



The World's Toughest Bicycle Race

All the news, views and events from day three of the world's toughest bike race.

RAAM Daily Wrap-Up - Day 3

As the race heads through Arizona on its second day, the obstacles are starting to mount. The wind has been largely favourable thus far, but the acrid desert temperatures are scorching, playing havoc with both body and mind; one racer described it as "hotter than hell". As the race progresses and riders press on through the pain, digestion problems and nagging fatigue – part and parcel of the epic undertaking that is RAAM - are going to get worse and worse.

RAAM - Solo Male

Jure Robic has wasted little time in stamping his mark on the race throughout the course of today, in the ongoing hope of achieving a record fifth RAAM title. He was the first male soloist through the tenth check at Kayenta, AZ, 1 hour 32 minutes ahead of rookie prodigy Christoph Strasser. Dani Wyss has been the revelation of the day, riding strongly to up his speed and pass Marko Baloh. He is only six minutes down on Strasser in third; the 2006 winner could well pass him as the racers move into Utah. Provisional fourth, 2h 10m behind, is Marko Baloh, who has just cooled his speedy early pace slightly.

Robic taps out robotic pace to increase lead

However, all this was not enough for Robic, who continued to tap out a relentless pace (currently over 18mph) today, despite some tough climbing in the Bradshaw Mountains. Going through the tenth check, in the space of 50 miles, he had put over an hour into his closest rivals. It remains to be seen whether any of these riders can live with the intense pace the Slovenian is tapping out.

The man is like a robot, able to forgo sleep, seemingly ignore the heat and keep to the same rhythm and speed. This skill will become even more important around the halfway mark, as his rivals start to get tired. Psychologically, it must be tough on the likes of Strasser and Baloh, as he takes ten minutes to twenty minutes time advantage on them at every station. He has completed 635 miles at 18.65 mph, itself quite phenomenal.

Oyler and Popp going well

Canadian Peter Oyler is riding well in provisional fifth, three hours down on Robic. At last check, Julian Sanz Garcia and rookie revelation Ben Popp were duking it out for seventh; the Spaniard led through Time Station #8 in Flagstaff by a mere five minutes, as Popp showed strong climbing legs on the mountainous section. Franz Preihs is not far off the pair either.

Further down the list, there is a "Battle of Britain" for twelfth and thirteenth between Richard Newey and Jim Rees. Remember, everywhere you look in RAAM, there are always mini battles raging within the war itself. These positions are likely to yo-yo over the next few days, with gaps so small. Sleep will continue to affect the positioning, before things settle down into a more stable leaderboard.

Quick starter Gottwald slows his pace

The early lightning-fast pace that briefly saw Christopher Gottwald mixing it with ultra-cycling's elite in California has slowed down. After making good time in the opening 100 miles, averaging 20.63mph, the Colavita pro has gone slower through Arizona. His average is down to 13mph. However, we believe that Gottwald, who is doing this for Miles for Mentoring, is taking more rest than his rivals.

DNF for Luikart

The RAAM male solo's first DNF was Scott Luikart, succumbing to the dry heat of the Arizonan desert. Reasons are at the moment unknown; only eight hours ago, his brother and crew member Mark posted on their Twitter feed: "Thank for all the interest, prayers and encouragement. We are having a blast. Time for bed. Awsome crews and rider." (sic) I'm no detective, but the DNF seems unexpected considering the



upbeat tone of that post. Having averaged a healthy 16.28mph for the first 350 miles, Luikart slowed to a crawl for the fifty-mile section to time station #6 at Prescott, AZ.

Indeed, because of the scorching desert daytime temperatures there, many of the leading men had opted for a sleepless night, thus being able to tackle the inclines and mile after mile of identical Arizonan roads in the cool of the night. We wish Scott all the best, and hope everything is okay.

Tomorrow...

As the riders head past the two-day mark, fatigue and average speed become an issue. With a 10mph speed minimum, the riders at the back of the field will begin fighting to stay in the race over the next few days. This will be no mean feat either, as the riders pass through Utah to the Rocky Mountains via Cortez and legendary cycling town Durango. Here lie some of the highest climbs they will have to face. Robic could either continue to increase his lead here, or face a challenge from the likes of Strasser and Wyss. He may currently be robotic in his pace but he is human – he has to rest at some point!

STOP PRESS* As this blog went to press, I notice that Dani Wyss has taken over the lead in the Solo RAAM as Jure Robic caught up on sleep. The race is really on. *STOP PRESS

Tomorrow, the leaders in the men's race will also catch and pass the solo women, who left 24 hours earlier.

Moreover, all the RAAM teams, from two-ups to octets, hit the road on their odysseys, starting at 1200 in Oceanside, California.

RAAM Solo Male Standings

1. Jure Robic (Slo) 634.80 miles – **TS# 10** – 1 day 10 hours, 02 minutes (18.65mph average)
2. Christoph Strasser (Aut) 634.80 miles – 1d 11h 34m +1 hour 32 minutes (17.85 mph)
3. Dani Wyss (Swi) 634.80 miles – 1d 11h 40m +1 hour 38 minutes (17.80mph)
4. Marko Baloh (Slo) 634.8 miles – 1d 12h 12m +2 hours 10 minutes (17.54mph)
5. Gerhard Gulewicz (Aut) 563.00 miles – **TS#9** – 1d 10h 33m (16.3mph)
6. Julian Sanz Garcia (Spa) 563.00 miles – 1d 12h 02m (15.62mph)
7. Peter Oyler (Can) 563.00 miles – 1d 12h 27m (15.45mph)
8. Ben Popp (Usa) 491.10 miles – **TS #8** – 1d 07h 02m (15.82mph)
9. Franz Preihs (Aut) 491.10 miles – 1d 07h 43m (15.48mph)
10. Jean Marc Velez (Fra) 491.10 miles – 1d 9h 52m (14.5mph)
11. Michael Cook (Usa) 491.10 miles – 1d 10h 04m (14.42mph)
12. Richard Newey (Gbr) 491.10 miles – 1d 10h 19m (14.31mph)
13. Jim Rees (Gbr) 491.10 miles – 1d 11h 21m (13.89mph)
14. Claudio Clarindo (Bra) 491.10 miles – 1d 11h 59m (13.65mph)
15. Tony O'Keeffe (Can) 491.10 miles – 1d 12h 43m (13.38mph)
16. Miles for Mentoring/Christopher Gottwald (Usa) 491.10 miles – 1d 13h 06m (13.24mph)
17. Daniel Rudge (Gbr) 437.90 miles – **TS #7** – 1d 07h 32m (13.89mph)
18. Patrick Autissier (Fra) 437.90 miles – 1d 12h 49m (11.89mph)
19. Kevin Kaiser (Usa) 396.70 miles – **TS #6** – 1d 07h 33m (12.57mph)
20. Bill Bradley (Usa) 346.30 miles – **TS #5** – 1d 06h 54m (11.21mph)
- DNF** Scott Luikart (Usa) 396.70 miles – **TS #6** – 1d 04h 39m (13.85mph)

RAAM - Solo Female

As Robic gets closer to passing them, the women soloists entered Utah yesterday. We really have a race on our hands here – after almost 700 miles, the four women competitors were only five hours apart. While Janet Christiansen still leads, 50 year-old Ann Wooldridge has shown some good form. As her rivals took on more sleep, the strong Briton moved into second, 2h 41m behind. Having been sat fourth yesterday, she has made up a whole hour on the race leader, making good progress while her rivals napped.



As Christiansen took a chance to catch some sleep, Daniela Genovesi fought back as well, crossing just 33 minutes behind at Time Station #10 to also regain second place. However, since the race leader got back on the road, she pulled the gap out to over an hour once more. Michele Santilhano lies fourth, just over four hours down, but sleep means all these positions are likely to change come tomorrow.

Everything is still to play for, a fifth of the way through this epic race. Rest and recuperation are crucial elements of the RAAM, but no rider wants to compromise a leading position by taking more than they need. The Rockies could be crucial for the field but, at the moment, it's still anyone's guess as to who will be crowned the RAAM solo women's champion in around nine days time.

1. Janet Christiansen (Usa) 719.10 miles – **TS# 12** – 2d 8h 19m (12.77mph)
2. Daniela Genovesi (Bra) 719.10 miles – 2d 9h 36m (12.48mph)
3. Ann Wooldridge (Gbr) 719.10 miles – 2d 11h 42m (12.05mph)
4. Michele Santilhano (Rsa) 679.50 miles – **TS #11** – 2d 10h 01m (11.71mph)

RAAM - Solo Men 50-59

As sleep becomes an issue, Hermann Bachmann made up some time on rival Dominique Briand, as the Frenchman took the opportunity to catch up on some zzzs on the road to Cottonwood, AZ (TS #7). However, Briand still leads by around four hours and will be able to push out his leading margin in the coming hours.

1. Dominique Briand (Fra) 491.10 miles – **TS #8** – 1d 12h 51m (13.33mph)
2. Hermann Bachmann (Swi) 396.70 miles – **TS #6** – 1d 06h 27m (13.03mph)

RAAM - Solo Men 60+

Let's not forget the man who is at the geographical front of the RAAM solo pack: Paul Danhaus. 719 miles in, he was the first rider through Montezuma Creek, UT (TS #12) and is keeping an admirably-consistent pace. Just fifty-four minutes in front of Christiansen on the road, the next challenge is a stern one, as he and the women hit the Rockies and Colorado, one of the toughest parts of the route.

1. Paul Danhaus (Usa) 769.20 miles – **TS #13** – 2d 12h 43m (12.67mph)

RAAM - 4-Person Male 75+

Danhaus is not the oldest competitor this year though. Everyone on the RAAM media team is going to run out of superlatives if the septagenarian quartet of Great Grand PAC Masters continue to show that age is just a number this fortnight. 500 miles into the race, they have averaged 14.84mph and are still going strong, looking chipper. Simply outstanding.

1. Great Grand PAC Masters 563.00 miles – **TS #9** – 1d 13h 48m (14.89mph)

Race Across The West

In the sticky heat of the Arizonan desert, the Race Across the West has seen several abandons. Sole 50-59 female Linda Guerette decided to call it quits on the way to Hope, AZ, after 250 miles. In the solo male 50-59 category, both competitors registered as DNF within twelve hours of one another. Solo male Tim Richardson and two-person male Team Wisconsin also left the race; best wishes to all of them. They have all acquitted themselves well.

RAW - Men's Solo

In the solo male category, Dallas Morris' early lead has been pegged back slightly by Joe Mann and Mike Wilson. Mann has not taken as much sleep as his Canadian rival, but his consistent pace may pay dividends as he continues to make up time on the road to Taos.



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1. Dallas Morris (Can) 491.10 miles – **TS #8** – 1d 09h 09m (14.81mph)
 2. Joe Mann (Usa) 437.90 miles – **TS #7** – 1d 05h 28m (14.86mph)
 3. Forward Motion / Mike Wilson (Usa) 437.90 miles – **TS #7** – 1d 12h 14m (12.09mph)
- DNF** Tim Richardson (Gbr) – 346.30 miles – **TS #5** – 1d 03h 15m (12.71mph)

RAW - Men's Solo 50-59

There are no more competitors in the solo male 50-59 category. John Caton abandoned a day into the challenge, unable to cope with the dry heat of the desert. Twelve hours later, remaining entrant Gary Johnson also registered DNF.

DNF Gary Johnson (Usa) 437.90 miles - **TS #7** - 1d 11h 50m (12.22mph)

DNF John Caton (Usa) 346.30 miles - **TS #5** - 23h 39m (14.64mph)

RAW - Women's Solo

In the women's solo event, Ironman competitor Leslie Holton has come back on Jennifer Swaney, taking the lead by two hours. However, Swaney took the chance to rest in Prescott, so while it is close, it's likely that the lead will see-saw as the two sleep at different points.

1. Leslie Holton (Usa) 396.70 miles - **TS #6** - 1d 08h 29m (12.21mph)
2. Jennifer Swaney (Usa) 369.70 miles - 1d 10h 45m (11.42mph)

RAW - 4-Person Male

As for the four-person male teams, Wildcats Four Brett and Bicycle John's are also having having a great scrap. Wildcats led by just 41 minutes through Flagstaff, AZ (**TS #8**). Though they increased their lead to two and a half hours in the next section, it is very clear that this little battle is going to be raging all the way to the wire.

1. Wildcats Four Brett 563.00 miles – **TS #9** – 1d 11h 39m (15.79mph)
2. Bicycle John's 563.00 miles – 1d 14h 05m (14.78mph)

RAW - 2-Person Female

However, even more impressive is perhaps the performance of Team Project Athena. In the under-50 two-person female category, they are going faster than the male quartets! Averaging 16.28 miles for the first 563 miles, this is unbelievable going. Rivals Team Fitista are by no means going slow, but they have fallen to five hours behind, unable to match the fast pace of their fellow ladies.

1. Team Project Athena 563.00 miles – **TS #9** – 1d 10h 35m (16.28mph)
2. Team Fitista 491.10 miles – **TS #8** – 1h 09h 42m (14.57mph)

RAW - 2-Person Male

In the two-person male category, RAO – GVHBikes are on their own after Team Wisconsin's withdrawal. They are going great guns too, averaging 18.09mph as they head for the Arizona-Utah state border. The finish is a day away for them, 360 miles down the road in New Mexico. At their current speed, they will be the first Race Across the West competitors to make it there.

1. RAO – GVHBikes 679.50 miles – **TS #11** – 1d 13h 24m (18.17mph)
- DNF** Team Wisconsin 369.70 miles – **TS #6** – 1d 02h 14m (15.12mph)

Good luck to all the racers out there as they head into their second and third days of RAAM and RAW. Keep the feedback and messages of support coming in, folks!

Results all taken at 1100 GMT, Friday 19 June



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