

DANNY CHEW'S 2005 SOLO RAAM PREVIEW & PICKS

Slovenian Juré Robic and Mike Trevino are racing to break Pete Penseyres' 19-year old average speed record of 15.40 mph. In only his second RAAM, Robic won last year averaging 14.66 mph. Although this is the eighth fastest solo transcontinental crossing, Robic will need very favorable weather (tailwinds) conditions. He has the racing speed; he is the UMCA 24-hour non-drafting record holder, covering 522 miles last September. Read about it at:

http://www.ultracycling.com/records/24hour_record2004.html

Last years Rookie-of-the-Year and 2nd place finisher Trevino also has SPEED; last month he set a new Across Iowa record riding 273 miles at a sizzling 25.7 mph. Read about it at:

http://www.ultracycling.com/records/iowa_record2005.html

Despite false cheating allegations against him last year, he still set the 3rd fastest RAAM rookie speed of 13.88mph. An ultra runner turned cyclist, Trevino entered RAAM at the last minute this year. Although Trevino is hungrier for his first win, I still give the edge to Robic because of his brutal 48 hour sleep deprivation training. Also, Robic beat Trevino by 11 hours last year so I wonder how much faster Robic could have ridden the final few days if somebody was breathing down his back. However, Kish says that rookies can expect to ride about 12 hours faster in their 2nd RAAM so it could be a very close race. Such a close finish hasn't happened since I beat Fasching by just over an hour in 1999.

When Penseyres set the record, he slept only 11.5 hours in his 8 day 9 hour crossing. Last year Robic slept a reported 8 hours. Can he cut his time off the bike and increase his riding speed to average 15.4 mph? The time to beat on the 2005 course is 8:06:11 - with a \$10,000 prize if he or Trevino breaks the record!

Robic likes to establish an early lead, while others like myself prefer to take the lead near the end which can make for a much more exciting race. Robic will be chased by fellow countryman Marko Baloh. Baloh dropped out in 2003 2,449 miles in the race due to blood clots in his lungs. Last October he won the Furnace Creek 508 mile RAAM qualifier at an astounding speed of 17.26 mph - the headwinds were the worst in the history of the 508!

Also chasing Robic and Trevino will be RAAM legend Rob Kish, riding in his 20th RAAM! Kish has won the race three times and he's finished on the podium 12 times! Kish rides a strong, steady race and, even though he just turned 50, his competitors will be keeping an eye on him. Also, Kish has more than double the finishes the rest of the combined solo field has!

Dr. Bob Breedlove, 53, is the best RAAM rider to never win the solo race, although he has won the tandem division twice. Breedlove holds the 50+ transcon record (correlating to a 10:08:56 finishing time on the 2005 course) and also the record for a double transcontinental. Like Wolfgang Fasching and myself, Rob and Bob have never dropped out. A veteran of 7 RAAMs (4 top 7 finishes and 3 DNF's), David Kees rounds out this very competitive 50+ division. Kees just set the new 50+ record of 426 miles at the Davis 24 Hour Challenge.

Fabio Biasiolo will be starting his ninth RAAM, but he hasn't finished since 2000 when he placed third, two hours behind me. He has two back-to-back 5th places before that, but is haunted by five DNF's (similar to 1989 winner Paul Solon's 6). Back for unfinished business, if he can overcome the inevitable problems this year, he should place well. I look forward to getting some terrific interviews with gregarious Fabio who is liked by all riders.

Switzerland's Pius Achermann could be a dark horse winner. In 1999, he set the drafting world record of 610 miles in a 24-hour race. He was among the early leaders last year until saddle sores ended his race at 1,120 miles. Austrian Karl Traunmueller is back to improve on his 12th place finish in 1994.

Italy's Alessandro Colo hopes that setting all kinds of indoor stationary cycling distance/time records similar to RAAM (talk about boring and painful on the rear) will give him the mental toughness to make it farther than the 1,191 miles he rode last year. Spinning instructor Colo rode his RAAM bikes with PowerCrank's the equivalent of "5,841 miles" in 11 days during which time he faced some of the same physical and technical problems RAAM creates. He broke a saddle, two tires, and a frame. He also endured knee, feet, and saddle sore problems. Although indoor cycling is more boring than road riding, he did not face extreme weather conditions, mountainous terrain, route navigation problems, or crew problems which RAAM throws at you, and can chew you up and spit you out. Because you go nowhere when indoor cycling, I don't count any of these imaginary miles (much easier to maintain a higher average speed) towards my million mile goal.

Overall I predict Robic to win again (by a slim margin over Trevino), but miss Penseyres' record, unless favorable tailwinds prevail. It should be a fierce battle between veterans Kish and Breedlove, but I give the edge to Kish because he has ridden over three times as many RAAM miles as Breedlove, and Kish is three years younger. (Please see related article on Kish vs. Breedlove)

Fourteen rookies are starting the solo race. RAAM is an emotional roller coaster and it is impossible to simulate the many highs and lows in training. It's equally impossible to guess the amount of sleep a rider needs (a big variable for each racer). Rookies are so overwhelmed that they have little chance of winning. Only one rookie man (Jonathan Boyer) has won in the history of the race, but he was the first American to ever finish the Tour de France.

Rookie-of-the-Year honors will be fought between Denmark's Chris MacDonald and England's Chris Hopkinson. MacDonald recently set a course record of 500 miles at the Sebring, FL 24-hour race. Hopkinson won the Sebring and Texas 24-hour races last year. Both will be going after 1985 RAAM winner Jonathan Boyer's 20 year old rookie record of 14.31 mph which would yield a finishing time of 8:21:17 on the 2005 course - good enough for a top three finish. I

give the edge to MacDonald because Hopkinson "only" rode 249.5 miles – winning the Sebring 12-hour race on the same day MacDonald rode 500 miles. {Please see related article on 500 mile riders}

I think the first half of the race will be a 4 man battle between Robic, Trevino, Baloh, and MacDonald. Rookie MacDonald and Baloh will fade by the Mississippi River leaving Trevino and Robic in a very close fight to the finish in Atlantic City.

Sweden's Anna (Cat) Berge qualified for RAAM at the 2001 Furnace Creek 508, placing second overall and beating Seana Hogan's 1991 rookie time by over four hours. Berge is attempting to become the first woman finisher since Cassie Lowe in 2001. She will be going for Muffy Ritz's 12-year old rookie record of 12.49 mph, which would yield a finishing time of 10:04:21 on the 2005 course. Berge once took a survey of why people drop out of RAAM. I hope she doesn't become a statistic in her own survey.

Alaska's Ben Couturier is trying to break Chris Kostman's youngest (age 20) finisher record set back in 1987. Winner of the Firewood 400-mile RAAM qualifier in 2004, 18 year old Couturier would like Alaska to have both the oldest (Peter Lekisch at age 60) and youngest RAAM finishers.

A RAAM rookie, Jim Trout was the 2001 winner of the UMCA's John Marino Competition, which determines the best racers of the year through a series of one to three day events. Riding a lot of double centuries, 12/24-hour races, and even multi-day events like Paris-Brest-Paris is a far cry from RAAM ("the big one"), but I believe that riding big/long miles can determine one's RAAM performance. Randonneur Mark Metcalfe will also be relying on his long-distance base to finish RAAM.

David Haase returns after hydration problems forced him into a hospital and out of the race after 2,508 miles last year. NBC did a terrific job showing the difficulties of RAAM through David's many struggles.

Completing team RAAM is one of the best ways to qualify for solo RAAM and to gain some experience with the race. John D'Elia (Team New England in 2004) is making the bold transition from 2-person relay to solo, and Switzerland's Urs Koenig is going from 4-person to solo. Brazil's Ricardo Arap has unfinished business. After setting the 2-person record in 1998, he had a 2-person DNF in 2001 and a solo DNF in 2002.

The leaders will ride over 40 hours before sleeping, racing from San Diego across California and Arizona before stopping. With an on-the-bike speed of 16-17 mph, they will ride some 350 miles a day, taking only 1 to 2.5 hours of sleep per night. At about 900 miles they'll climb Wolf Creek Pass (10,550 feet high) in the Colorado Rockies. I've raced over Wolf Creek five times. Crossing the Continental Divide was always a big deal mentally because it was the high point of the race, and subconsciously your mind likes to think "it's all downhill from here" even though you know that is far from the truth. A rider can usually make up about 10% of the remaining distance on a competitor. So an early lead (unless it is huge) doesn't make that big of a difference.

There is a truism that the race doesn't really start until crossing the Mississippi River – 1,034 miles left in the 2005 route. This is because the last third of the race is the toughest, and position changes become more important. All the riding you have done up until now is just a warm-up for the final few days (will seem more like a few weeks) push towards the Atlantic City finish line. This is the section of the race, which exposes a rider's inner core. If a rider or even a crew member has a darker side or Mr. Hyde personality, it is sure to surface here.

Once the race gets spread out riders can go for days without seeing another racer. Motivation can flag, especially in the Midwest when the finish line is still days away. The crew tries to even out a rider's pace by not letting the racer go too slowly during the emotional lows nor too fast during the highs. The top riders will have an 8-12 person crew do everything but turn the pedals, and use 2-3 vehicles including an RV and minivan that stays with (mostly behind) them nearly all the time equipped with spare bike(s), tons of food (mostly liquid), clothing, music, a PA system, and walkie talkies. They may also have a spy vehicle.

The smallest margin of victory ever was 48 minutes when Rob Kish Beat Bob Fourney in 1992. Because riders have different sleeping patterns, it is extremely difficult for one rider to stay within sight of another rider for more than 18 hours, except for the first day. A sprint finish is highly unlikely (although one did occur for victory in the first women's race in 1984) in RAAM because if there is a pass on the final day/night, usually one rider ends up feeling better and smokes past the other rider so much faster (like what Juré Robic did to Rob Kish in the 2003 RAAM to claim 2nd place and rookie-of-the-year) that the rider being caught is devastated and broken mentally so bad that they give up any hope of beating their rival, and come crawling into the finish.

In 23 years only 169 individuals have finished the solo RAAM, but over 1,300 people have summited Mt. Everest (since Hillary & Tenzing in 1953) of which 179 have died. Only one person has done both – three time RAAM winner Wolfgang Fasching who said RAAM was tougher, but less dangerous. Andrew Lapkass has reached the summit 3 times out of 7 attempts, but he only made it 1,074 miles on his rookie attempt last year before back spasms and toeless (lost from frostbite mountain climbing) feet ended his RAAM. On average 40% drop out of RAAM. Which of these brave 26 solo riders will complete the 3,052 mile trek to the Boardwalk in Atlantic City?

Jure Robic pre RAAM Interview with Danny Chew

DC: CONGRATS ON RIDING 522 MILES IN 24 HOURS JUST 3 MONTHS AFTER WINNING RAAM. DID YOU FEEL FULLY RECOVERED FROM RAAM? HOW MUCH DID YOU RIDE IN

JR: Yes, I felt totally recovered, except for my finger injuries. I trained a lot, especially speed training with a motorbike. I also did a few 1

DC: HOW IS YOUR TRAINING GOING FOR THE 2005 RAAM? ARE YOU PRACTICING SLEEP DEPRIVATION TRAINING AGAIN?

JR: The preparations are going well. Trainings are very much the same as previous years. The distances are the same, while the intensity of it is

DC: WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN GOALS FOR THIS YEAR? WHO DO YOU THINK YOUR MAIN COMPETITION WILL BE IN RAAM THIS YEAR? DO YOU THINK YOU CAN WIN AGAIN? WH

JR: My first goal is to win RAAM 2005, and the second is winning LeTourDirect. The third goal would be breaking the world record at the 24 hour r

DC: WILL YOU TRY TO SLEEP LESS THAN THE 8 TOTAL HOURS YOU SLEPT LAST YEAR IN RAAM? HOW MUCH TIME DID YOU WASTE OFF THE BIKE NOT SLEEPING LAST YEAR?

JR: Of course! Less sleep will be necessary. I wasted far too much time (6 hours) off the bike and not sleeping at that time. This problem will

DC: WILL YOU TAKE OFF SUPER FAST LIKE YOU DID LAST YEAR TO ESTABLISH A BIG EARLY LEAD? DO YOU PREFER WINNING BY MANY HOURS LIKE YOU DID LAST YEAR?

JR: The tactics are not yet decided. It depends on how the race evolves. The goal is to win and to give all the best that I have at that time.

DC: DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD HAVE RIDDEN FASTER LAST YEAR IF ANOTHER RIDER WAS STILL CLOSE TO YOU ALL THE WAY TO THE FINISH LINE?

JR: For sure I would have gone faster if someone were close behind.

DC: LAST YEAR YOU HAD PROBLEMS WITH YOUR HANDS AND FEET. WILL YOU DO ANYTHING DIFFERENT THIS YEAR FOR THAT?

JR: We are still searching different options for my hand position on the handlebars, and I have to change the socks for the feet problems.

DC: DO YOU ALWAYS WANT YOUR CREW TO TELL YOU WHERE THE OTHER RIDERS ARE?

JR: Yes, I want to be informed, especially for the first one behind me.

DC: HAS BECOMING A NEW FATHER MEANT THAT YOU HAVE LESS TIME TO RIDE THIS YEAR? WOULD YOUR WIFE EVER CONSIDER BEING ON YOUR CREW?

JR: Becoming a father is no obstacle, quite contrary; it motivates me even more, to train harder and longer. My wife was important member of my RA

DC: DO YOU HAVE A FULL CREW FOR THIS YEAR YET? HOW MANY RETURNING MEMBERS FROM LAST YEAR?

JR: The team is already selected, and will be the same as last year, except for one member, the journalist.

DC: WOULD YOU LIKE TO BECOME THE FIRST MAN TO WIN 4 RAAMS?

JR: Yes I would like to and I think I am able to, but financially this project is very large. At this time I cannot say if I can participate so ma

DC: DID YOU HAVE A COLD WINTER THERE IN SLOVENIA WITH LOTS OF SNOW? IF SO, WHAT DID YOU DO FOR EXERCISE? DO YOU RIDE STATIONARY INDOOR BIKES MUCH

JR: The winter was long and cold, but that didn't bother me. I did a lot of cross country skiing and ergometer riding. I also spent around one mo

DC: DO YOU KEEP A TRAINING JOURNAL OR DIARY?

JR: Yes.

DC: HOW MANY TOTAL KILOMETERS DID YOU RIDE IN 2004 (LAST YEAR) FROM JANUARY 1ST – DECEMBER 31ST? INCLUDE BOTH TRAINING AND RACING MILES RIDDEN. I

JR: Without indoor training and cross-country skiing, I rode about 41,000 Kilometers (25,473 miles). Danny, I am pleased and proud that a legend o

2005 SOLO RAAM 50+ DIVISION: Kish vs. Breedlove

This years RAAM 50+ division promises to be one of the best battles ever fought between legend Rob Kish (synonymous with RAAM) and Dr. Bob Breedlove. Kish finally 50, has a record 19 finishes including three wins, six seconds, and three thirds. He has the most (4) transcontinental crossings over 14 mph, and the most (7) sub 9 day crossings. His average RAAM finishing time is 9 days 10 hours 50 minutes. Only four times did he go over 10 days. Breedlove 53, has three solo finishes and two tandem wins. In 2002 outside of RAAM, he set the 50+ transcontinental record of 12.26mph, which would yield a finishing time of 10:08:56 on the 2005 course. (Both Rob & Bob will be shooting for this).

In 1989, Breedlove rode from the Mississippi River in Alton, IL West into headwinds all the way to Los Angeles where he waited about 40 hours to start RAAM. After finishing RAAM in 3rd place in New York City, he turned around and rode back to Alton to set the current double Transcon. record of 22:13:36. He also has finished four Paris-Brest-Paris races all on tandems. I consider Breedlove to be the greatest male

rider never to win solo RAAM. Muffy Ritz is the greatest female rider never to win solo RAAM (thanks to Seana Hogan).

I consider myself to be an equal rider to Rob Kish. In the eight RAAMs we have ridden together, we have both beaten each other four times and won twice. I only raced against Breedlove once in 1994 my rookie year, and I finished 4th behind him (2nd). Breedlove is also on our level, but has failed to win the solo race because his busy life (He is an orthopedic Surgeon and married with 4 children) has allowed him just three solo RAAM finishes. Look at how amazingly similar his and Kish's RAAM results are:

1988 solo RAAM - Kish 5th in solo race and Breedlove 7th in solo race - 11:13 behind
 1989 solo RAAM - Breedlove 3rd in solo race and Kish 7th in solo race - 9:49 behind
 1990 RAAM - Breedlove 1st in tandem division and Kish 2nd in solo race - 1:57 behind
 1992 RAAM - Kish 1st in solo race and Breedlove 1st in tandem division - 4:57 behind
 1994 RAAM - Kish 1st in solo race and Breedlove 2nd in solo race - 1:33 behind
 2005 RAAM - Breedlove ? in solo race and Kish ? in solo race - :?? behind

If you just look at their solo results (not really fair to compare solo versus tandem results), Kish beat Breedlove in 1988, Breedlove beat Kish in 1989, and Kish beat Breedlove in 1994. Based upon this pattern, Breedlove is due to beat Kish this year.

However, I predict that Kish will prevail because he has so much more RAAM experience - Kish has ridden over three times as many RAAM miles as Breedlove, and Kish is three years younger. Also, Kish seems to have the best crew from his loyal crew chief & wife Brenda being able to get a lot of return experienced Krew members.

Breedlove and Kish have very different personalities, and this shows up in their RAAM demeanors. Like Gerry Tatrai and myself, Breedlove is very gregarious and talkative. In contrast, like Seana Hogan, Kish is very focused and stoic, rarely smiling. They're not rude - they're just there to race, not to talk.

Looking at Breedlove's Transcon. record of 12.26mph which he did at age 50, I may be able to predict Kish's mph this year based upon speed decay. In 2003, Kish rode 12.57 mph, and in 2004, he rode 12.41mph for a decay of 0.16mph. Assuming that same rate of decay applies from 2004 to 2005, he should ride at 12.25mph this year almost tying Breedlove's record. The big question is what is Breedlove's speed decay rate if any from age 50 to 53? This is going to be one very exciting race to watch and for me to write about. Both Bob and Rob are expected to finish, as they have never dropped out of RAAM much like Wolfgang Fasching and myself.

Spurred on by competition from each other, they might both ride over 13 mph and go sub 10 days smashing Breedlove's 50+ record. Breedlove's 2002 record ride was dedicated to remember and honor heroes that have fallen in the Line of Duty, so he had to stop and visit fire stations all across the country which had to slow him down considerably. In the 2004 RAAM, Kish finished over 13 hours behind 4th place and over 12 hours ahead of 6th place, so he had a very "relaxing" final day with no riders near him to speed up his pace. Imagine how fast Kish and Breedlove's final day could be if they are within one hour of each other.

Time trial (non-drafting) events usually start and finish at the same place to insure even or neutral wind conditions and no altitude advantages. Martha Stewart could "beat" Lance Armstrong in a 10 mile time trial if she had a 30 mph tailwind the whole way and he had a 30 mph headwind the entire way. Robin Williams could "beat" Lance on Alp d'Huez if Robin rode down the mountain and Lance rode up it. Technically, RAAM can't be considered a time trial because it starts and finishes in different locations, allowing for predominant tailwinds, yet it is the worlds longest time trial. Because it is such a unique event and consistently runs West to East every year, average speeds can be compared from year to year, but shouldn't be compared to other events. In 1989, Bob Breedlove is the only person ever to turn RAAM into a bonified time trial by going across the country in both directions. In 1981, Lon Haldeman went both directions in just over 24 days, but that was before any sort of transcontinental bicycle race existed. In 1974, Victor Vincente also did it in over 36 days.

OVER 500 MILES IN 24 HOURS RELATING TO RAAM

Riding over 500 miles in 24 hour time trial (non-drafting) events and winning the solo Race Across America (RAAM) seem to go hand-in-hand. In 1994, Australian Rod Evans rode 530 miles on an indoor velodrome. He has never ridden RAAM. In 1996, 1987 RAAM winner Michael Secrest rode 503 miles on the road to set the course record at Dave Holmes' 24 Hour World Championship in Iowa. Later that same year, Secrest rode 533 miles on an outdoor velodrome to establish a new world record. In 1997, England's Andy Wilkinson rode 525 miles on the road. He has never ridden RAAM. In 2000, three months after finishing 2nd in RAAM, I rode 508 miles on the road to establish a new course record in Iowa. I won the 1996 and 1999 RAAMs. In 2004, 2001 RAAM winner Andreas Clavdetscher of Liechtenstein rode 505 miles on the road. Just 3 months after winning the 2004 RAAM, Slovenian Juré Robic rode 522 miles on the road. In 2005, Denmark's Chris MacDonald rode 500 miles on the road to set the course record at the

Sebring, FL 24 hour race. He will enter his first RAAM this year.

Of the seven men to ride over 500 miles, four have won RAAM. The same attributes (must have speed, power, and be mentally tough) that allow a man to ride over 500 miles are also necessary to win RAAM, and vice-versa. MacDonald has the horsepower needed to win RAAM, but most likely won't win this year since he is a rookie. The same goes for Evans and Wilkinson, but they may never do RAAM.

There are exceptions to every rule, and the two men who have won RAAM the most (three times each) Rob Kish and Wolfgang Fasching have both tried and failed to ride over 500 miles in 24 hours, although Fasching rode 475 miles the first day of the 2000 RAAM he won. Because RAAM is such a long multi-day event, riders lacking speed can make up for this by sleeping less and staying on the bike longer. Perhaps being able to ride over 500 miles is a better indicator of being able to win RAAM than winning RAAM implying that riding over 500 miles is possible.

I happen to think that winning RAAM is much tougher than riding over 500 miles in 24 hours. There are probably many amateur and professional road racers who could ride over 500 miles, but a much smaller number could win RAAM. Sleep deprivation in a 24 hour race is minuscule compared to RAAM. After becoming the first America to finish the Tour De France, Jonathan Boyer did make good on his word to win RAAM in 1985, but I believe he is the exception rather than the rule.

I do hope that with RAAM being back on network (NBC) TV, it can grow and offer enough prize money to attract more pro racers to the solo race. Pete Penseyres and Boyer racing against each other would have been such a close and exciting race.

2005 RAAM Solo Rider Video Interviews

On Friday, June 17th, the solo rider video interviews began with Stephen Auerbach and I asking the questions, and camera guy Don Hauk filming. The star of last years NBC TV program, David Haase is back after dropping out 2,508 miles into the race from hyponatremia (over hydration). He is here to win which he admits might get in the way of finishing. Last year the pain of the race caused him to grind away all the fillings in his mouth, which had to be refilled over the winter. His girlfriend Shannon (a family marriage therapist) will be on his crew the entire time this year. He says that owning his own business (a ski, bike, and snowboard shop called Attitude Sports) is a 24/7 lifestyle rather than a job. That coupled with RAAM training has led to sleep deprivation practice. He will start riding at 3:30am, work a full day, then ride till 3am and sleep a couple of hours.

Originally from Switzerland, Urs Koenig has lived in Seattle for the past 3 years. In 2002, he placed 2nd in the 4 man Team RAAM on Team Swiss Academic Ski Club. He will never forget how much pain the solo riders were in as he caught, talked with, and passed them that year. He is curious to see what sort of respect the teams will give him as a solo rider this year – role reversal. With a goal of “only” finishing, he doesn't care what place he finishes in. He and his wife Catherine are expecting their first baby in 3 months. He ran his first marathon at age 14 in 3.5 hours. He saw Alan Larsen about his neck apparatus, and has such a device ready if he should need it. Thanks to Larsen's Medieval Torture Device, Dropping out of RAAM with Shermerneck is no longer a valid excuse.

Last year's rookie-of-the-year and 2nd place finisher Mike Trevino seemed very zoned in and focused on his goal to win this year. An ultramarathon runner, he had to cut back on running this year (his longest run over the winter was just 40 miles) to concentrate more on cycling. He has done fewer miles this year, but more intense rides. He hadn't planned on riding RAAM this year, but once he found himself in the best shape of his life in May, he couldn't resist. On RAAM, he thinks of himself as a machine that needs simple inputs and outputs to work most efficiently. He feels that mental preparation must be extensive. He hasn't obsessed over the race this year like he did last year when he took off work for 6 months to train full time for it. He feels he does better taking short naps (15-20 minutes) on RAAM rather than sleeping a full 90 minutes. He has only ever watched about 15 minutes of Tour de France coverage, and therefore doesn't worship the ground Lance walks on like the rest of us do.

18 year old Ben Couturier heard of RAAM at age 14, and tried to enter on team, but that fell through. He has worked for 3 years at REI as a bike mechanic for his boss and coach John Glidden. He father was in the military, but now is a policeman, which Ben might like to be someday. His mother is self-employed with her own tourist shop called “The Downtown Co-Op.” Ben told me that because RAAM is so much more mental than physical, he thinks that taking illegal performance-enhancing drugs wouldn't help a rider that much. His favorite food is tortellini with alfredo sauce. Hopefully he can become the youngest person to ever finish solo RAAM.

After finishing 12 place in the 1994 (my rookie year) RAAM, police detective Karl Traunmueller is back to improve on that at age 48. 7 of the 10 people on his crew are also police detectives. On his head, he shaved RAAM on one side, and his race number on the other side, after his son (a soldier) suggested it. He rode the 1999 Furnace Creek 508 with a blind tandem partner. He has an artificial right hip.

Perry Stone joined us in the video interview room on Saturday. After finishing the 2-person team RAAM last year on Team New England, lawyer John D'Elia is back to try the solo race. He thinks

that Team RAAM is the best possible preparation for the solo race. His father owned a bike shop in Connecticut. Working there and at 4 other bike shops as a teenager got him addicted to cycling. He enjoys night riding. On last years RAAM, he discovered that the first few days of RAAM your body is on a pain curve, but after day 4 even though you feel lousy, you don't get any worse on the rest of the days. He feels there are 8-10 super athletes here, and his goal is to finish.

Although he grew up in France, Patrick Autissier had lived near Boston for the past 4.5 years. Wired with 7 electrodes to his chest, scientist Pat will use RAAM as laboratory to learn what stress does to his body. His crew will send data onto his website during the race. They will use a urine test with 7 parameters. His only goal is to finish, and doesn't care about the competition. If he can finish within the 12 day, 2 hour time limit, he would be the happiest man in the world. Since RAAM is such a huge endeavor, he has a goal of fundraising \$2 million (one person every 7 seconds) from January to July to help HIV patients.

Jure Robic said he feels the pressure of being the defending champ this year. He acknowledges there are more good riders in the field this year, and the course is also tougher (30,000 more feet of climbing) than last year. He has known Marko Baloh for 15 years, and lives 100 kilometers away from him. He said that mornings just after sunrise are the most difficult times for him. He wants his fans to know that he is not some robot as he may appear on camera. He suffers just as badly as every rider does. He feels as though he could ride the Tour de France because the Tour seems so much easier to him than RAAM. His favorite music is rock 'n' roll.

England's Chris Hopkinson is quite a character. 3 days ago, he got a red Mohawk haircut for RAAM. He has raced 3-4 times per week for the past 18 months. Like myself, he is known for riding long distances to and from races to get better training. When I asked him if he was worried about the desert heat since he is from Great Britain, he told me that he hates the cold weather there, and can't wait to experience the desert since he loves the heat. He claims to have the best bike lights – Exposure lights which are 30 watts and last for 12 hours. His crew chief is Steve Masters who was Team Royal Air Force's crew chief for 3 years (including 2 victories), and Ann Wooldridge (may race solo RAAM next year) is also on his crew. He is also good friends with Terry Lansdell. He has kept the screws that once held his hip together after a bad accident. He wants to become the first British rider to finish RAAM since Brits are so time trial crazy.

I had a great interview with the greatest rider to never win the men's race Dr. Bob Breedlove. His RAAM resume being too long for me to list here, Bob has been with his wife Gretchen since they were 6 years old. His fraternal twin brother Bill has been on all of his transcontinental crossings, and is his crew chief this year. Being in a group practice with 19 doctors makes it easier for him to slip away for long rides. He used to ride 15-20,000 miles per year, but now only rides 8-10,000 miles, which are more quality. He has ridden 4 Paris Brest Paris' on tandems, and considers his 1999 Elite PAC Tour with his 14 year old son on a tandem to be his most cherished athletic feat. Although some people may have accused Bob of child abuse for this, Bob was very proud of Bill riding every mile averaging some 170 miles per day. Sometimes he is up all night on call, but he usually averages 5-6 hours of sleep per night. He plans on sleeping the first night this year. He will sleep 90 minutes each night starting at 1:30am, and take 15 minute naps in the afternoon.

It is remarkable that the first two places in the 1994 RAAM (my rookie year I placed 4th) are back racing again 11 years later. Except for maybe golf, this sort of thing just doesn't happen in sports. It would be like if Greg LeMond and Miguel Indurain were racing the Tour de France this year against Lance Armstrong, and both were expected to finish in the top half. The 26 starters this year is the largest field in the solo race since 1994 when there were 31.

I am sorry I didn't get to interview more riders, but I was running around trying to get Jim Pitre's old laptop computer (which I am using) to go online with no luck, and had to go get our minivan rental. I will be traveling this year with Perry Stone again and camera guy Billy DelRiego.

The pre-race banquet was terrific. 6 Time Women's champ Seana Hogan gave a speech and slide show of her 7 year RAAM career. I ate dinner with her & hubby Pat Enright, Seana's son 14 year old Alexander who is now 6'2" tall with size 15 feet, their other child 4 year old Austin, and Steve Born. Cycling legend Mike Aisner spoke. He was the promoter of the Red Zinger/Coors Classic stage race in Colorado which 1985 RAAM winner Jonathon (Jock) Boyer won. He is a terrific race announcer, and is just what RAAM needs to boost it up to the next level! As the solo riders were called upon stage, I noticed Jim Trout's red Mohawk haircut with blue sideburns. After the first raffle drawing which nobody claimed, Trout's ticket was drawn and he won a pair of Velocity wheels. He and Chris Hopkinson looked like Team Mohawk. By the time the 24 hour racers were introduced, much of the solo riders and their crews had left except for David Haase.

You really get the feeling of a RAAM reunion when you see so many former riders on crews. 2003 winner Allen Larsen is Marko Baloh's crew chief. Allen's wife Tresa is also on the crew, and won't have to worry herself silly about her husband riding too far for too long. Guus Moonen is Alessandro Colo's crew chief. Tracy McKay is on Chris MacDonald's crew. Reed Finrock is on the Kish Krew again. Lee Mitchell is Cat Berge's crew chief. Rich Kondzielaski is also on Cat's crew. Byron Rieper is on Trevino's crew again, but not crew chief this year. The two person mixed Team Endorphins has hired Kyle Young to videotape their crossing. Kyle produced the RAAM video for the Outdoor Life Network a few years ago, on which Scott Johnson narrated.

Day 1

The 24th Race Across America began on Sunday, June 19th at 7:03 am local time in San Diego. Official race time is Eastern Standard Time military (0-24 hours) so we began at 10:03. The solo field and the new 24 hour Corporate Challenge [to Flagstaff, AZ] up to 8 person teams left together on the 13 mile parade (neutral) route to the official race start. The solos got a 10 minute head start on the five teams. The first 52 mile leg to Pine Valley has the most (5,780 feet) climbing of all 57 time stations. The climbing quickly breaks up the pack, and Slovenians Marko Baloh & Jure Robic and Rookie Chris MacDonald led through the first time station. The only solo woman Catherina (Cat) Berge was mid-pack 33 minutes behind them. 7 minutes after Cat was 18 year old Ben Couturier. Three time winner Rob Kish riding his 20th RAAM, was in next to last place 1 hour 4 minutes behind the leaders. The Clif Bar Team (headed by former world duathlon champion Kenny Souza) cut the ten minute gap behind the solos in half by Pine Valley. 11 minutes after Clif, Team Swami's Raceplan arrived in 2nd place.

81 miles into the race in Jacumba, Team Clif Bar caught the solo leaders Robic and MacDonald who was on a bicycle without aerobars. Robic finally pulled away from MacDonald when Chris stopped to change bikes. About 5 miles before time station #2 in El Centro, we came upon David Haase lying on the ground at a gas station with his crew nursing him. His crew tried to over-correct his over-hydration problem leading to his DNF last year by limiting him to just 28 ounces (one large water bottle) per hour. With the high temperature in the desert being about 105 degrees F, Haase was so severely dehydrated that he had to stop for 2 hours bumping him from 5th to 25th place in El Centro. Solo leader Robic went through there 3 minutes ahead of MacDonald. Team leader Clif Bar was 10 minutes ahead of Robic and 20 minutes ahead of Team Swami's Raceplan. Team JMI Rookies passed Team Bicycling San Diego to move into 4th place.

Bob Breedlove's vast transcontinental crossing experience had him moving up places by staying well hydrated. He was drinking over 100 ounces of fluids per hour and pissing on the bike once every hour. At time station #3 in Glamis, Robic lead Baloh by 7 minutes, MacDonald by 11, and Mike Trevino by 27 minutes.

The team placings remained unchanged with Clif leading Swami by 27 minutes. At time station #4 in Blythe, Rookie Englishman Chris Hopkinson arrived in 9th place and stopped in his RV. A crewmember told me that it is illegal to ride in Britain in a sleep-deprived state. No wonder Chris was so excited to come to America and "legally" ride RAAM. He left the time station bare backed under a nearly full moon on a warm desert night. Cat Berge moved up to 10th place. Teams places held, but the gap widened.

Leader Robic's 12 hour split was 242 miles – the same he rode last year. 2nd place Baloh's split was 239 miles – 36 more miles than he rode his first 12 hours of the 2003 RAAM which he led before winner Allen Larsen passed him. Ironically Larsen is Baloh's crew chief this year. In the middle of the night, I asked Baloh about Larsen, and Larsen will most likely be pushing Baloh as hard or harder than Larsen pushed himself in 2003. Baloh told me that Larson told him that being a crew chief is tougher than riding. Later, I asked Allen about this, and he confirmed it.

Including their 10 minute wait stop at the official race start, the lead Team Clif Bar rode 270 miles their first 12 hours. Just after sunset, Rookie Chris MacDonald lost 3rd place to Trevino. Despite a 2 hour sleep break, MacDonald still held onto 4th place. A 2 hour sleep dropped Breedlove from 5th to 11th place and behind Kish. Race leader Robic had a 24 hour split of 447 miles which is 11 miles more than he rode last year, and two miles less than Pete Penseyres rode his first day of his 15.4 mph record. In Williams, AZ on Monday morning, Baloh was 24 minutes behind Robic, and Trevino was 56 minutes behind Baloh.

The Clif Bar Team has turned the 24 hour team race into a 23.5 hour race arriving victoriously in Flagstaff, AZ. All teams rode the 485 miles to the Sky Dome at Northern Arizona University which is 8 miles short of the Flagstaff time station #9. Clif Bar got there about 2 hours 40 minutes ahead of Robic, 2 hours 3 minutes ahead of 2nd place Team Swami's Raceplan, and 3 hours 12 minutes ahead of 3rd place Team Kaiser Permanente R2R. 4th place team JMI Rookies came within two penalties of being disqualified when they got their 4th one totaling 2 hours, 30 minutes. This allowed last (5th) placed Team Bicycling San Diego to officially finish just 6 minutes after JMI Rookies. The first three teams beat Robic to Flagstaff, but Robic had to save something for the next week+.

I am always amazed at how fast the solo race spreads out so below is a chart of the time gaps in hours: minutes - between the lead and last solo riders for the first 6 time stations:

Time Station #	Time Gap
1	1:05
2	2:42
3	6:04
4	6:49
5	11:36

6 | 15:11

The traditional teams start on Tuesday afternoon 55 hours after the solo riders. It will take the lead team about this same amount of time to catch the last solo rider meaning that the average speed is twice.

Day 2

Two Slovenians are dominating RAAM as the field continues to spread way out. Staying within two hours of each other, Jure Robic and Marko Baloh are pulling away having both had their first 90 minute sleep break on the 2nd night. However, Robic went down first allowing Baloh to win the time station in Aneth, UT by 25 minutes before Baloh went down himself. Although Baloh briefly lead the race, I call it an invalid lead since it merely happened from variable sleep times on the same night. It is possible though if Robic wanted to lead the entire way across the country after California, not being able to do so could hurt his psyche.

Mike Trevino is holding a solid 3rd place, and closed to within an hour of Baloh because Mike didn't take a substantial sleep break the 2nd night. He may have had one or two 15 minute cat naps. I was surprised to see Mike Trevino using a double water bottle cage behind his seat, and he was regularly reaching back for drinks. The leading rookie Chris MacDonald has been getting the most sleep (3 hours the first night and 3 hours the second night), and is in 4th place 3 hours behind Trevino and 3 hours ahead of Fabio Biasiolo in 5th place. Fabio has climbed through the field amazingly well from 19th place the first day in Blythe. His wife and baby are on his crew.

A late afternoon building fire in Williams, AZ had some middle of the packers taking a very short detour through town. The only woman in the race Cat Berge is using her monster 55 tooth front chainring to stay in the front half of the field.

We got a motel in Flagstaff, and hung out at the time station there watching riders go pass and stop. As Chris Hopkinson stopped for a short dusk break, I checked out his equipment. He is riding on Rotorcranks, and I saw the disk rear wheel (with "Kiss My Ass" written on both sides) he rode on for the first 350 miles. Ricardo Arap also stopped, and I noticed he only has 5 crew members using a minivan and a car. Italian Alessandro Colo went into his RV where he and his crew chief searched through piles of clothing unable to find a certain favorite warm long sleeve top.

The back of the packers are already concerned about having to average 10.52 mph to be official finishers. A new rule this year will check to see if they are at or above this speed a quarter, half, and three quarters of the way across. If not, they could be disqualified. This means making it 727 miles to time station #13 in Aneth, UT within 72.5 hours.

The race's first casualty was 50 year old David Kees who dropped out for medical reasons at or past time station #6 in Congress, AZ on the second day while in the middle of the field. This was Kees' 4th DNF out of 8 solo RAAM starts. The second person to drop out was lawyer John D'Elia from exhaustion at or past time station #8 in Williams, AZ while in last place. His average speed had dropped below 10.52 mph by time station #7 and fell even farther to 9.24 mph by Williams. Austrian police Detective Karl Traunmueller is also in trouble. At Congress, his average speed fell below 10.52 mph. For the next three stations it was 9.20, 9.46, and 9.72. He will have to work hard to get it back up to 10.52 mph in the next four stations.

Firefighter Scott Dakus is rookie Kevin Walsh's crew chief. Knee problems forced Dakus out of last years race after 716 miles. Mark Metcalfe who started the race at 220 pounds told me he lost 15 pounds on the first day through the desert. Any help or words of wisdom from Jeff Bubba Stevens for Mark?

Day 3

Taking another 90 minute sleep break on his 3rd night, Robic continues to defend his RAAM title convincingly with a four hour lead over 2nd place. In the early afternoon in Western Colorado, Trevino passed Baloh to move into 2nd place. It looks like Trevino took his longest (one hour) sleep break of the race thus far on the 3rd night while Baloh slept 2.5 hours. Holding onto 4th place, rookie leader Chris MacDonald got his 3rd consecutive night of 3 hours of sleep (Chew style). After falling back to 25th place the first day in the desert from severe dehydration, David Haase made a remarkable comeback moving up to 8th place in Colorado.

Around Noon local time on Tuesday, Dr. Bob Breedlove walked into the gas station at time station #12 in Mexican Hat, UT to cool off. With an ice pack on his head, he began reminiscing about his many past transcontinental crossings. He had ridden on this section of the course two times. He said that the Southern course he set the 50+ record on in 2002 (outside of RAAM) was much flatter the first half. UMCA magazine editor John Hughes was there shooting photos. Getting ready to leave, Bob put on a pair of thin orange long-fingered gloves ovetop regular cycling gloves so people can see him waving at them across the country.

18 year old Alaskan Ben Couturier moved up into 12th place within an hour of Cat Berge in 11th. In danger of being disqualified from falling below 10.52 mph at time station #13 (a fourth of the way across), Austrian Karl Traunmueller got his average speed up to 10.68 mph just in time. Patrick

Autissier's speed was right on the edge at 10.51 mph at the time station. Not so fortunate was Brazil's Ricardo Arap who was stuck at time station #11 in Kayenta, AZ 635 miles in for over 12 hours helplessly watching his speed drop below 10.52 mph. In spite of arriving at the time station in 17th place (ahead of 7 men and two DNFs), he became the 3rd casualty of the race when he dropped out on Wednesday morning.

Leader Robic rode 361 miles his 2nd day giving him a 48 hour split of 808 miles. This is 34 miles more than he did last year, but 12 miles less than than Pete Penseyres rode his first two days of his 15.4 mph record. Robic rode 317 miles his 3rd day giving him a 3 day split of 1,125 miles. 4 miles less than he did last year and 85 miles less than Pete Penseyres rode his first three days of his 15.4 mph record.

Team RAAM

25 teams representing 8 divisions or categories started Team RAAM on Tuesday afternoon 55 hours after the solo riders left on Sunday morning. Lead solo rider Jure Robic has a 920 mile head start – he was climbing up Wolf Creek Pass to the Continental Divide when the teams started after him. How long will it take them to catch him? The 4 person teams started at 17:11 followed by the 2 person teams 5 minutes later, and the 8 person corporate teams 5 minutes after the 2 person teams.

The fastest division will be the 4 person. The first person to win 4 person three times is big Joe Petersen who also has two 2nds and a 4th. Joe will be going for his 4th win this year on his Kern Wheelmen Team with 3 rookies. The only other person to win 4 person three times is Kerry Ryan last year on his Action Sports Team. Ryan broke Petersen's 8 year old speed record last year by a mere 0.02 mph.

Joe, a 46 year old certified personal trainer from Bakersfield, CA is 6'4" tall and 230 pounds. He believes the only limitations we have are those we put on ourselves. He is married and a father of five children. He rides 180 Rotor cranks with 46/63 chainrings and an 11-24 rear cluster. He seldom shifts so the 63x11 gets most of the wear. He hasn't used smaller than a 60 chainring in over 12 years. He spoke with Chris Carmichael about his gearing, and he's the first coach who ever agreed with Joe's selection. For Joe's unusual size, leg length, strength, and "riding style" it optimizes his pedal stroke. Joe's position on a bike is unmistakable. He has shattered both of his shoulders and in an aero tuck position, they collapse and almost disappear. Due to extreme flexibility, he is able to ride completely flat which gives him a huge aerodynamic advantage. Finally,

the fact that he does not displace any more frontal area than smaller riders, but has longer and much stronger levers, makes him a threat on everything except the steepest climbs.

RAAM has become very dear to Joe's heart over the years. His main goal for his Kern Wheelmen team this year is to do RAAM to the absolute best of their abilities. Joe writes:

"If I can lead and co-ordinate 3 men and 16 crew members into functioning as a cohesive unit, and have each of them coming away with the knowledge that they all did everything in their power to attain perfection; Then we all walk away Winners in the truest sense of the word. Podium finishes, and records are to be savored like the wildflowers in spring. Real victory lies in the battle well fought, the journey well traveled. Everyone who crosses the finish line in RAAM is a winner and a true Champion. Dreams do not 'just happen', fantasies are just fantasies, it takes a Champion to put it all into motion, and make it come true. When it is all said and done, I don't want to look back on my life and say I wish could have, or would have done something. Life experiences should be cherished, life is much too short to just stand idly by and not embrace it with your heart and soul. In RAAM, I have found a journey like no other; it's not just a journey across our great country, but an inner journey of self-discovery."

The biggest obstacle in the way of Joe's 4th victory is Team Beaver Creek – Vail out of Colorado. Their captain Zach Bingham, a three time 4 person veteran including a victory in 2001, was knocked out of this years RAAM with hepatitis. Zack's teammate on all 3 teams, Mortenson will lead the team along with pro mountain bike racer Mike Janelle on the 2004 Vail – Go Fast team that placed 2nd. Beaver Creek has an average age of 32.75 years old, and Kern Wheelmen 40.5

Team Beaver Creek - Vail won the first time station over Switzerland's Team IWC Schaffhausen by 6 minutes. Kern Wheelman was 3rd two minutes behind IWC. At TS #2, KW moved into 2nd, but fell 11 minutes behind BC-V. KW came within one minute of BC-V in Hope, AZ, but fell 57 minutes behind by Flagstaff. IWC held onto 3rd place. BC-V rode 561 miles to Tuba City, AZ in the first 24 hours.

In the 4 person recumbent division, ALS Bacchetta and JDRF VeloKraft started out slow, but moved up to 4th and 7th place overall among the teams by Flagstaff, AZ separated by 27 minutes. In the 2 person race, Lower Austria – City of Krems was as high as 4th place overall among all teams, and had a two hour lead on Crazy Gones in Williams, AZ. In the mixed 2 person, Free Riders had a 10 minute lead over Grupo Gaupo, and was 55 minutes ahead of Endorphins in Prescott, AZ. In the 8 person corporate challenge, Insight was as high as 4th overall among all the teams, and was leading Eric Heiden's Donate Life team by 43 minutes in Flagstaff.

Day 4

Increasing his lead over Trevino to 7 hours in Western Kansas, Robic is sealing up another RAAM win. 2-3 hours behind Trevino, Baloh and rookie MacDonald were battling it out for third place trading positions at the Colorado/Kansas state line. 6 hours behind them is 5th place Fabio Biasiolo attempting to finish his first RAAM since 2000 when he placed 3rd behind Fashing and myself. He then had three consecutive DNFs, and sat out last year. How very sweet a finish in Atlantic City would be for the gregarious, lovable Italian. After dropping out in 2003, he showed up in Atlantic City to watch other riders finish. That had to be a very difficult scenario that he doesn't want to go through again.

We spent all morning driving up and down beautiful Wolf Creek Pass looking for riders. RAAMs highest point at 10,857 feet on the Continental Divide, Wolf Creek averages 38 feet of snow per year, and shaded areas still had a thick snow pack. I jumped into Bob Breedlove's support vehicle as he was climbing the mountain with John Hughes. Bob told me this year's route has the most climbing of all transcontinental courses he has ridden. He feels bad when anybody drops out of RAAM knowing how much time and money he or she have invested in it.

As we were descending down the East side of Wolf Creek pass with 8th placed David Haase, we had to wait for 30 minutes as construction crews were blasting. A woman worker told us they work 24/7, and have been stopping all cyclists. Dave rode ahead thinking he might be able to get through, but was stopped. His crew (in a long line of waiting vehicles) rushed down with food, drinks, and a blanket for him to lie on. This kind of unplanned stop can really stress a rider out. While Haase had to wait the full time limit, other riders may luck out and not have to wait at all.

I discovered that MacDonald most likely has the biggest crew (in the history of the solo race) with 18 people in 5 vehicles. That beats Harold Trease's old record. Cat Berge has moved up to 9th place with 18 year old Alaskan Ben Couturier behind her. Urs Koenig pulled into time station #14 in Cortez, CO 781 miles from San Diego in 14th place. A medical condition hospitalizing him made him the 4th casualty of the race. Several riders are in danger of being disqualified from dropping below 10.52 mph. At time station #16, last place rider Kevin Walsh's average speed was 9.77 mph, and 19 time finisher, three time winner, RAAM legend Rob Kish's average speed was 10.30 mph. I imagine that Kish would still finish unofficial this year just like he did way back in 1985 on his first RAAM when he missed finishing within 48 hours of winner Jonathan (Jock) Boyer. I can't fathom his 20th RAAM ending with a DNF. At time station #17, Karl Traunmueller's average speed was 10.31 mph. After sitting at 10.51 mph at time station #13, Patrick Autissier managed to raise it to 10.58 by time station #16. They all have until the halfway point of the race at time station #27 in Mt. Vernon to get above 10.52 which means they have to make it there before Saturday morning at 11:00am race time.

Leader Robic rode 340 miles his 4th day giving him a 4 day split of 1,465 miles. This is 73 miles less than he did last year, and 108 miles less than Pete Penseyres rode the first four days of his 15.4 mph record. So unless he gets huge tailwinds, it looks like he won't break the record, but he can still go after his own record of 14.66 mph set last year.

Team RAAM

In the 4 person race, Beaver Creek – Vail continues to pull away from all other teams opening up a 3.5 hour gap on 2nd place by South Fork, CO. Holding onto 2nd place since the 2nd time station in CA, Joe Petersen's Kern Wheelmen were finally passed by the Swiss Team IWC Schaffhausen before Cortez, CO 781 miles into the race. By Pagosa Springs, IWC opened up a 24 minute gap on Kern, but over Wolf Creek Pass Kern reeled IWC back in and the teams were tied for 2nd place in South Fork, CO. Then Kern opened up a half hour gap by Trinidad, CO. BC-V rode 544 miles to Trinidad in their second 24 hours, giving them a 1,113 mile two day total.

In the 4 person recumbent division, ALS Bacchetta continued to open the gap to 4 hours on JDRF VeloKraft by LaVeta, CO. In the 2 person race, Lower Austria – City of Krems continued to build their lead on Crazy Gones to 3.5 hours by Alamosa, CO. In the mixed 2 person, Grupo Gaupo had a 3 hour lead over Endorphins, and was 4.5 hours ahead of Free Riders in Cortez, CO. In the 8 person corporate challenge, Insight was leading Eric Heiden's Donate Life team by over 2.5 hours.

Day 5

Day 5 of the 2005 Race Across America was jolted by the second fatality in the race's 24 year history. On Thursday at around Noon, 53 year old solo rider Dr. Bob Breedlove was killed when his bike collided with a pick-up truck West of time station #20 (Trinidad, CO) near the tiny town of Weston. Over 1,000 miles into the race, Bob had just climbed up 9,941-foot high Cuchara Pass. He was in 12th place and leading the 50+ division at the time of the accident, and trying to break his own 50+ transcontinental record average speed 12.26 mph set in 2002. The other death was two years ago when 30 year old Brett Malin hung a U turn at night in front of an 18 wheel truck he didn't see on the crest of a hill near Pie Town, NM. His 4 person Team Vail was leading the Team race when the accident happened. The race went on that year like it is this year. Both Bob and Brett died doing what they loved.

I had a great pre-race interview with the greatest RAAM rider to never win the solo men's race, although he has won the tandem division twice. Bob placed 7th in his rookie RAAM in 1988. In

1989, he set the still standing double

transcontinental record of 22 days, 13 hours, 36 minutes by first riding from his home in Des Moines, IA to Irvine, CA as a warm-up for a 3rd place finish in RAAM that year, followed by a cool-down ride back home afterwards. In 1990, he won Tandem RAAM with partner Roger Charleville – their time was 46 minutes faster than solo winner Bob Fourney. In 1992, he won Tandem RAAM with partner Lon Haldeman – their time would have placed them 4th among solo finishers. In 1994, he placed 2nd in RAAM ahead of me.

Bob has been with his wife Gretchen since they were 6 years old. His fraternal twin brother Bill has been on all of his transcontinental crossings. Being in a group practice with 19 doctors made it easier for him to slip away for long rides. He used to ride 15-20,000 miles per year, but this year rode 8-10,000 miles, which were more quality. He has ridden 4 Paris Brest Paris' on tandems, and considers his 1999 Elite PAC Tour with his 14 year old son on a tandem to be his most cherished athletic feat.

In Bob's RAAM bio, he said his ultimate goal was to keep riding a bike until he's 80 and he was most intimidated by illness, injury or death. The thing he would most like to express to the world is love. With love this world would be paradise. Bob was full of love and extremely humble and helpful to all those who knew and loved him.

As we were interviewing Mike Trevino late last night, he revealed to us that Breedlove was responsible for him to turn from marathon running to ultracycling. Growing up in Iowa, Trevino heard all about Bob's transcontinental crossings, and sparked Mike's interest in our sport. Bob can never be replaced, however his spirit can live on through those people he touched so dearly. I was very lucky to have been able to ride some of my million miles with Bob in my rookie 1994 RAAM. My long term mileage goal becomes more important than ever because of people like Bob.

Leader Robic rode 324 miles his 5th day giving him a 5 day split of 1,789 miles. This is 72 miles less than he did last year, and 142 miles less than Pete Penseyres rode the first five days of his 15.4 mph record. When we asked the Robic crew about Jure and the 15.4 mph speed record, they told us that Jure doesn't care at all about breaking it. Our camera guy briefly jumped into Robic's support crew, and found out the \$40,000 it costs him to do RAAM is a huge factor to overcome. One of Robic's support vehicles ran out of gas near time station #17 in Mount Vernon, KS (the halfway point of the race). Although Robic's pace has slowed to less than 15 mph, he now has a very comfortable 9 hour lead

on Trevino. Rookie MacDonald was closing in on Trevino, so the interesting race might be for 2nd place.

I ate a free lunch and dinner at McDonalds restaurant in Pratt, KS along the route. The owner Steve Strecker offered to feed any RAAM rider, crewmember,

official, or media person for free. He wants his restaurant to become a time station next year.

The minimum speed of 10.52 mph has started taking its toll on the riders. At or after time station 17 in South Fork, CO, Kevin Walsh dropped out when his average speed was 9.23 mph. Kish is in big trouble, as he hasn't moved from time station 19 in La Veta, CO for a full day. Karl Traumueller was able to increase his speed after it reached a low of 10.13 mph. Riders have to reach the halfway point (time station #27 in Mount Vernon, KS) by Saturday, 15:00 race time.

Team RAAM

Just as Robic is dominating the solo race, Beaver Creek – Vail is controlling the 4 person team race keeping 2nd place Kern Wheelmen 4 hours back. BC-V rode 544 miles on their 2nd day giving them a 48 hour total of 1,105 miles.

Riding at over twice their speed, The lead team (BC-V) only needed 40 hours to catch the last placed solo rider Kevin Walsh on Thursday morning 900 miles into the Team Race between time stations 16 & 17. Because of heat, headwinds, and more feet of climbing this year, only 2 divisions are on pace to set new records: BC-V and the corporate 8 person team leader Insight.

Day 6

Leader Robic rode 309 miles his 6th day giving him a 6 day split of 2,098 miles. This is 114 miles less than he did last year, and 182 miles less than Pete Penseyres rode the first six days of his 15.4 mph record. Robic slept two hours on Friday night before crossing the mighty Mississippi River just North of St. Louis. Traditionally this is where the race begins. With two thirds of America behind him, and a 13 hour gap on 2nd place Trevino at time station #36 in Greenville IL, the Slovenian has a good chance to win again. There is a general rule in RAAM that you can only expect to make up 10% of the remaining distance. Since a 13 hour gap towards the end of the race represents about 185 miles, it is seeming more and more likely that Trevino will have to accept 2nd place, and start worrying about the guys behind him.

The only person other than Robic to win a time station (the 13th one in Utah because he waited longer to sleep than Robic), Slovenian Marko Baloh dropped out (while in 5th place) at or after time station #29 in Yates Center, Kansas. Baloh's crew chief Allen Larsen told me that Marko went to

the hospital in Iola, KS as a preventative measure, and he learned he had pneumonia. This was Baloh's 2nd RAAM DNF – chest pains and severe saddle sores forced Marko to drop out of the 2003 RAAM at 2,449 miles. This year, he was either 1st or 2nd place for the first 15 time stations over 825 miles.

After riding 1,458 miles to time station #26 in Pratt, KS, 13th place Alessandro Colo DNFed because he ran out of money. This is indoor Spinning guru Colo's second consecutive DNF – at least he made it farther this year than last year when saddle sores ended his race at 1,191 miles.

RAAM history was made when Rob Kish announced he was dropping out of RAAM for the first time ever on Friday. Rob arrived at time station #19 in 19th place some 1,047 miles into the race. He would go no farther: he had been in the hospital twice for pneumonia, and when he heard of Bob Breedlove's death decided it wasn't worth risking his own life to continue. Kish's name is synonymous with RAAM. His record 19 RAAM finishes (including three wins and six 2nd places) will most likely never be equaled. In his 1992 RAAM victory, he set the time record of 8 days, 3 hours, 11 minutes. He has the most RAAM miles ridden - 57,377. Rob proved that if you ride enough RAAMs, sooner or later the event will chew and spit you out with no mercy. Death was the only thing that could prevent Bob Breedlove from finishing RAAM. Good thing I stopped after finishing 8 eh? You can only push your luck so far when going up against such a formidable opponent as RAAM. The sequence of rare events that have happened in RAAM this year means there is no longer a 50+ division field.

By time station #33 well after the halfway point, Fabio Biasiolo moved up to 3rd place, and has maintained this position through 6 time stations. Rookie Chris MacDonald's long sleep breaks have moved him from 3rd to 4th place. I am proud of Chris for having enough confidence to sleep so long. By riding only one mph faster all day than your competitors, you get to sleep 90 more minutes per day than them. Chris reminds me a lot of myself when I slept a lot in my 1994 rookie RAAM. I hope somebody is keeping track of his total sleep time, which will probably be three times as much as Robic's or Trevino's. Although most people think of RAAM as some crazy sleep deprivation contest, it need not have to be this way. Because of sleeping so much, Chris is by far the freshest rider we have interviewed so far, though we haven't seen Ben Couturier (who is also sleeping a lot) for several days. Chris seems to be enjoying the race far more than those people who try to get by on such minimal sleep. Perhaps Chris and Ben can send a clear message to future RAAM riders than when it comes to sleep, MORE IS BETTER! When a rider sleeps more, their crew gets more sleep making them function better. That extra hour or two of sleep every night can make a huge difference in resting your neck to prevent the dreaded 'Shermerneck'.

MacDonald's elaborate 18 person crew is like a full house poker hand – three minivans and two motor homes. Crewmember Thomas told me about an angry redneck coming out with a gun to get Chris and crew off his property. Chris jokingly told the guy to go ahead and shoot him to put Chris out of his misery. Mac saw nearly the entire RAAM route by riding the western part, and driving the rest with his father. The rookie has been amazed at the emotional bonding he has had with his crew bringing him to tears more than once. David Haase is also having a great race, having moved up to 5th place by time station #33 in Jefferson City, MO. There are now three Americans in the top 5.

18 year old Alaskan Ben Couturier has moved up to 8th place in his quest to become the youngest solo finisher. A record held by Furnace Creek 508 director Chris Kostman who finished the 1987 RAAM in 9th place at age 20. Attempting to become the first solo woman finisher since Cassie Lowe in 2001, Cat Berge was in 9th place at time station #32 in Camdenton, MO.

The back of the packers were concerned about keeping their average speed above the 10.52 mph needed to officially finish. They had to reach the halfway point (time station #27 in Mt. Vernon, KS) by 11:00 am on Saturday. I mistakenly wrote it was 15:00 in my last posting. Pat Autissier made it by 9:35, but triathlete Tom Rodgers arrived 38 minutes late. Since race director Jim Pitre allowed riders to stop and grieve Bob Breedlove's death (the time would be subtracted from their finishing time), Tom was permitted to go on. 18 out of 26 riders continue pedaling towards Atlantic City.

Team RAAM

Beaver Creek – Vail continues to lead all teams now, having a 5 hour buffer on Kern Wheelmen. Similar to the solo race, a fierce battle for 2nd place is shaping up, as IWC Schaffhausen is only 42 minutes behind Kern at time station #39 in Putnamville, IN. BC-V rode 527 miles on their 4th day giving them a 4 day total of 2,210 miles. BC-V finally caught and passed lead solo rider Robic just after the IL/IN state line after chasing him over 2,200 miles across the country for 4 days. BC-V has finally fallen below the 4 person speed record of 23.06 mph set by Action Sports last year.

In the 4 person HPV (recumbent) division, ALS is 4th overall among the teams, and leading their competition JDRF by 8.5 hours. In the 4 person mixed division, Cheniere's is leading Landis Team Phoenix by just 49 minutes. In the 4 person women's, Roaring Fork Velo B2B Divas are faster than they were in Greenville, IL last year, but are behind the record.

In the 2 person division, Lower Austria – City of Krems is beating Crazy Gones by over 7 hours. Citta Della dropped out at time station #19 in La Veta, CO from medical problems. 60+ is in 3rd place and ahead of Wisconsin.

In the 2 person mixed division, Grupo Guapo is beating Endorphins by over 2 hours. Free Riders

dropped out at time station #23 in Ulysses, KS because of logistical problems.

In the 8 person corporate challenge division, Insight is 5th overall, and leading their competition Donate Life by almost 4 hours. Although their average speed is 20.05 (above the record of 19.84) at time station #39 in Putnamville, IN, it may

not be high enough to survive decay from the upcoming Appalachian Mountains. The record holders (R2R-Kaiser Permanente in 2004) had an average speed of 20.20 mph last year at the same time station.

Day 7

The gap between leader Jure Robic, and the other top riders has gotten so big (over 12 hours) that the film crew and I can no longer drive to the front of the pack to shoot Robic, and then go back to shoot the other top riders in one day. This is partly because we get slowed down visiting the manned time station volunteers. Very early on Sunday morning before daybreak, we shot Mike Trevino and Fabio Biasiolo on US Rt. 40 in Western Indiana. As we went back to our motel room to get some much needed sleep, 2nd place rider Mike Trevino crashed and separated his shoulder. His tired crew (only 5 people with a minivan and a full sized van getting not much more sleep than his 15 minute cat naps) took him to a motel near the Indianapolis Airport. They then drove him back out onto the route where he crashed, but he would have had to have ridden the last 800 miles using only one arm which he felt was too unsafe to continue, so he dropped out. He probably would have finished 2nd to Robic again like he did last year if not for his accident. My film crew guys got a terrific interview with Mike from his motel before he flew back home to San Diego. He said his saddle sores were much worse this year because it was so much hotter. I got to thinking that he could sleep a full two days in Indianapolis, and still have a full three days to ride the last 800 miles into Atlantic City as an official finisher. Mike will be watching closely to see how David Haase does.

With Trevino's departure, everybody except Robic moved up a place. Fabio found himself in 2nd place, which would be his best RAAM finish ever if his previous kidney problems don't resurface. Rookie Chris MacDonald and his huge crew are in 3rd. We pulled into a time station thinking there were many riders around only to learn that all 4 vehicles belonged to Chris. 18 year old Ben Couturier is in 7th place, and Cat Berge in 8th. When Ben finishes he will send out a strong message to today's youth who would rather do things virtually on the Internet.

Falling behind the 10.52 mph minimum speed to officially finish RAAM, Patrick Autissier arrived at time station #29 (1,417 miles) in last place with a speed of 10.32 mph. Soon afterwards, the scientist with so many electrodes attached to his chest (to record all sorts of data posted on his website) dropped out from exhaustion. He was no longer willing to have his body be a guinea pig in the world's toughest experiment.

Robic rode 301 miles his 7th day giving him a one-week split of 2,399 miles. This is 91 miles less than he did last year, and 226 miles less than Pete Penseyres rode the first seven days of his 15.4 mph record. 15 out of 26 solo riders continue pedaling towards Atlantic City.

Team RAAM

Beaver Creek – Vail will most likely win team RAAM this year. In the battle for 2nd place, in the Appalachian Mountains, IWC Schaffhausen have caught and passed Joe Petersen's Kern Wheelmen boys between Grafton and Gorman, WV. BC-V rode 485 miles on their 5th day giving them a 5 day total of 2,695 miles.

In the 4 person HPV (recumbent) division, ALS is still 4th overall among the teams, and leading their competition JDRF by 12 hours. In the 4 person mixed division, Cheniere's is leading Landis Team Phoenix by over 90 minutes.

In the 2 person division, Lower Austria – City of Krems is still beating Crazy Gones by over 7 hours. 60+ is still in 3rd place and ahead of Wisconsin.

In the 2 person mixed division, Endorphins have brought a once over two hour gap down to 49 minutes in their attempt to catch Grupo Guapo.

In the 8 person corporate challenge division, Insight is still 5th overall, and leading their competition Donate Life by 7.5 hours. Their average speed has dropped to 19.98 mph, and they will have to work very hard to break the speed record.

Day 8

Entering the beautiful, humid, green Appalachian Mountains, leader Robic's average speed has dropped below 14 mph, but he continues to pull away from the field as he has done the past week turning the 2005 RAAM into his own parade, and making another huge margin of victory race which has been the case since my 1999 win. Looking at the depth of the field this year, I thought it would have been a closer race, but Robic went out hard, and anybody who tried to match his pace paid the price. He rode 275 miles his 8th day giving him an eight day split of 2,674 miles. This is 152 miles less than he did last year, and 280 miles less than Pete Penseyres rode the first eight days of his 15.4 mph record. Each time a champion rider tries and fails to beat Pete's record; they get a

deeper respect for it. Does RAAM need Lance Armstrong to get the job done?

At time station #47 in Smithburg, WV (with just 445 miles left to go), rookie sensation Chris MacDonald caught Fabio Biasiolo in the battle for 2nd place. Chris would like 2005 to be the third consecutive year in which a rookie grabs 2nd. Will Fabio's years of RAAM experience and having his wife and baby on his crew pay off or will Mac's huge crew and his more hours slept be the deciding factor? Eight hours behind them in 4th place is David Haase who hopes he can make it past the point in West Virginia where he dropped out last year 2,508 miles in. He was the 11th and final rider to DNF, and there are 11 DNFs so far this year. Three hours behind Haase is Achermann in 5th place, and six hours

behind Achermann is Zeller in 6th place. Austrian Zeller is experiencing a crew meltdown. His crew chief told me that Zeller wants his girlfriend Manu in the follow/support vehicle at all times. As a result, she is exhausted and causing huge safety issues. The crew chief ordered her to sleep, but she would not. Achermann is hoping to finish after saddle sores ended his 2004 RAAM 1,120 miles in.

3.5 hours behind Zeller in 7th place is 18 year old Ben Couturier from Alaska. In Eastern Indiana, I jumped into his follow vehicle and his RV. What Ben is doing is nothing short of amazing! He never complains and has never wanted to drop out. I learned why he has the mental toughness of somebody a decade or two older. Ben's training partner Jeremiah Bell told me that showing up at the start of the Iditarod race in Alaska in the dead of winter with snow so deep that you have to push your bike for 75 miles – that sort of true hardship makes RAAM seem relatively easy to Ben. His REI boss and coach John Glidden doesn't believe in all liquid nutrition that nearly all other RAAM riders swear by. Having a cast iron stomach, Ben has been eating anything and everything all the way across the country. 10 time Kish Krew member Peter Moffett who likes to crunch RAAM numbers and stats is extremely knowledgeable. He is on the Couturier Crew.

Primarily a mountain bike rider, Ben bunny hopped railroad tracks and road kill for the first 2,000 miles. He did his first road race on a road bike he pulled out of a dumpster. His REI co-workers have nicknamed him Popeye because of his huge forearms from weightlifting. Weightlifting, hockey, and long sleep breaks have prevented Ben from getting Shermerneck. He is on a random sleep schedule. Within 30 seconds of cresting Wolf Creek Pass, his heart rate was down to 83. He had to wait the full 30 minutes for construction at the tunnel on the Wolf Creek Pass descent. He almost always talks with (ride side by side other RAAM riders for 15 minutes every 24 hours) other riders he catches or catch him. He has no rooftop speakers to blare music at him like most RAAM riders have. He talks to his girlfriend Shauna once a day. He has a "dog dish" bowl attached to his handlebars to eat out of. His sponsor Kona must be very proud of him. He is riding a Titan Flex bike. He hit 60 mph on a descent near Mexican Hat, UT.

Glidden said Ben did no 24 hour rides before RAAM this year. He only did two "12 hour" rides, but they were two 6 hour rides separated by a 2 hour break. He slept in a hypobaric tent on half the days in May. It can simulate up to 12,000 feet altitude, but Ben mostly used 5-7,000 feet altitude. Ben's parents are both on his crew. Ben's mother Brenda told me she is more stressed out when Ben's out in the Alaskan wilderness by himself without communication, than on RAAM now. Ben's father Mike has climbed Mt. McKinley. He thinks the experiences a person has in their lives more so determines how they can handle extreme sports like RAAM rather than what the calendar says their biological age is. Although he is only 18, Ben has suffered and endured more than most extreme athletes twice his age.

Time station #42 in Troy, OH (one of the best) is manned by two time solo RAAM finisher Matt Bond. Matt told me that 23 out the 57 time stations are manned. I was fortunate to observe a huge Couturier Family Reunion there. Ben's 4 grandparents from Toledo were there: Mike's parents Al & Eileen, and Brenda's parents Norm & Carol. Mike's brother Joe and Mike's sister Madonna were also there. Shortly after Ben stopped at the time station in Troy, a heavy thunderstorm opened up, so well all (including Ben) stood under the gas station roof in a party-like atmosphere.

Five hours behind Couturier in 8th place, Cat Berge under veteran crew chief Lee Mitchell is making all women cyclists proud as she is filling the void in the women's race since Cassie Lowe last finished back in 2001. The oldest man left in the race, 48 year old Austrian police detective Karl Traunmueller is in 11th place. He hopes to finish his 2nd RAAM. He finished in 1994, which was my rookie RAAM. His 11 year gap may be the longest in RAAM history.

Mark Metcalfe (similar to Jeff Bubba Stephens finishing the 2001 RAAM unofficially) in 14th place is making all the common man, slightly overweight, JMO Challenge, Randonneur riders very proud. He designed and built the house he and his family have lived in since 1987 in Duncanville, TX. Riders like Mark and Jeff prove that ordinary men can indeed achieve extraordinary results. Who is to say that they finishing RAAM is not as tough or tougher than a fitter person like Robic winning RAAM?

A former couch potato until age 37, Texas triathlete Tom Rodgers is in 15th (last) place. At time station #34 in Marthasville, MO, he arrived 2 days, 18 hours after leader Robic. Although he is well under the 10.52 mph minimum average speed, the multisport endurance coach may want to finish so badly that he continues on unofficially. Not counting any time credit he receives from stopping for the Breedlove accident, he has until 11:30am on Tuesday morning to make it to time station #40 in Indianapolis - three quarters of the way into the race.

I was surprised that nobody dropped out. There are still 15 out of 26 solo riders heading towards Atlantic City.

Team RAAM

On Monday morning, Team Beaver Creek – Vail won team RAAM beating out 25 other teams. Leading from start to finish, BC – V outclassed their 4 person team competition finishing in 5 Days, 18 Hours, 15 Minutes. Their average speed of 22.07 mph is nearly 1 mph slower than the record, and 0.61 mph slower than Team Vail – Go Fast last year, but this year's race was longer, hotter, had more climbing, and worse South winds in Kansas than last year. In the battle for 2nd place, IWC Schaffhausen increased their lead over Joe Petersen's Kern Wheelmen boys all the way to Atlantic City finishing over 5 hours ahead of Kern and 4.5 hours behind BC – V.

In the 4 person HPV (recumbent) division, ALS finished fast doing the last time station to Atlantic City at over 23 mph, moving them up to 3rd place overall among the teams. They beat their competition JDRF by over 12 hours. In the 4 person mixed division, Cheniere's has stretched their lead over Landis Team Phoenix by over 4 hours.

In the 2 person division, Lower Austria – City of Krems is still beating Crazy Gones by over 8 hours. 60+ is still in 3rd place and ahead of Wisconsin.

In the 2 person mixed division, Endorphins have caught and passed Grupo Guapo in Missouri before the Mississippi River. By Indianapolis, Endorphins had opened up a three hour lead over GG.

In the 8 person corporate challenge division, Insight has finished 5th overall among all the teams, and first place in their division beating Donate Life by 4 hours.

Day 9

Without any chance of breaking the 15.4 mph speed record or even tying his 14.66 mph set last year, leader Robic has slowed down. Starting out super fast (he averaged 20.19 mph for the first 228 miles to Blythe, CA), he built up such a huge lead over 2nd place that he felt no pressure from the rear the whole second half of the race. This allowed him to slow down and start sleeping more. His last over 15 mph time station split was clear back in Illinois. Robic rode 265 miles his 9th day giving him a nine day split of 2,939 miles.

The other solo riders are slowing down – none of them will finish in less than 10 days. 18 hours behind Robic, the battle for 2nd place unfolded. In the Appalachian Mountains rookie sensation MacDonald opened up a 28 minute gap over Biasiolo at time station #49 in Gorman, WV.

13 hours behind Biasiolo, 4th place David Haase rode past the point in West Virginia where he dropped out from over hydration last year 2,508 miles in. Getting the most airtime on NBC TV's 2004 RAAM coverage, Haase and crew were delighted to pass that point, and look forward to the finish line in Atlantic City. At time station #48 in Grafton, WV, David stopped and bathed in a two feet deep plastic, inflatable pool in somebody's back yard (the door was knocked on, but nobody answered). A former training buddy of David's, John Lanser came aboard the Haase crew on Friday planning to leave on Saturday, but fell so much in love with David's performance, other crew members, and RAAM that he agreed to stay on until the finish. John's father Wayne has been on the crew since San Diego.

Six hours behind Haase is Achermann in 5th place, and now only one hour behind Achermann is Zeller in 6th place. If Zeller's crew can hold it together to

the finish, they may just get 5th place. Five hours behind Zeller in 7th place is 18 year old phenom Ben Couturier from Alaska. Nine hours behind Couturier in 8th place, is the only woman starter Cat Berge. Two hours behind Berge is rookie Chris Hopkinson attempting to be England's first solo RAAM finisher. Suffering from Shermeneck, he has been wearing an Allen Larsen type neck brace. Mark Metcalfe inherited 13th place after last place rider Tom Rodgers dropped out. Tom arrived at time station #37 in Effingham, IL with an average speed of just 9.78 well below the 10.52 mph minimum. Realizing he had little chance to increase his speed enough over 147 miles to time station #40 in Indianapolis, Tom became the 12th solo rider to drop out.

There are now only 14 out of 26 solo riders remaining in the race.

Team RAAM

In the 4 person division, Joe Petersen and his Kern Wheelmen had to settle for 3rd place this year. He and Kerry Ryan remain the only men to win 4 person three times. With Beaver Creek – Vail's win this year, Jimmy Mortenson becomes a two time 4 person team winner – having won on Team Vail in 2001.

In the 4 person mixed division, Cheniere's beat Landis Team Phoenix by 2.5 hours.

In the 2 person division, Lower Austria – City of Krems was leading Crazy Gones by 8.5 hours at time station #53 in Hanover, PA. 60+ is still in 3rd place and ahead of Wisconsin.

In the 2 person mixed division, Endorphins continue to increase their lead over Grupo Guapo. By time station #44 in Laurelville, OH, Endorphins were over 5 hours ahead of GG.

Day 10

On Tuesday, Slovenian Jure Robic won his 2nd consecutive RAAM. He finished the 3,052 mile race in 9 Days, 8 Hours, 48 Minutes with an average speed of 13.58 mph. This was much slower than last year (14.66 mph), but faster than his rookie year (12.66 mph) in 2003. He told me that the heat and wind this year were much worse than his two previous RAAMs. He becomes the 4th man (Lon Haldeman in 82/83, Bob Fournay in 90/91, and Rob Kish in 94/95) to win back-to-back RAAMs, and the 8th man to win two or more RAAMs. Other two-time winners include Pete Penseyres, Gerry Tatrai, and myself, and Wolfgang Fasching with three wins.

Still 18 hours behind Robic, 2nd place was decided. Rookie MacDonald increased his lead over Fabio Biasiolo to 5.5 hours by time station #56 in McKee City, NJ. We (Perry Stone, Billy DelRiego, and myself) came upon MacDonald and huge crew (18 people) on the narrow, windy, hilly roads of Pennsylvania. His 5 vehicles (two RVs and three minivans) were caravanning, and made it extremely difficult to drive past. I think there should be a new RAAM rule that limits the size (say 12) of the crew, and the number (say 3) of vehicles. MacDonald's crew could smell the finish line in Atlantic City, and made a huge sign, which read "Only 400 Km. To Go Chris". Another crewmember looked like a cheerleader complete with pom poms.

4th place David Haase was 9 hours behind Biasiolo at time station #53 in Hanover, PA. Eight hours behind Haase was Achermann in 5th place. Making a late race charge for 5th place, Zeller closed to within 40 minutes of Achermann at time station #51 in Hancock, MD. Eight hours behind Zeller in 7th place is 18 year old Ben Couturier. Five hours behind Couturier in 8th place, is the only woman starter Cat Berge. Mark Metcalfe was still in last place, but his average speed of 10.6 mph at time station #46 in Parkersburg, WV is still 0.08 above the official finisher minimum of 10.52. It will be no easy feat for 210 pound tired Mark to stay above this over the steep climbs through WV and MD.

The oldest (48) rider left in the race, Austria's Karl Traunmueller arrived in 12th place at time station #45 in Athens, OH with an average speed of 10.91 mph. I was surprised to see him drop out from exhaustion since there were still two people behind including Metcalfe over 12 hours back. The police detective's average speed had dropped to 10.13 mph at the 1,000 mile mark, but he recovered it nicely to over 11 mph by halfway.

Only half of the 26 solo riders remain in the race.

Team RAAM

In the 4 person division, Joe Petersen became the only man to finish 7 times.

In the 2 person division, Lower Austria – City of Krems beat Crazy Gones by 10.5 hours. 60+ is still in 3rd place and ahead of Wisconsin.

In the 2 person mixed division, Endorphins continue to lead Grupo Guapo. By time station #50 in LaVale, MD, Endorphins were still over 5 hours ahead of GG. Solo rider Tom Rodgers is good friends with Endorphins Shanna Armstrong and Guy Wells. They are triathletes in Texas.

The top 13 teams arrived in Atlantic City before solo winner Jure Robic. The lead team got to the finish 31 hours before Robic.

Day 11

Robic would be the only rider to go under 10 days on a very slow year. 18 hours (4th biggest time gap in RAAM history) would pass before American Chris MacDonald arrived in 2nd place as rookie-of-the-year. Using the biggest (18 people with 5 vehicles) crew in the history of the solo race, Chris brought his own unique style to RAAM. He rode in the top 4 the whole way across the country, and slept as much or more than my 3 hours per night I got in my riding days. Near the end of the race in West Virginia, he passed Fabio Biasiolo and ruined any hopes I had for a close race for 2nd place.

Five hours after MacDonald, Fabio arrived in third place with his wife and baby on his crew. This was Fabio's second 3rd place finish, and his first finish after three consecutive DNF's. Two 5th place finishes, and two more DNF's rounds out his distinguished 9 year RAAM career. Fabio arrived in Atlantic City just before the awards banquet, which was indoors this year. A tribute to the late Dr. Bob Breedlove included a slide show, Lon Haldeman telling Breedlove stories, and Jim Pitre reading something Bob's daughter wrote. Bob's favorite saying IADIP stands for "It's Another Day In Paradise" pretty much summed up how Bob lived his full life. Miss America 2005 Deidre Downs handed out team and solo awards. The winning 4 person Team Beaver Creek – Vail was not at the banquet to receive their award/prize. Because this years race was so tough (extra distance, heat, wind, and much climbing made solo finishing times nearly a day slower) only three solo riders finished in time for the banquet.

John Hughes sent me the following e-mail concerning Bob's funeral which he attended:

Bob's funeral was held Wednesday in Iowa. About 1,200 people came to the visitation on Tuesday and/or funeral. At the visitation they had many displays of Bob's RAAMs, PBPs, and other rides: jerseys, t-shirts, photos, etc. There was even a recent photo of me climbing Wolf Creek Pass with Bob. At the funeral, two of his doctor colleagues gave tributes, all four of his kids talked, and three of his cycling friends talked:

Bill Magie, his crew chief on every one of his races since 1988. LaJean Breedlove, who was taking care of the RV Forrest Ridgeway, who owns the bike shop where Bob shopped. One of the Forrest kids got married Friday, June 17th and Bob wanted to go to the wedding – so he did, and then flew to the RAAM start on Saturday?

Several riders who dropped out were at the banquet: Marko Baloh, Alessandro Colo, and Tom Rodgers. Baloh's crew chief Allen Larsen was there, and he told me that once Marko quit, they gave David Haase their leftover Perpetuem (Hammer Nutrition). Baloh and crew also gave Fabio some butt cream near Indianapolis. Rodgers won a pair of Velocity Wheels in a raffle drawing. Tom told me all about his RAAM. He had serious trouble with sleep deprivation. He was spending 6 hours off the bike (sleeping 5) every 24 hours. He climbed to the summit of Wolf Creek Pass at night into a 30 mph headwind in 40 degrees F. Since his RV was ahead of him at the time station in South Fork, frozen Tom drove in his support vehicle down the mountain to a motel. He had three 30 minute waits at the tunnel construction area (twice in a car each direction, and once on his bike). This whole ordeal took about 7 hours.

Five solo RAAM winners (Haldeman, Boyer, myself, Larsen, and Robic) were at the awards banquet. I got my photo taken with the only rookie to ever win RAAM Jonathon (Jock) Boyer and his 8 person corporate Team Donate Life star rider Eric Heiden. The RAAM poster painting (on the cover of route books) was auctioned off for \$4,500. Fabio Biasiolo won the Ian Sandbach inspiration award. The 8 person corporate Team Vern's Inc. was self crewed with the help of one extra person. They used a 3 person rider rotation doing 123, 456, 781, 234, 567, 812, etc...

After dinner, a huge crowd assembled on the boardwalk to welcome 4th place finisher David Haase coming in 5 hours after Fabio. The last rider to drop out last year, Haase made it 2,508 miles to West Virginia where over hydration took him out. NBC TV showed his struggle because pain and suffering show up on David's face so well. We came upon David with about 150 miles to go this year, and his face looked the same (as he was riding through a very difficult period), but things would be different this time around. He proudly finished at night in 10.5 days. His girlfriend Shannon who went the entire way across this year shed tears of joy as the national anthem was sung to a cheering crowd and Dave on stage.

I think that Haase getting dehydrated in the desert on the first day causing him to fall back to 25th place was actually a blessing in disguise. Dave told me at the start of the race he was afraid his desire to win might get in the way of him finishing. Once he fell so far back, he realized he couldn't win, and reset his goal to finish, and have fun catching as many riders as possible to Atlantic City. On stage at the finish, he said he was good for the first 7 days, and then he just loses it. He became possessed at night when he got into a rhythm and made his best time. Once Trevino crashed out, he e-mailed Dave and asked him to get that 2nd place back for Trevino. Dave sponsored time station #37 in Effingham, IL for Marko Baloh. Dave lost 10 pounds on his trip. Breedlove's accident reminded David about his buddy that he lost to a drunk driver.

Three time RAAM champion Wolfgang Fasching convinced his fellow Austrian friend 27 year old Valentin Zeller to enter RAAM this year. A professional cyclist since he graduated from high school in 1995, Zeller won the difficult Race Across the Alps in 2004. Riding in 5th – 7th place the entire way across the country, the heat crushed him, and he experienced crew problems, yet still managed to be the 2nd rookie finisher. In 7th place and 9 hours behind Switzerland's Pius Achermann through Missouri and Illinois, he inherited 6th place when Mike Trevino crashed out. Zeller kept chipping away at Achermann's lead the last 1,000 miles finally passing him in PA with 200 miles to go. Zeller finished in 5th place 7.5 hours behind Haase and four hours ahead of Achermann. After I told him how bad the Appalachian Mountains would be, Zeller was disappointed wanting them to be steeper and longer.

Team RAAM

The oldest riders were on two person Team 60+. Both 60, Dan Crain of Irvine, CA and Fred Boethling of Boulder, CO finished 3rd out of eight two person teams. Dan said he's stronger now than he's ever been. Fred said that sleep management is the most important aspect of RAAM. They decided to use motels (instead of the more common RV), but discovered they were too far spaced out. Fred said that only 50% of the stuff pre-planned works out, so the crew has to solve the other 50% problems. Solo RAAM was his original objective, and he has a new appreciation for the difficulty of the solo race after seeing how much pain the solo riders he passed were in. The youngest solo finisher was 18 year old Ben Couturier of Alaska meaning that the age range of this years finishers was an amazing 42 years.

Look for the two person mixed team in my next report.

Day 12

Four hours after Zeller, Switzerland's Pius Achermann arrived in Atlantic City in 6th place. Riding in 5th-7th place across the country, Pius learned from his mistakes last year when saddle sores ended his race after 1,120 miles in Texas. Speaking very little English, German official Karl Schlederer interpreted for Pius on the finish stage. Pius intentionally went out slower this year, and thought that the front four started out way too fast. In his last night battle against Zeller, Pius was very sleepy and chose to sleep for safety reasons. He said his three children are already winning races. Now that RAAM is over, his family will be his #1 priority. When I asked him why the Europeans seem to do so well against the Americans in RAAM, he said that high tech doesn't make you win RAAM. He said that Swiss rider Daniel Wyss is very strong, and plans to ride RAAM next year as a top contender.

Just under three hours after Achermann, 18 year old Alaskan Ben Couturier arrived in 7th place making RAAM history as the youngest solo finisher ever! Alaska now has the oldest (Peter Lekisch at age 60 in 2001) and youngest finishers. Ben broke Chris Kostman's youngest finisher record, which had stood for 18 years. Race director Jim Pitre had Kostman on his cell phone to congratulate and pass the youth torch to Ben on the finishing stage. In 1987, Kostman placed 10th in a starting field of 33, finished 36 hours behind winner Secrest, and had an average speed of 11.84 mph. This year, Ben placed 7th in a starting field of 26, finished 42 hours behind winner Robic, and averaged 11.42 mph. With his parents on his crew, Ben rode a 'casual' RAAM (to learn what it's all about) getting lots of sleep and stopping a lot so that his on the bike speed was very high. Peter Moffett estimated his total off the bike time to be well over 3 days. Maybe this explains why he looked so fresh at the end, why he never complained to his crew, and why he not once mentioned anything about dropping out.

Ben opened his bottle of champagne on stage, but didn't drink any. He thought RAAM would be worse. Using a solid food diet, he ate every and anything including peanut butter & jelly sandwiches, Snickers candy bars, pizza, and McDonalds - at the Pratt, KS McDonalds where owner Steve Strecker offered unlimited free food to RAAM people, Ben sat down to a tasty meal of: 3 double cheeseburgers, French fries, and a milkshake. Although he enjoyed night riding, he didn't do very well at it. His crew had a heck of a time waking him up after sleep breaks. It usually took 30 minutes from the time he started waking up until he was on his bike riding. His lowest moments of the trip were waking up after sleep breaks.

Being from Alaska, the desert heat on day one really scorched him. He spoke of how the desert heat burnt his lips, tongue, and mouth. He had 6 flat tires. His 47 year old father Mike knows Ben's limits well from doing ultra events together. His mother Brenda only got into the follow vehicle once. His 27 year old sister Emily Boyle was at the finish line. Ben will turn 19 on November 29th. He bench pressed 250 pounds at 135 pounds of bodyweight. At the beginning of the race, his sweat was white, but by the end it was clear and tasteless.

He always made it a point to chat with riders he caught and who caught him. Riders are allowed to talk to other riders in the race for 15 minutes (riding side by side) every 24 hours. Very modest and non-cocky for an 18 year old kid, Ben thought it would be very rude to blow past people he caught without saying hello. Riding the Fireweed 400 mile race in Alaska twice, RAAM was only his 3rd ultracycling event, and 5th road race. Before I knew anything about Ben and his family, I would have doubted his ability to finish RAAM solely on his age, but know that I know him and his family, I am not surprised that he finished. He has much character depth, and ultra-event experience with his father in life threatening Alaskan winter weather. Even though the calendar says he is only 18, he has been through more pain and suffering than most people twice his age. I think it is safe to say that this years RAAM has made a man out of a boy. While this years very difficult (heat lasting for days, vicious sidewinds in Kansas, and never ending climbs) RAAM turned 14 grown men into crying boys who DNFed, it turned one very tough and determined boy into a man. Ben, my hat is off to you.

Using the old 48 hour cut-off rule (existing from 1999 and before) only the top 7 riders would have been official finishers.

Arriving 8 hours after Ben Couturier in 8th place overall, Sweden's (now living in California) Cat Berge became the first solo female finisher since Cassie Lowe in 2001. Veteran crew guru Lee 'Fuzzy' Mitchell headed Cat's crew with CATitude, and allowed Cat to ride totally relaxed. When asked about the heat, rookie Cat responded, "It wasn't hot to me." She sang the Swedish national anthem as it was played on stage. At no point in the race did she ever ask herself, "What am I doing out here?" She said that 75% of her expenses were covered. Her crew made big signs for the passing of the 1,000 & 2,000 mile marks. Her left hand/wrist became so swollen that she couldn't shift into her 55 tooth big chainring.

Missing her two pet cats a lot, animal lover Cat tried to pick up a roadside turtle in Arizona as a souvenir. Being a day person by nature, she hated riding at night, so she slept a lot - at least 3 hours per night. By 11pm, her speed would slow to a 5 mph crawl. To get through the long nights, she would ride hard for 50 minutes, then take a 10 minute nap. She came upon England's Chris Hopkinson often, and formed a strong bond with him. When he developed Shermerneck, her crew gave him a neck brace, which he used all the way to the end. Her crew played her a wide variety of music ranging from classical to gospel to ABBA.

Having enough time to shower and get some sleep, Ben Couturier came onto the stage to congratulate Cat and swap stories about their amazing voyage. Cat would like to see more two person women's teams since she thinks 1,500 miles wouldn't be nearly as intimidating as 3,000

miles to most women. Only one two person women's team has ever finished RAAM: The 50+ Twin Team of Dr. Barbara Warren & Angelika Castaneda in 2001.

Crew chief Mitchell waited until Atlantic City to tell Cat about Bob Breedlove's tragic death because he didn't want her to lose focus on making it to the finish line. This proves how riders are totally protected in their own bubble sheltered from the outside world by their crew. Mitchell and Breedlove had a long history together. Lee met Roger Charleville (Breedlove's winning 1990 RAAM tandem partner) in 1985 on RAPID Tour - a predecessor to PAC Tour, which averaged 204 miles per day. Lee met Breedlove while crewing on the 1988 PAC Tour. Lee also crewed on the 1989 PAC Tour with Breedlove. Watching Cat finish must have been extra special for Lee this year since the last person he crewed for (Rebecca Smith) dropped out of the 2003 RAAM at the Mississippi River. Wyatt Wood (he introduced RAAM to then girlfriend Seana Hogan) was Lee's other DNF. Probably the most knowledgeable crew person out there (because he has crewed for so many different riders), Lee has never been on a Kish Krew or Chew Crew though.

Finishing the Race Across America has been Austrian Alexander Gepp's dream since he was 14. His dream finally came true very early on a foggy Friday morning as he rode down the boardwalk to finish in 8th place (9th overall) 4.5 hours behind Berge. Starting out conservatively in the back of the field, Gepp rode a steady pace and moved up as other riders started to drop out. He said the toughest thing about the race is to stay focused the whole 3,000 miles. He slept about 2 hours per night. He doesn't like riding at night. He did an 80% liquid diet. He said he enjoyed talking to other riders as he passed or got passed by them. He said he was a slow descender for safety reasons. He told me that his fellow Austrian Karl Traunmueller's crew couldn't support Karl the first two time stations. As Gepp came upon the Breedlove accident scene, his crew hid Breedlove's bike so that Gepp wouldn't know what was up. At the finish line Gepp's crew told me they still hadn't told Gepp about it, but planned to tell him after Gepp got some sleep. A day before crossing the Mississippi River, Gepp started caring about his position in the race.

Finishing less than two hours behind Gepp in 9th place (10th overall) was Michigan's Ben Robinson. Looking extremely tired on stage, Ben met his goal to finish officially. He leap frogged with Gepp all the way across the country. He slept 2-3 hours per night. He did an all liquid diet. Twilight was his favorite time to ride. He talked with as many other riders as he could. When he talked to Chris Hopkinson, Chris ran through a long laundry list of all his problems. He hit every major traffic area at the right time of day. Ben made a deal with crew member Sarah Davis to crew for her on next years RAAM. I noticed that both Ben's finished with hairy legs. Robinson competed against Couturier in Alaska when Couturier won the Fireweed 400. Robinson's crew chief was also his girlfriend.

Finishing 3.5 hours behind Robinson in 10th place (11th overall) was Seattle's Jim Trout. He still had his mohawk, but the blue side pieces above his ears were gone. He said, "It wasn't as tough as I thought it would be. I have been worse on other rides." He said being at such high altitude was the worst thing for him. He couldn't breathe for the first four days. The heat slowed him way down, causing him to almost miss the cut-off points (quarter, half, three quarters). He felt better when he started hearing reports of other riders out there suffering so much.

His wife was on his crew. He wanted to finish in 10 days. Before Prescott, AZ, he had no energy at all, so he had to be shuttled 5 miles ahead to a motel in the city. He gained 15 pounds in one day, but finished only 3 pounds less than he started at. He told me his best distance at the Michigan 24 Hour race (which he has ridden 14 times) was 419 miles. Usually going down at Midnight, he averaged 2-4 hours of sleep per night. He said it was a very relaxed trip. Getting up after a sleep break felt like the worst hangover (hammer hitting him on the head) he has ever had.

His daughter was in Atlantic City two days before he finished. He said that winning the John Marino Mileage Challenge doesn't guarantee a RAAM finish. He rode through the Bob Breedlove accident scene. He was very concerned about having flashers on the personal support vehicle (PSV) all the time not allowing turn signals on his PSV to be seen. He was very nervous whenever making a turn in front of his PSV because of this, and thinks there has got to be some kind of solution to this dangerous problem. He almost got killed (like Robert Bachtel did at the 2004 Calvin's Challenge) when a car from the rear passed on the left as Jim was making a left turn.

Jim knew he'd finish RAAM at the start in San Diego. Jim said, "The race is about survival for me because I know I am not capable of winning RAAM." He had deja vu throughout the entire trip. He had this strange sensation of floating over the bicycle at high altitudes. On hot days, he did 80% liquid diet. On cold days, 80% solid food diet. He carried out huge bags of free food from the McDonalds in Pratt, KS. He tried Ben Couturier's idea of wearing long sleeved white clothing to reflect the sun, but it didn't work out so well for him.

Finishing less than two hours behind Trout in last place was Chris Hopkinson who became England's first RAAM finisher. Finishing meant far more to Chris than his placing 11th(12th overall). Starting out in 8th place on day one in CA, problems seemed to multiply as Chris rode east, but he would not be denied a finish. He said, "Everything that could go wrong did go wrong. I don't give in." While chasing after Ben Couturier on day 7, Hoppy cracked his Litespeed Blade frame, and had to switch over to another bike, which began to tear up his Achilles tendons, gave him calf problems, and gave him Shermerneck. Luckily, Cat's crew was nearby, and they gave him a neck brace, which he wore to the finish line, but he said he could have finished without it, but he would have been in so much more pain.

On the second week, he lost his crew chief Steve Masters who had to rush back to England to deal with family problems. On day 10, he collapsed from low blood sugar levels, so he switched over to high calorie, sweet, junk foods. In the Hocking Hills section of Ohio, long time official Mike Roark came upon one of the worst thunderstorms he has ever experienced - his windshield wipers on high were operating at about half speed from heavy rain. Hoppy was riding right through it like it was just another British training ride. He said to Roark, "I'm from England, I like cold, wet, rainy weather." Chris arrived in Atlantic City looking a mess. He was wearing an orthopedic brace to support his neck, he had extra foam padding on his seat, and he had installed a second set of handlebars that tilted way up above his regular and aerobars still left on the bike. Because of this, I awarded Chris my Most Tired Award (MTA which goes to the solo finisher I think looks the most tired at the finish line) with a Danny Chew Million Mile Man t-shirt.

Hoppy tries to turn every negative into something positive. At the 2004 Sebring 24 hour race, Hoppy met Terry Lansdell, and they have been very close ever since. During RAAM, Hoppy consulted Lansdell on the phone everyday since Chris knew that every type of problem he could encounter, Terry most likely has dealt with in his 4 RAAMs. Hoppy will see his doctor for a complete medical exam next Wednesday. Putting RAAM on the map in England with his finish, Hoppy plans to convince British time trial specialist Zack to ride the 2007 RAAM on a specially built tandem by Litespeed. With his never give up attitude and courageous finish; Hopkinson embodies the spirit of RAAM.

What ever happened to 220 pound good ole boy Mark Metcalfe of Texas? Starting out in the middle of the pack, he survived the Rocky Mountains, but the steeper, shorter Appalachian Mountains did him in. He wasn't in last place until Tom Rodgers dropped out (he fell way below the minimum speed of 10.52 mph) at time station #38 in Marshall, IL. Mark then held last place for the rest of his race. Mark's speed was above the minimum until he fell right on it at time station #44 in Laurelville, OH. Despite the Hocking Hills in Southeastern Ohio, Mark managed to increase his speed to 10.62 mph by time station #48 in Grafton, WV, but the brutal Appalachian Mountains in WV and MD would have the last laugh.

Between time stations #48-53, his speed would drop at each station to a final low of 10.28 in Hanover, PA. Despite RAAM headquarters staff encouraging him to continue even if it meant an unofficial finish, Metcalfe finally called it quits dropping out with just 155 miles to go. He was the 14th and final person to quit. The person who drops out with the fewest miles remaining is usually the most disappointed/devastated - having gotten so close to the finish, yet still unable to make it. Although family man Mark's dream came up 155 miles short, I am sure that all of the big, average ultracycling riders out there loved living vicariously through his shoes for 11.5 long days, and thanks to Mark's humongous effort, they have a little more hope and optimism that they too will one day get the same chance to finish RAAM that he had this year.

Team RAAM

In the two person mixed division, Team Endorphins (Shanna Armstrong is a 30 year old triathlete, and Guy Wells is a 53 year old doctor and ultracyclist) of Lubbock, TX beat out three other teams. Team Free Riders started out well (they led all the way to Prescott, AZ), but had crew and logistical problems ending their race after 1,300 miles in Kansas. The heat also got Guy the first two days making him feel 'sicker than a dog'. Team Grupo Guapo opened up a four hour lead on Endorphins by Colorado, but Endorphins fought back passing GG in Missouri, and pulling away to a 9 hour lead by the finish line in Atlantic City. In one 100 mile section, they gained 100 minutes on GG. They rode through 4 hours of horrendous rain in Ohio. They both ate a 90% liquid diet. They did 5-6 hour night shifts. While Guy was able to sleep fine in a moving RV, Shanna was so wired that she only slept 8 hours the entire trip. She climbed all 8 miles up Wolf Creek Pass to the Continental Divide (10,857 feet) in Colorado. Endorphins had to wait 44 minutes at a construction site near a tunnel on the Wolf Creek Pass descent. Unlike most riders, Shanna liked Kansas the most because of strong cross/headwinds there. Unable to run in RAAM, triathlete Shanna hopes to be out running in less than a week.

Finishing 9 hours behind Endorphins was Team Grupo Guapo (Iva Hradilova of San Francisco and John Wagoner of Corte Madera, CA - both 40 years old). They did RAAM on a \$5,000 shoe string budget with a 4 person crew and two (no RV) vehicles. Even though John & Iva both work for Marriott Hotels and can get a room for \$35 there, they still preferred to sleep in their minivan. They didn't shower the whole way across the country, and their crew only got one shower in Colorado. After John met Iva at work (Marriott), he got her into cycling, and the RAAM bug soon struck. John plans to ride solo next year. Sleep deprivation this year was far worse than their 4 person Team Grupo Guapo in 2003. Joining John & Iva that year were Robert Brudvik and John's 14 year old son John Jr. known as Johnny. Johnny has a fatal illness called Hurler's syndrome. He has dealt with bone marrow transplants, sleep apnea, hypoglycemia, four bouts of pneumonia and numerous other ailments on his way to becoming possibly the oldest person with Hurler's syndrome. After Johnny led the ceremonial start out of San Diego, GG became a three person team. This year, GG took really short pulls especially on the hills. They couldn't care less about where the other teams were along the route.

The last team to finish was the two man Team Wisconsin (John Palmer, 34, & Matt Mason, 33). The only team that solo winner Robic beat (except for the two teams that DNFed), Wisconsin and crew finished in Atlantic City wearing cheese hats. They have a newfound respect for all the solo riders. Starting with crates and crates of vitamins and meal replacement food, Wisconsin soon

ditched them in favor of McDonalds food, which they praised. Matt's highlight of the trip came on the final night: His right foot came out of the pedal, but he saved a crash with his cleat acting as a brake - sending sparks all across the pavement for an early 4th of July celebration. John's lowlight of the trip also came the final night: In Pennsylvania around Midnight, a man waited in his car for John to ride past. As John drew near, the guy peeled out and came straight at John. Terrified, John almost hit the guardrail narrowly missing the crazed driver. Wisconsin's crew called RAAM headquarters, which notified local police, but the car was not seen again. John told me of another story earlier in the race along Interstate 40 near Flagstaff, AZ. While hallucinating, he collapsed on the paved shoulder of the highway, and accused his crew of throwing his bike down on the ground. Once awake, he jumped back on his bike - refusing to lose the battle between him and the Interstate highway.

At the awards banquet, I discovered that April Guinchard (the only woman on the self-crewed corporate 8 person Team Vern's Inc.) rode the entire 8 miles up Wolf Creek Pass to the Continental Divide in Colorado. Every solo and team finisher had their national anthem played for them on stage in Atlantic City. David Haase was even lucky enough to have Adam Ellis sing it to him, bringing his girlfriend Shannon (on his crew the whole way across this year) to tears.

Post RAAM Breakfast

Since only three solo riders finished in time for the awards banquet on Wednesday evening, a breakfast was held at the Shore Diner on Friday morning after the last finisher Chris Hopkinson arrived. In attendance were Valentin Zeller, Ben Couturier, Cat Berge, Ben Robinson, Jim Trout, Team Grupo Guapo, Team Wisconsin, and their crews. I learned of an incident with Zeller near Hermitage, Missouri at night. A blue Ford pick-up truck with 4 people in it threw gasoline on Zeller. Zeller was afraid they would be back to throw a torch at him. Race official Karl Schlederer notified local police who looked for the vehicle. I also got some stats on RAAM crew legends there. Peter Moffett on Ben Couturier's crew, just finished his 20th crew: 10 with Kish, 4 with Gerry Tatrai, 3 with Bob Fournay, and 3 with Rob Templin. Brenda Kish started her 20th crew this year with Rob, but pneumonia kept them from reaching the finish line for the first time ever. Lee 'Fuzzy' Mitchell on Cat Berge's crew, just finished his 17th crew, and he has finished 4 person team RAAM twice emphasizing team because he knows that team is a far cry from solo RAAM.

2005 post RAAM

On a 'normal' year, 24 year old Austrian Alex Gepp would have been the youngest rider in the solo RAAM, but this year was anything but 'normal'. Who would have ever bet against Rob Kish and Bob Breedlove making it to the finish line? What would the odds have been for an 18 year old finishing? How about 8 of the 12 finishers being rookies?

A record 161 riders in 12 divisions started the 2005 Race Across America in San Diego. In the solo race, 26 starters was the biggest field since my rookie RAAM back in 1994. Slovenian Jure Robic started off where he ended last year - at the front of the pack. Except for a time station in Utah (Marko Baloh arrived first because he waited longer to take his first sleep break) on the second night, Robic led the entire way across the country, getting farther and farther ahead and winning by a huge time margin - the fifth consecutive year that first and second places haven't been close. Robic's main competition never made it to Atlantic City. Slovenian Marko Baloh suffered his second DNF when pneumonia forced him to quit (while in fifth place) in eastern Kansas after holding second place from California to Colorado. Last year's rookie-of-the-year and second place finisher Mike Trevino crashed out (separated shoulder) in Indiana while in second place - a position he held since Colorado. Mike's plan of taking only 15-20 minute naps backfired on him as Robic (sleeping 90 minutes per night) kept pulling away from him. By the time Mike got any real sleep (3 hours in the afternoon or evening just after the Mississippi River), Robic was already 13 hours ahead of him. The next morning in IN, Mike crashed possibly from sleep deprivation. Robic won his second consecutive RAAM in 9 days, 8 hours, 48 minutes with an average speed of 13.58 mph - much slower than his 14.66 mph last year, but faster than his 12.66 mph his rookie year in 2003.

Robic finished over 17 hours (4th largest margin of victory) ahead of second place Chris MacDonald. This is the third consecutive year {Trevino last year and Robic in 2003} that a rookie has finished 2nd. MacDonald with the biggest crew (18 people in 5 vehicles) in the history of the solo race, told me he slept a total of 37 hours. This is about the most sleep any top rider has gotten, and is the same amount I got my rookie year back in 1994. So much sleep left MacDonald rested enough to steal second place from Fabio Biasiolo the final night of their race. Fabio won the Ian Sandbach inspirational award for finishing his first RAAM since 2000 (he also placed 3rd) after which he had three consecutive DNFs caused by kidney failure. The oldest solo finisher, 43 year old Fabio fell as far back as 19th place from desert heat the first day, but with inspiration from his wife and new baby (both on his crew), he worked his way up through the field nicely to 2nd place by the Appalachian Mountains in West Virginia. Only the first three solo riders and the first 19 teams arrived in Atlantic City in time for the awards banquet on Wednesday evening, which featured a tribute to the late Dr. Bob Breedlove and 2005 Miss America Deidre Downs handing out awards. The winning Team Beaver Creek - Vail didn't even stick around for the awards banquet. After dinner, a huge crowd assembled on the boardwalk at night to welcome 4th place finisher David Haase coming in 5 hours after Fabio.

Also having trouble from desert heat the first day was bike shop owner David Haase from Wisconsin. With the high temperature in the desert being about 105 degrees F, Haase was so

severely dehydrated that he had to stop for 2 hours bumping him from 5th to 25th place in El Centro. I think that Haase getting dehydrated in the desert on the first day causing him to fall back to 25th place was actually a blessing in disguise. Dave told me at the start of the race he was afraid his desire to win might get in the way of him finishing. Once he fell so far back, he realized he couldn't win, and reset his goal to finish, and have fun catching as many riders as possible to Atlantic City. On stage at the finish, he said he was good for the first 7 days, and then he just loses it. He became possessed at night when he got into a rhythm and made his best time. Once Trevino crashed out, he e-mailed Dave and asked him to get that 2nd place back for Trevino.

Three time RAAM champion Wolfgang Fasching convinced his fellow Austrian friend 27 year old Valentin Zeller to enter RAAM this year. Riding in 5th – 7th place the entire way across the country, the heat crushed Zeller, and he experienced crew problems, yet still managed to be the 2nd rookie finisher. In 7th place and 9 hours behind Switzerland's Pius Achermann through Missouri and Illinois, he inherited 6th place when Mike Trevino crashed out. Zeller kept chipping away at Achermann's lead the last 1,000 miles finally passing him in PA with 200 miles to go. Zeller finished in 5th place 7.5 hours behind Haase.

Four hours after Zeller, Switzerland's Pius Achermann arrived in Atlantic City in 6th place. Riding in 5th-7th place across the country, Pius learned from his mistakes last year when saddle sores ended his race after 1,120 miles in Texas. Pius intentionally went out slower this year, and thought that the front four started out way too fast. In his last night battle against Zeller, Pius was very sleepy and chose to sleep for safety reasons. When I asked him why the Europeans seem to do so well against the Americans in RAAM, he said that high tech doesn't make you win RAAM.

The revelation of the race was 18 year old Alaskan Ben Couturier placing 7th overall despite spending over 4 days without his wheels turning (verified by crew member Peter Moffett). Just under three hours after Achermann, Couturier finished in 11 days, 3 hours, 10 minutes - making RAAM history as the youngest solo finisher ever! Alaska now has the oldest (Peter Lekisch at age 60 in 2001) and youngest finishers. Ben broke Chris Kostman's youngest finisher record, which had stood for 18 years. Race director Jim Pitre had Kostman on his cell phone to congratulate and pass the youth torch to Ben on the finishing stage. In 1987, Kostman placed 10th in a starting field of 33, finished 36 hours behind winner Secret, and had an average speed of 11.84 mph. This year, Ben placed 7th in a starting field of 26, finished 42 hours behind winner Robic, and averaged 11.42 mph. With his parents on his crew, Ben rode a 'casual' RAAM (to learn what it's all about) getting lots of sleep and stopping a lot so that his on the bike speed was very high. He tamed the toughest race in the world, making it look easy. Ben always made it a point to chat with riders he caught and who caught him. Riders are allowed to talk to other riders in the race for 15 minutes (riding side by side) every 24 hours. Very modest and non-cocky for an 18 year old kid, Ben thought it would be very rude to blow past people he caught without saying hello. Before I knew anything about Ben and his family, I would have doubted his ability to finish RAAM solely on his age, but know that I know him and his family, I am not surprised that he finished. He has much character depth, and ultra-event experience with his father in life threatening Alaskan winter weather. Even though the calendar says he is only 18, he has been through more pain and suffering than most people twice his age.

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Finishing less than two hours behind Gepp in 9th place (10th overall) was Michigan's Ben Robinson. Looking extremely tired on stage, Ben met his goal to finish officially. He leap frogged with Gepp all the way across the country. When Ben talked to Chris Hopkinson, Chris ran through a long laundry list of all his problems. Finishing 3.5 hours behind Robinson in 10th place (11th overall) was Seattle's Jim Trout. He still had his mohawk, but the blue side pieces above his ears were gone. He said being at such high altitude was the worst thing for him. He couldn't breathe for

the first four days. He said that winning the John Marino Mileage Challenge doesn't guarantee a RAAM finish. He was very concerned about having flashers on the personal support vehicle (PSV) all the time not allowing turn signals on his PSV to be seen. He was very nervous whenever making a turn in front of his PSV because of this, and thinks there has got to be some kind of solution to this dangerous problem. He almost got killed (like Robert Bachtel did at the 2004 Calvin's Challenge) when a car from the rear passed on the left as Jim was making a left turn. Jim knew he'd finish RAAM at the start in San Diego. Jim said, "The race is about survival for me because I know I am not capable of winning RAAM."

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The entire 50+ field was eliminated only 1,100 miles into the race by Trinidad, Colorado. David Kees suffered his fourth DNF (out of 8 solo starts) and became the first rider to drop out in Arizona only 340 miles and one day into the race. Neither Rob Kish nor Bob Breedlove takes RAAM lightly. Between them, they have ridden over 73,000 RAAM miles, and have 24 RAAM finishes with no DNFs before this year, so I knew it would take something very major to knock them out. Just west of Trinidad, Colorado on the start of his fifth day while leading the 50+ division in 12th place overall, Dr. Bob Breedlove drifted over the center line on a slight downhill, and had a head-on collision with a vehicle – this killed him – the only possible way he couldn't finish RAAM. The race went on – because we all knew that is the way Bob would have wanted it, but a new rule was created where a support vehicle had to be with the rider at all times.

Two deaths (Brett Malin was killed in the 2003 Team RAAM when he was hit by an 18 wheeler truck in New Mexico at night as he led the 4 person team division on Team Vail – Go Fast) in two years really brought to light the dangers of riding all the way across the country on open roads. Reed Finrock (a solo RAAM finisher after two DNFs) stopped cycling altogether after having so many of his friends killed by cars. This is still my greatest fear/worry about not reaching my million mile goal. On one hand, we ultracyclists have so very much exposure time to vehicles, but on the other hand, we have better reflexes and more experience than the average recreational cyclist who rides much less, so maybe this balances things out.

Kish did not drive out to the start the week before in his RV like he usually does, and started the race with a virus. The desert heat and altitude the first four days made it worse, eventually he developed pneumonia stopping his race (for the first time ever) somewhere before Trinidad, Colorado.

What ever happened to 220 pound good ole boy Mark Metcalfe of Texas? Starting out in the middle of the pack, he survived the Rocky Mountains, but the steeper, shorter Appalachian Mountains did him in. He wasn't in last place until Tom Rodgers dropped out (he fell way below the minimum speed of 10.52 mph) at time station #38 in Marshall, IL. Mark then held last place for the rest of his race. Mark's speed was above the minimum until he fell right on it at time station #44 in Laurelville, OH. Despite the Hocking Hills in Southeastern Ohio, Mark managed to increase his speed to 10.62 mph by time station #48 in Grafton, WV, but the brutal Appalachian Mountains in WV and MD would have the last laugh. Between time stations #48-53, his speed would drop at each station to a final low of 10.28 in Hanover, PA. Despite RAAM headquarters staff encouraging him to continue even if it meant an unofficial finish, Metcalfe finally called it quits dropping out with just 155 miles to go. He was the 14th and final person to quit. The person who drops out with the fewest miles remaining is usually the most disappointed/devastated - having gotten so close to the finish, yet still unable to make it. Although family man Mark's dream came up 155 miles short, I am sure that all of the big, average ultracycling riders out there loved living vicariously through his shoes for 11.5 long days, and thanks to Mark's humongous effort, they have a little more hope and optimism that they too will one day get the same chance to finish RAAM that he had this year.

None of the three riders crossing over from Team RAAM (Ricardo Arap & John D'Elia both from 2 person and Urs Koenig from 4 person) finished. Alessandro Colo DNFed for financial reasons.

I would have to call the 2005 RAAM the year of the rookies since 8 of them finished out of 12 riders. After Breedlove's death, I think riders started sleeping more and took less chances – riding along as sleep deprived zombies. RAAM is still a race, and every minute you spend off your bike makes you faster on it. Riding at just one mph faster, gives you a whole 90 minutes of extra sleep every 24 hours. This extra sleep can prevent Shermerneck, and make you ride faster and feel much better. Perhaps people will start to realize that good, quality sleep is very important in

RAAM. Maybe you can't break Pete Penseyres' 15.4 mph speed record on 3 hours of sleep per night, but I have twice shown you can win RAAM (both got me into the top 10 speed crossings) on that amount of sleep, and Chris MacDonald should also be ready to start winning RAAM this way come next year. I simply will not ride RAAM on any less sleep.

2005 post Team RAAM

With nine different categories, Team RAAM has grown from the very first 4-person HPV team in 1989 to making up the majority of RAAM entries with 30 teams this year. Due to extreme heat nearly every day, strong south winds in Kansas, and lots of climbing, no existing speed records were broken, but a couple of new ones were established: Team ALS – Bacchetta established a new 4 person recumbent record of 20.70 mph, and were the 3rd team overall. Team 60+ established a new 2 person 60+ record of 14.85 mph, and were 3rd of eight 2 person teams. In what other major sporting event can you have a 42 year age range between the youngest and oldest finishers?

In the 4 person, Team Beaver Creek – Vail outclassed their 4 person team competition leading from start to finish. Their time of 5 days, 18 hours, 15 minutes gives an average speed of 22.07 mph. This is nearly one mph slower than the record, and 0.61 mph slower than Team Vail – Go Fast last year. Jimmy Mortenson became a two-time winner having won on Team Vail in 2001. The battle for 2nd was between Joe Petersen's Kern Wheelmen and the Swiss Team IWC Schaffhausen. Although IWC led Kern to the first time station by two minutes, Kern opened up over an hour lead on IWC by AZ. They went back and forth in CO, and Kern went ahead by over 80 minutes in KS. IWC caught Kern again in the Appalachian Mountains in MD, and increased their lead over Kern to over 5 hours by Atlantic City. Joe Petersen failed to get his fourth 4 person team win, however he did become the only man to finish 4 person 7 times.

In the 4 person mixed, Cheniere's Making Cancer History beat Landis Team Phoenix by 2.5 hours. In the 4 person women's, Roaring Fork Volvo B2B Divas averaged 18.09 mph which was faster than their 17.69 mph last year, but still short of the 18.57 mph speed record.

In the 2 person, Lower Austria – City of Krems dominated beating Crazy Gones by 10.5 hours. Lower Austria's speed of 18.03 mph was slower than the 18.71 mph speed record set last year. Team Wisconsin was the last team to finish, and the only team slower than solo winner Robic. The Italian Team Citta Della Speranza DNFed 1,047 miles in for medical reasons.

In the 2 person mixed, Grupo Guapo opened up a four hour lead on Endorphins by Colorado, but Endorphins fought back passing GG in Missouri, and pulling away to a 9 hour lead by the finish line in Atlantic City. Endorphins speed of 14.56 mph was well off the 15.90 speed record set last year. Although Free Riders had the early lead to Prescott, AZ, they had logistical and crew problems causing them to fall back and eventually drop out after 1,300 miles in Kansas.

In the 8 person corporate challenge, Insight led from start to finish beating Eric Heiden's Team Donate Life by almost 4 hours. Finishing 5th overall among the teams, Insight's speed of 19.62 mph was close to the 19.84 mph speed record set last year. One of the people on that record setting R2R Kaiser Permanente team last year - Tom Paluch was an official this year. 3rd place went to The Vern's Inc., which was self-crewed. They only had one crew member (a driver) who wasn't riding. Their only woman April Guinchard rode up all 8 miles of Wolf Creek Pass in CO.

The winning 8 person corporate team (19.62 mph) was 2.45 mph slower than the winning 4 person (22.07 mph) team. When will we see a faster winning 8 person team than the winning 4 person team which is what you would logically expect?

The new 24 hour corporate challenge consisted of five 6-8 person teams starting with the solo riders, but racing 'only' to Flagstaff, AZ. The Clif Bar Team arrived in 23.5 hours victoriously in Flagstaff, AZ. All teams rode the 485 miles to the Sky Dome at Northern Arizona University, which is 8 miles short of the Flagstaff time station #9. Clif Bar got there about 2 hours 40 minutes ahead of Robic, 2 hours 3 minutes ahead of 2nd place Team Swami's Raceplan, and 3 hours 12 minutes ahead of 3rd place Team Kaiser Permanente R2R. 4th place team JMI Rookies came within two penalties of being disqualified when they got their 4th one totaling 2 hours, 30 minutes. This allowed last (5th) placed Team Bicycling San Diego to officially finish just 6 minutes after JMI Rookies. The first three

teams beat Robic to Flagstaff, but Robic had to save something for the next week+.

2005 post RAAM Interviews:

Danny Chew post RAAM Interview with Jure Robic

DC: CONGRATS ON YOUR SECOND CONSECUTIVE RAAM WIN. YOU RECOVER AMAZINGLY QUICKLY FROM RAAM. HOW DID YOU DO IN THAT RACE ONE WEEK AFTER YOU WON RAAM?

JR: This race was only for training, my injuries were still there, believe me.

DC: EXCEPT FOR A TIME STATION IN UTAH ON THE SECOND NIGHT (BALOH GOT THERE FIRST BECAUSE HE WAITED LONGER TO TAKE HIS FIRST SLEEP BREAK), YOU LED THE ENTIRE WAY ACROSS THE COUNTRY. WAS THIS YOUR RACE STRATEGY? DO YOU PREFER TO BE IN THE LEAD?

JR: My strategy is to keep with the best, if the pace of the first guy is slower than mine, I just go in the lead. But it's not my strategy to be in front for all costs.

DC: HOW DID THE LONGER, LESS STEEP CLIMBS IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS THE FIRST THREE DAYS COMPARE WITH THE SHORTER, STEEPER CLIMBS IN THE APPALACIAN MOUNTAINS CLOSE TO THE END? WHICH WERE TOUGHER?

JR: Appalacians were tougher. I was more tired, also I was mentally exhausted.

DC: I HAD TO STOP RIDING RAAM AFTER 8 CONSECUTIVE SOLOS LEFT ME IN GREAT DEBT. HOW MUCH MORE EXPENSIVE IS IT FOR A EUROPEAN RIDER TO DO RAAM THAN AN AMERICAN? DO YOU THINK YOU CAN KEEP AFFORDING TO DO RAAM UNTIL YOU WIN FOUR TIMES?

JR: We must hire cars and buy plane tickets. It's that much more expensive. If I find a good sponsor, I can do it, otherwise not.

DC: IT WAS A PRETTY BIZARRE RAAM WITH BREEDLOVE'S DEATH AND KISH'S FIRST EVER DNF. HOW DID THESE EVENTS AFFECT YOUR RACE?

JR: I found out about those events on the finish, so it did not affect my racing but I was affected afterwards.

DC: MARKO BALOH QUIT BECAUSE OF PNEUMONIA IN EASTERN KANSAS, AND MIKE TREVINO CRASHED OUT IN INDIANA. HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU HEARD ABOUT THIS? HOW GOOD OF FRIENDS ARE YOU WITH BALOH?

JR: I felt sorry for both. I know how much it takes to get to RAAM. It touched my soul. With Marko we have known each other for 20 years, we are friends and still competitors.

DC: YOUR AVERAGE SPEED OF 13.58 MPH THIS YEAR WAS MUCH SLOWER THAN YOUR 14.66 MPH LAST YEAR. WHAT REASONS DO YOU GIVE FOR THIS? DID YOU SLEEP MORE THIS YEAR? HOW MANY TOTAL HOURS DID YOU SLEEP THIS YEAR?

JR: It was hot and humid. More climbs and strong headwinds. Under these conditions it was impossible to go faster. I slept for 10 hours this year.

DC: HOW DOES YOUR WIN THIS YEAR COMPARE TO YOUR WIN LAST YEAR? WHAT SORT OF PHYSICAL AND MENTAL PROBLEMS DID YOU EXPERIENCE THIS YEAR?

JR: It was harder due to reasons mentioned above. A lot less mental problems, except one occasion, but I had a lot of injuries due to harder race conditions.

DC: ON YOUR WEBSITE, IT SAYS THAT YOU WANTED TO QUIT THE RACE IN ATHENS, OHIO WHERE YOU HAD A 16 HOUR LEAD ON SECOND PLACE FABIO BIASIOLO. WHAT WAS GOING ON IN YOUR MIND THEN? HOW DID YOUR CREW HELP YOU TO KEEP RIDING?

JR: I suffered sun stroke, and I lost my self mentally. My crew waited a little and left me to rest and then they motivated me again.

DC: DID YOU TALK TO YOUR WIFE PETRA BACK HOME IN SLOVENIA DURING THE RACE? HOW MUCH DID YOU THINK OF YOUR ONE YEAR OLD SON NAL DURING THE RACE?

JR: I spoke a lot with her. She and Nal were the biggest motivation to me

DC: WHAT IS NEXT FOR YOU? WILL YOU BE DOING ANY 24 HOUR RACES BEFORE THE TOUR DIRECT? HOW IS IT SIMILAR AND DIFFERENT TO RAAM?

JR: LeTour Direct is my next race. This race is a bit shorter but with a lot of climbs. I will let you know after the race.

Danny Chew post RAAM Interview with Chris MacDonald

DC: CONGRATS ON YOUR 2ND PLACE AND ROOKIE OF THE YEAR HONORS! DID YOU PASS THROUGH THE FIRST TIME STATION LEADING WITH SLOVE

CM: I did pass through Pine Valley in first place, with Robic right on my tail. He was not dropped in any way and had full control of the situation. He simply used me as a

DC: SOMEWHERE BEFORE THE 2ND TIME STATION, YOU STOPPED TO CHANGE BIKES AND ROBIC PULLED AWAY FROM YOU. DID YOU HOPE TO SEE HIM?

CM: yes I changed bikes and went down with massive cramps. I had gotten dehydrated and the race had hardly started. I suffered from cramps all the way out to Con

DC: YOU SLEPT THE FIRST NIGHT AND TOLD ME YOU SLEPT A TOTAL OF 37 HOURS THE WHOLE RACE. THIS IS AMAZING AND TIES THE AMOUNT I SLEPT

CM: the benefits are two-fold. Number one is that you can ride safely! You have a clear head, good judgment and basically never run the risk of losing control of your

DC: YOU HAD THE BIGGEST CREW IN SOLO RAAM HISTORY WITH 18 PEOPLE AND 5 VEHICLES. WHAT IS YOUR SECRET IN GETTING SO MUCH SPONSORSHIP?

CM: 5 of the people in the crew were film and media individuals. There are two documentaries being done in Europe on the race and my preparations for it. This was

DC: AFTER BALOH QUIT BECAUSE OF PNEUMONIA AND TREVINO CRASHED OUT, YOU MOVED UP TWO PLACES. HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS? TR

CM: Actually I moved up one place. I had passed Marko a couple of times (as I kept going down to sleep then caught up again), and had definitely passed him a third

I expected there to be several people to drop out of the race, I expected there to be crashes, and I expected there to be medical issues. I especially expected there to be but not really issues, as they were very treatable and just slowed us down. I did not have saddle sores, had a clear mind and raced a very safe race.

DC: YOU BATTLED WITH BIASIOLO FOR SECOND PLACE IN THE APPALACIAN MOUNTAINS. HOW DID THIS UNFOLD? DID YOU PASS HIM WHILE HE WAS

CM: I passed Biasiolo during the day during the big climbing in West Virginia. My climbing speeds were much faster than his. I was never a second in doubt that I would

DC: HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE YOU TO FULLY RECOVER FROM RAAM?

CM: I am basically recovered. It took me about 2 weeks to feel back to 100%. I have been teaching my spinning classes in Denmark and guiding some recreational riders

DC: WHAT IS NEXT FOR YOU? WILL YOU COME BACK TO WIN?

CM: I am not sure if I will come back, depends on a lot of factors. I have to admit that I think the race is dangerous in its current format. I think the race has become more

DC: DO YOU THINK YOU WILL HAVE TO CUT BACK ON YOUR SLEEP TO DO SO?

CM: No. I do not think I would have to cut back on my sleep to win, but I would have to cut down on my off bike time. Too many sit down dinners and breakfasts, too many

DC: HOW MANY HOURS PER NIGHT DO YOU THINK YOU CAN AVERAGE AND STILL WIN? I DID IT ON 3 PER NIGHT WITH BOTH OF MY WINS.

CM: I agree 100%! Again, a reason that I think one could easily have a 3-4 hour black out period and still have records, and likely even better and more tight racing, and

DC: I WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOU GO HEAD TO HEAD AGAINST ROBIC IN A 24 HOUR RACE. IS THERE ANY CHANCE OF THAT EVER HAPPENING?

CM: For sure, and if he is interested. I would do a two man team with him, smile!

Danny Chew post RAAM Interview with Fabio Biasiolo

DC: HOW DOES THIS 3RD PLACE COMPARE WITH YOUR OTHER 3RD BACK IN 2000 AGAINST ME?

FB: That one with you in RAAM 2000 was a great thing because it was my first time on the top 3 and because I was fighting shoulder to shoulder with a big and honest

DC: DO YOU THINK THAT A TOP 3 FINISH MEANS A RIDER HAS THE POTENTIAL TO WIN RAAM?

FB: I think so but it's too difficult to say and more difficult to do, talking about me, I mean, I think I have the mental and the physical potential to win but if I was not able to

DC: YOU WON THE IAN SANDBACH INSPIRATION AWARD FOR FINISHING RAAM AFTER THREE CONSECUTIVE DNFs. YOU HAVE NOW FINISHED 4 OUT OF 5

FB: Concerning my DNFs: In 1996 one of my crew members fell out of the peace vehicle after only 100 miles into the race and was close to dying, so I had to stop to

DC: HOW WORRIED WERE YOU ABOUT YOUR KIDNEY PROBLEM PREVENTING YOU FROM FINISHING AGAIN? WAS THERE ANYTHING YOU DID SPECIALLY?

FB: Danny, very bad people told me my kidney problem happened because I took illegal drugs and/or banned substances, and this was very hard for me too, but you

DC: WHAT WAS IT LIKE HAVING YOUR WIFE AND BABY ON YOUR CREW? WOULD YOU BRING THEM ALONG AGAIN?

FB: My Baby Rocco Giovanni was my best 2005 race, there are no RAAM or other sport or whatever you want event can be such important, intense and wonderful like

DC: I HAD TO STOP RIDING RAAM AFTER 8 CONSECUTIVE SOLOS LEFT ME IN GREAT DEBT. YOUR FELLOW ITALIAN ALESSANDRO COLO HAD TO QUIT

FB: It was really a shame my American friend you had to stop riding RAAM just for a money problem, I mean, it's a shame you had to stop for this reason! Talking about

DC: IT WAS A PRETTY BIZARRE RAAM WITH BREEDLOVE'S DEATH AND KISH'S FIRST EVER DNF. HOW DID THESE EVENTS AFFECT YOUR RACE?

FB: Well, my feeling when I knew about Dr. Breedlove's death was one to stop the race in honor of him and his family. I never let my crew see but I cried more every

DC: ON THE FIRST DAY IN CALIFORNIA, YOU FELL BACK AS FAR AS 19TH PLACE, BUT MANAGED TO WORK YOUR WAY UP THROUGH THE FIELD NICELY.

FB: Probably another of my limits to ride for the victory is just that: always (every time it's happened) the first day of the race is my worst, even if I spend the previous night

DC: DID YOU SLEEP ON THE FIRST NIGHT? ABOUT HOW MANY HOURS OF SLEEP PER NIGHT DID YOU AVERAGE AFTER THAT?

FB: No, I didn't sleep on the first night, I stopped for 1 hour and 15 minutes the second night (shower included) but I was not able to sleep; got 1:15 (total) the 3rd night

DC: HOW WELL DO YOU ENJOY THE NIGHT RIDING? DOES YOUR CREW PLAY MUSIC FOR YOU?

FB: I love to ride during night time waiting for the sunrise, the weather this year was perfect for the night riding, so I really enjoyed it. You know, this year was kind of

DC: WHAT ARE THE MOST DIFFICULT ASPECTS OF RAAM FOR YOU? WHY DO YOU KEEP COMING BACK SO MUCH?

FB: The most difficult aspects of RAAM for me is organizing everything: getting everything right, like the plane time table, hotels at the start/finish lines, pick up and drop

DC: YOU NOW HAVE THE 7TH MOST RAAM MILES (OVER 18,000) RIDDEN. YOU ARE ONE RAAM FINISH AWAY FROM 4TH RANKED HALDEMAN, AND TWO AWAY FROM

FB: Danny, as I answered on the question before, I'm not looking for records or others, records are made to be broken so they do not stay forever, anyways I'm glad to

Thank you,
Fabio Biasiolo

www.FabioBiasiolo.it

Danny Chew post RAAM Interview with Cat Berge

DC: CONGRATS ON BECOMING THE FIRST SOLO RAAM WOMAN FINISHER SINCE CASSIE LOWE IN 2001. HOW DID YOU DO IT? HOW MUCH OF A ROLE

CB: I did RAAM with lots of pedal strokes, joy, pain, sightseeing, camaraderie and adventure. Lee was absolutely crucial in liberating me from all logistics pertaining to

DC: HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT LEE AND YOUR CREW NOT TELLING YOU ABOUT BOB BREEDLOVE'S DEATH UNTIL YOU FINISHED? HOW DID YOU TAKE THE NEWS IN ATLANTIC CITY? DID YOU KNOW BOB VERY WELL?

CB: Since I had talked twice with Bob during the race, the first day for 15 minutes and then during a 25 minute delay at the construction site below Wolf Creek Pass, I had

DC: I HEARD YOU HATED TO RIDE AT NIGHT. SOME PEOPLE LIKE GEORGE THOMAS LOVE IT. HOW DID YOU GET THROUGH 11 NIGHTS?

CB: At snail pace, with agony and lots of mental struggles! About half way through the race, we realized that it was no point in trying to get me to a certain point early night

DC: WAS REED FINFROCK RESPONSIBLE FOR GETTING YOU TO DO RAAM? WHAT ABOUT YOUR TANDEM PARTNER MARK PATTEN? DID YOU TRY TO

CB: Many people planted seeds. I think Steve Born has had a very major role in telling me that I could do this race, and then helping develop my ultra-racing skills including

DC: YOU FORMED A BOND WITH CHRIS HOPKINSON DURING THE RACE. ABOUT HOW MANY TIMES DID YOU RIDE WITH HIM? WHERE DID YOU GIVE HIM YOUR NECK BRACE? AFTER YOU GAVE HIM YOUR NECK BRACE, WHAT IF YOU NEEDED IT FOR YOURSELF?

CB: Chris, being another European, was a pleasant encounter on the course and we always spent our 15 minutes to exchange some thoughts and chat some. When I

DC: YOU LEFT WRIST GOT SO SWOLLEN YOU COULDN'T SHIFT INTO YOUR BIG CHAINRING. WHERE/WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN? WHAT DO YOU THINK CAUSED

CB: Since I had worked hours on bike fit, with flat double-padded bars and aerobars on both the Titanflex and my climbing bike, I believe that the problem was due to some

DC: YOUR CREW WORE T-SHIRTS SAYING THEY HAD CATitude. WHO CAME UP WITH THIS TERM? CAN YOU GIVE SOME EXAMPLES OF THEM AND YOUR OWN

CB: Tracy Fawns sent me a home-made card where it said that I had a CATitude, and I just loved that. CATitude means taking every minute and living to the fullest and

DC: CAT LOVES HER CATS. HOW MANY DO YOU HAVE AND HOW BADLY DID YOU MISS THEM ON RAAM?

CB: When I left for San Diego I hugged my 19-year old little female cat, Nineve with tears in my eyes. I was about to embark on the biggest challenge of my lifetime, and

DC: WERE YOU CONCERNED WHEN YOU FELL OFF PACE TO BREAK MUFFY RITZ'S ROOKIE SPEED RECORD? YOU WERE THE ONLY PERSON IN THE SADDLE WHO DID YOU CARE ABOUT WHERE OTHER RIDERS WERE?

CB: I had wanted to finish in 10 days, but about half way through the race... realized that goal was probably out of reach. I was pretty upset at one point... maybe more

DC: WHY DO YOU THINK SO FEW WOMEN ENTER SOLO RAAM? ANY IDEAS ON HOW WE CAN ATTRACT MORE WOMEN INTO THE RACE? THERE HAS O

CB: I think women have different goals, aspirations and commitments in life that makes RAAM harder to fit into their yearly plans. I believe that 2 and 4-women team co

DC: HOW LONG DO YOU THINK IT WILL TAKE YOU TO FULLY RECOVER FROM RAAM? WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU?

CB: My hand nerve injuries will probably take 4-6 months to fully recover. My legs are doing fine and I am commuting daily (2 times 15 miles) on my cross-bike set up

Danny Chew post RAAM Interview with Mark Metcalfe

DC: I SAW THE NAMES OF LIKE OVER 100 PEOPLE ON THE SIDE OF YOUR FOLLOW VEHICLE. WHO WERE ALL OF THESE PEOPLE?

MM: Those are the names of my support crew and all of the individual sponsors that made it possible for me to race RAAM. Without all of these people I would not have been able to fulfill my dream of racing RAAM. Many many thanks to all of my supporters!

DC: DID YOU REALIZE YOU WERE REPRESENTING ALL THE "AVERAGE ULTRACYCLISTS" OUT THERE WHO WERE LIVING VICARIOUSLY THROUGH YOU DURING RAAM?

MM: I was made aware of the great following I had through my individual sponsors and many of their friends. I was not aware of a larger following other than that.

DC: YOU STARTED RAAM AT 220 POUNDS. HOW DID YOUR WEIGHT FLUCTUATE, AND WHAT DID YOU FINISH AT?

MM: Yes, I started at 220 lbs fully dressed to ride; this was about 5 lbs. heavy to start with. I wanted extra water weight to offset the expected weight loss during the 1st day's ride. The type of scale I used wasn't completely accurate but could be used to indicate weight loss or gain. By the time I reached Blythe, CA the indicated loss was 12 to 15 lbs. Some of the crew really thought it would be best that I had an I.V. After a 90-min rest though, I decided to continue on and try an on-the-bike recovery during the night. By the next morning I was gaining weight back. During the next two days I reached normal riding weight, plus or minus a few pounds, and maintained that weight throughout the remainder of the event.

DC: HOW DID YOU GET THROUGH THE TOUGH ROCKY MOUNTAINS AND STILL MAINTAIN AN AVERAGE SPEED WELL ABOVE THE 10.52-MPH MINIMUM?

MM: It was my plan to ride with steady effort as long as I could each day with a stretch goal of 300 miles per day. This worked well and kept me from over exerting. The Rocky Mountains did not present the biggest challenge for me, as they are not that far into the race. In the big mountain areas, there tend to be many miles before and after the climbs in which to recover.

DC: DID YOU CARE ABOUT WHERE OTHER RIDERS WERE?

MM: During the first few days of RAAM, I actually expected to be farther back in the field due to my conservative race plan. It was entirely possible for me to come out of California near the front of the pack. I felt that type of effort would be a bad plan for most of us in the solo division. The history of RAAM indicates that if you finish, you will be in the top 50% of the pack. My plan was to let attrition take its toll.

DC: WAS THERE ANY ONE SPECIFIC INCIDENT, WHICH DROPPED YOU DOWN TO 10.52 MPH?

MM: The root cause of my overall average dropping below 10.52 mph was open saddle sores. This was a rookie mistake, which I unwittingly started to cause on day 1. Normally I do not have unlimited supplies of water to pour on myself for cooling, but with full support it was readily available. The cooling worked and I made good time in the heat but I had wet shorts and shoes. The wetness is what caused the saddle sores and by the time I reached Fort Scott, KS I was in bad condition with 1300 miles to go. I credit Guus Moonen of Alessandro Colo's team and Steve Born most for helping me find ways to continue past Eldorado Springs, KS, and almost making it to Atlantic City, NJ in time. Many friends' crew and other racers did the best they could to remedy the situation as well.

DC: HOW MUCH WERE YOU SLEEPING AND WHEN?

MM: As an average I lost over 4 hours per day of ride time but was only getting about 2.5 hours of sleep. We did the best we could at the time, but now I am able to see many ways to manage time better than we did.

DC: ONCE YOU DROPPED BELOW 10.52 MPH AFTER TIME STATION #44 IN LAURELVILLE, OH, DID YOU CONSIDER AN UNOFFICIAL FINISH?

MM: In Ohio I was making up time and was still convinced we would finish before the cutoff time in Atlantic City. I had not seriously considered an unofficial finish at the time and had not made a decision before the race that I would finish no matter what.

DC: DID YOU FINALLY QUIT AT TIME STATION #53 IN HANOVER, PA OR AFTER THAT ON THE ROAD?

MM: I stopped shortly after passing I-83 on SR 851 E before Stewartstown, PA with between 150 – 155 miles to go. I called an end to the quest for the finish for the following reasons: Inability to ride fast enough to make the cutoff time in Atlantic City, NJ. Safety concerns of riding so slow during the start of rush hour traffic on narrow twisting hilly roads. The injuries I had would most likely require medical intervention if I pressed on to the finish. One of my unstated goals for RAAM was to make it without visiting a hospital and to make it back to work on the 5th of July. Also, though unknown to me when I stopped, the roads just ahead were obstructed by very dense fog for many of the remaining miles as we drove on towards Atlantic City.

DC: WILL YOU CONSIDER RIDING RAAM AGAIN?

MM: Yes, I have much more confidence in my abilities now and have learned much that would help me succeed in any future attempts.

DC: HOW LONG AFTER THE BREEDLOVE ACCIDENT DID YOUR CREW TELL YOU ABOUT IT, AND HOW DID IT AFFECT YOUR FOCUS?

MM: Alessandro Colo and myself were the very next riders to arrive at the accident site and learned of what happened even before it was possible to notify RAAM headquarters. We were both very shocked and saddened by the event. The race was stopped for some time at the site. I felt many emotions with my crew, wife, and daughter present. I needed to decide if it was reasonable to continue the race for myself. I decided Bob would have wanted the race to go on. All of us felt very badly for the family, crew, and many close friends of Mr. Breedlove. He is an icon of the sport and will always be fondly remembered.

DC: WHAT SORT OF ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ALL THE "AVERAGE ULTRACYCLISTS" OUT THERE WHO YOU HAVE INSPIRED TO WANT TO DO RAAM?

MM: I think for those of us who have RAAM fever, I must recommend that you find a way to join this race. It will remain one of your life's most memorable and cherished times.

DC: WAS RAAM AS TOUGH AS YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE?

RAAM is both tougher and easier than I thought. There were more hot days than I anticipated, the long western climbs didn't use as much energy as I thought, and we did not have much cold or rain. I thought the wind was generally favorable, although the East Coast climbs were steep and relentless. My nutrition, muscle fatigue and sleep issues went better than anticipated, however, I was not properly prepared to prevent or contend with open saddle sores. Time went by very fast for me. Also, my hands, feet, neck, and back did not cause any issues. The large amount of added climbing this year also contributed much to my running short on time for an official finish.