



The World's Toughest Bicycle Race

RAAM Daily Wrap-Up - Day 1: Women Soloists and Men 60+

Posted on RAAM DAILY WRAPUP Blog by Andy McGrath

The race has started. Today, at 1200 PDT in Oceanside, California, the Race Across America clock started for the four competing women soloists, from four different countries: Janet Christiansen, Daniela Genovesi, Michele Santilhano and Ann Wooldridge. Paul Danhaus, the sole over-60 male competitor, also took the start. A tortuous 3,016-mile route and twelve-day journey awaits them, bound for a finish in Annapolis on the East Coast. Obstacles to be overcome, from nagging headwinds to mental fatigue and dehydration, await at every corner on this draining challenge. The riders will savour the freshness they felt on the start-line in Oceanside - they will not enjoy that sweet feeling for the next few weeks.

RAAM 2009 - Woman Soloists

Janet Christiansen (Usa), 48 years old

Daniela Genovesi (Bra), 41

Michele Santilhano (Rsa), 39

Ann Wooldridge (Gbr), 50

RAAM 2009 – Male Over-60 Soloist

Paul Danhaus (Usa), 60

The first test on the opening day's racing was the swift transition from the coastal flats to the barren, uphill wastelands of inland California. The banners, bunting and loud cheers of encouragement ringing in the riders' ears on the start-line were quickly forgotten, as the huge, solitary undertaking began to unfold, just like the miles and miles of desert land rolling uphill before them. After all, the route takes the soloists up almost 3,000 feet within 50 miles.

At Lake Henshaw, the first of the race's fifty-three time stations, RAAM newbie Daniela Genovesi led the women's race through, in front of Christiansen, Santilhano and Wooldridge.

Christiansen and Genovesi battle on the "glass elevator"

After the opening uphill section to Lake Henshaw, a technical descent of the fabled "glass elevator" followed. Aided by a kind tailwind, the riders carved round the bends at warp speed, pushing 60mph at points, as they tore down to the desert plain below. Through Borrego Springs and towards Time Station #2 at Brawley, CA - the lowest time station on the whole route - Christiansen upped the pace and briefly took over the lead. However, Genovesi fought back to gain a six-minute advantage over pre-race favourite Christiansen at the time station. Then it was Santilhano and Wooldridge - at 50, the oldest woman in the race. All four were separated across 45 minutes after 140-odd miles of racing.

Genovesi increases her slender lead

On the road to the third time station at Blythe, fast-starting Genovesi showed her quality, putting more time between herself and Christiansen to earn an eleven-minute buffer. Santilhano had dropped to an hour back, with Wooldridge two hours behind, having taken a brief nap. Of course, at this early juncture, it remains to be seen whether all these women can sustain their paces. It is time for a short rest for them, to re-gather their energy and focus. With this being the marathon of all marathons, it is way too early to make any kind of predictions. However, Genovesi has started like she means to go on - with her and Christiansen a mere 11 minutes apart, the race is definitely on.

Lone 60+ Danhaus soldiers on at the head of the race

Meanwhile, lone sexagenarian soldier Paul Danhaus made good progress throughout the day. With a 24-hour head-start on his fellow solo men, the trained veterinarian looked comfortable when he passed through the second time station at Brawley, having passed leading lady Genovesi along the way. As the



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day progressed, his strength showed, as he passed Genovesi and was the first RAAM rider at Time Station #4 in Salome, Arizona.

Tomorrow...

At 1200 PDT (Wednesday), the race begins for the rest of the solo men field. Finally, we get a chance to see if anyone – Strasser, Gulewicz, Preihs, Wyss? stand up and be counted - has the legs to challenge cast-iron favourite and race legend Jure Robic for RAAM glory.

The women soloists and Danhaus will continue across Arizona into the Bradshaw Mountains. Expect the first big time gaps to be levered open as the race climbs through Congress and Prescott, then up to 6900 feet at Flagstaff. As the racers head over the 400-mile mark, the freshness and enthusiasm from the day's first racing will be wearing off.

Time Station #1 – Lake Henshaw, CA (54.5 miles/3,016 miles), 2757feet altitude

1. Daniela Genovesi (Bra)
- ** Paul Danhaus (Usa) + 7'00" minutes ** (Men Solo 60+)
2. Janet Christiansen (Usa) +10'00" minutes
3. Ann Wooldridge (Gbr) +30'00" minutes
4. Michele Santilhano (Rsa) +30'00" minutes

Time Station #2 - Brawley, CA (143/3016), -102 feet

- ** Paul Danhaus (Usa) ** (Men Solo 60+)
1. Daniela Genovesi (Bra) +3'
 2. Janet Christiansen (Usa) +6'
 3. Michele Santilhano (Rsa) +30'
 4. Ann Wooldridge (Gbr) +45'

Time Station #3 – Blythe, CA (232.6/3016), 269 feet

- ** Paul Danhaus (Usa) ** (Men Solo 60+)
1. Daniela Genovesi (Bra)
 2. Janet Christiansen (Usa) +11'
 3. Michele Santilhano (Rsa) +1 hour
 4. Ann Wooldridge (Gbr) +2 hours