4-person team division with a time of 6d14h55m (18.91 mph) and the 4 Austrian Musketeers finished 2nd in 6d20h25m. (18.26).

The final 4- person division is the 4-person open division and this year there were two entries contending for the title ... Team FARA and Operation Progress. Both of these teams are characterized by strong individuals with heart wrenching yet inspirational stories.

Team FARA raced to raise money and awareness for the genetic, neuromuscular disease, Friedreich's Ataxia. Two of the racers on the team, Kyle Bryant and Sean Baumstark suffer from the disease, which attacks the muscles and causes life-shortening heart disease. Kyle is further progressed and raced riding a specially designed tricycle. Although Kyle spends much of his time these days in a wheel chair, he is one of the spokespeople for FARA and his continued cycling and fundraising efforts have garnered roughly \$1,000,000 for Ataxia research. Team FARA finished 1st in the division with a time of 8d7h59m (15.03 mph).

Operation Progress, led by paralyzed LAPD officer Kristina Ripatti, racing on a hand cycle, was racing to raise awareness for a program of the same name. Ripatti was shot and paralyzed in the line of duty four years ago. Operation Progress is a non-profit foundation established by LAPD Southeast Division

Gang officers 10 years ago to help good kids get out of bad places. The organization also provides educational and financial assistance to children in the area. Team Operation Progress finished the race in 8d16h38m (14.4 mph).

Finally, the Biking Vikings of Denmark literally rode away with the 2-person team title, racing their way to 1st place in a time of 6d23h13m (17.97 mph). The Vikings beat out Team Summit of the USA who finished in 8d11h14m (14.79 mph) and Velocity Bikes of the UK, who finished 3rd with a time of 8d14h54m (14.52 mph).

There were 3 two-person teams, 24 four-person teams and 12 eight-person teams. Nine countries were represented – Australia, Austria, Brazil, Denmark, Germany, New Zealand, Spain, UK and USA. All but two teams finished. Team 4Mil (USA) and COANFI desafio ASPONOA (Spain) dropped out due to accidents.

Many of the teams who choose to race RAAM do so because they have a story to tell and RAAM is their proverbial mountaintop from which to speak. This year alone, RAAM teams raised approximately \$2 million dollars for various charities and causes around the globe. Perhaps, stating that a simple bike race – even the world's toughest bicycle race - can change the world is a stretch, but then again, when that much money is raised for charitable purposes, you never know how far that can reach. Anything is possible.