



**The Official Newsletter of the Race Across America 2009**

RAAM Report February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009

The Race Across America, RAAM, has long touted itself as the World's Toughest Bicycle Race. But is it really?

Often media sources seem to state without any real argument that the fabled and internationally acclaimed crown of Le Grand Tours, Le Tour de France is the toughest bicycle race on Earth. Certainly, Le Tour is no around the park club race and in a popularity contest, Le Tour de France is one of the most anticipated and viewed sporting events in the world but is it tougher than RAAM?

While professional cycling suffers from a lack of financial recognition when compared to other widely publicized sports, still there is a benefit for pro-racers—expert support, trainers, nutrition, equipment, clothing, medical staff, elite-level coaches and the ability to focus all of their attention on becoming the best cyclist they can be.

For the most part, RAAM racers are amateurs, with families to support, who don't have agents. Which means that they need to acquire the knowledge and find the time to raise much needed sponsorship dollars while simultaneously recruiting and training their support crew. They are often forced to wake up at 2 a.m. to “knock-off” a hundred miles before readying their children for school and getting to their day job on time.

Still, year after year, they arrive from around the world and line up on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, in one of the bravest moments of their lives, to turn the cranks of their bicycles and head off on an epic journey to reach the east coast—over 3,000 miles away.

Let's look at the numbers and then let you, the cycling fan decide.

<b>Race Year 2008</b>	<b>Solo RAAM</b>	<b>Team RAAM</b>	<b>Tour de France</b>
Distance	3,014 miles	3,014 miles	2,208 miles
Stages <sup>1</sup>	1	1	21
Rest Days	0	0	2
Total Time of Race	12 Days	9 Days	23 Days
Number of Racers <sup>2</sup>	1	8	9
Avg. Daily Distance	335 miles	557 miles	98 miles
Avg. Daily Time Racing <sup>3</sup>	22 hours	24 hours	3.82 hours
Drafting <sup>4</sup>	No	Yes	Yes
Climbing <sup>5</sup>	n/a	n/a	n/a
Public Traffic <sup>6</sup>	Yes	Yes	No
Night Racing <sup>7</sup>	Yes	Yes	No
Avg. Speed On Bike <sup>8</sup>	15.07 mph	23.24 mph	25.09 mph
Avg. Speed Overall <sup>9</sup>	13.98 mph	23.24 mph	4.18 mph

## Key

Averages are based on winning performances and while all efforts were taken to be as accurate as possible they are not exact.

<sup>1</sup>Stages – RAAM is contested in a non-stop ultra-endurance format with NO scheduled rests or breaks from the start to finish line.

<sup>2</sup>Number of Team Racers – There are numerous team formats in RAAM allowing from 2-8 racers per team. The chart above represents an 8 person team. These riders form a relay team and often ride splits as short as 15-20 minutes from start to finish.

<sup>3</sup>Avg. Daily Time in Saddle (Winner) – In Team RAAM, presuming that each individual racer rode identical amounts of time they would each ride 3 hours daily. In Solo RAAM, the 2008 winner's crew reported that he slept a total of 14 hours over 9 days. The rule of thumb for RAAM soloists is if you are in it to win it you must ride 22 hours a day.

<sup>4</sup>Drafting- In Solo RAAM, no drafting is permitted at all. In Team RAAM, members of the same team may ride at the same time and draft off each other, but not off of other racers. This technique is rarely utilized but it is permissible.

<sup>5</sup>Climbing – Official climbing statistics for RAAM are not available, but are estimated at over 100,000 ft. The TDF is awarded this category.

<sup>6</sup>Public Traffic – RAAM is contested on public roads which are not closed to public traffic and racers must obey all traffic laws.

<sup>7</sup>Night Racing – Due to RAAM's single-stage format, the racers ride around the clock.

<sup>8</sup>Avg. Speed On Bike (Winner) – The Team RAAM speed listed in the chart above represents the winning teams average speed of all 8 relay racers. The Solo RAAM average speed is an estimate and taking into consideration sleep breaks by 2008 winner.

<sup>9</sup>Avg. Speed Overall- The 4.18 mph average speed accredited to the TDF winner is based on 22 total days from the first to the last stage. One day was subtracted from the 23<sup>rd</sup> day total to account for the hours of the day preceding the start of stage one and the hours following the conclusion of the final stage on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day. While this comparison may seem unreasonable to some, it would be completely unfair to Solo and Team RAAM racers if it was not factored into our comparison. RAAM's toughness level cannot be adequately assessed without due consideration to this signature aspect of the challenge RAAM presents.



## Conclusion

By the standards considered above, RAAM is the World's Toughest Bicycle Race.

RAAM is 806 miles or 26% longer than the TDF.

The average daily mileage of the Team RAAM winner was 557 miles, the Solo RAAM winner pedaled an average of 335 miles a day while TDF winner only averaged 98 miles a day.

On average, the 2008 TDF winner was in the saddle for less than 4 hours per day. The Solo RAAM winner rode an astounding 22 hours+ per day. Team RAAM winners averaged 3 hours per day comprised of 15-20 minute splits that are performed in "sprint mode."

The average speed of the Team RAAM winners, while not drafting and racing an additional 806 miles longer than TDF contestants, was 23.24 mph while the 2008 TDF winner hammered for 25.09 mph. Not bad, for a bunch of amateurs with day jobs!

What do you think?

Please email [worldstoughestbikerace@gmail.com](mailto:worldstoughestbikerace@gmail.com) and include the name of the race you think is toughest in the subject heading. Your comments are also welcome and some will be selected for publishing. We will compile the totals and declare a fan selected winner. Another candidate? We accept write-in votes!



For information regarding the Race Across the West, or to receive our RAW information package please contact Perry Stone: [raw09@raceacrossamerica.org](mailto:raw09@raceacrossamerica.org)

## RAAM CLINICS

Remaining RAAM Clinics for 2009 will be held in London, England and Annapolis, MD. The clinics are a great way to gain insight into logistics and preparation techniques. You can ask your questions, and interact with the RAAM team and other team managers/crew chiefs. Topics such as sleep management, what crewing is like, handling team exchanges, flexible and others are covered. Increase your chances of a safe, fast and successful race by attending a RAAM clinic near you.

You can find more details on dates, price, and more [here](#).



Collage of 2008 Race Across America Images by RAAM Staff Photographers