

# **RAAM 2010 – Recap – Part 1**

## **A Year for the Record Books**

The 29<sup>th</sup> edition of Race Across America and the 3<sup>rd</sup> running of Race Across the West are in the books—the record books to be more to the point.

This year racers experienced what, arguably, may have been the worst weather in the history of RAAM. Despite the heat, strong winds, rain and hail, both RAAM and RAW Racers set a number of new course records this year.

### ***Race Across America - New Record Holders***

- Most Wins by a Male Solo Racer: Jure Robic, 5 time RAAM Champion
- Solo Women, Recumbent: Barbara Buatois, 11d19h48m (10.59 mph)\*
- Solo Men (50-59), Recumbent: Timothy Woudenberg, 10d23h14m (11.42 mph)
- 4-Person Women (50-50): Kalyra Women's Race Team, 7d10h35m (16.83 mph)
- 4-Person Men (60-69): Hoosiers, 6d16h44m (18.7 mph)
- 4-person Mixed Tandem (50-59): Team JDRF, 6d14h55m (18.91 mph)

\* Barbara Buatois is the first female racer to finish RAAM on a recumbent bicycle and is the 2010 Women's Overall Champion.

### ***Race Across the West - New Record Holders***

- Solo Men: Thomas Lavallee, 2d11h51m (14.33 mph)
- Solo Men (50-59): Mark Metcalf, 2d18h16m (12.94 mph)
- Solo Men Fixed Gear: Terry Lansdell, 2d21h13m (12.39 mph)
- 2-Person Men: Team Switchback, 1d22h27m (18.46 mph)
- 2-Person Men (50-59) Third Coast, 2d11h35m (14.39 mph)
- 4-Person Men: Team HTHH, 1d19h57m (19.51 mph)
- 4-Person Women (50-59): Denver Spokes, 1d22h45m (18.35 mph)

## **2010 Battle to Reach Annapolis—The Story of the Solo Race**

This year's Solo Race Across America lived up to its reputation as the *World's Toughest Bicycle Race*. Participants – racers and crew alike – faced the usual array of extreme physical and mental challenges. The wild card in the non-stop race from coast-to-coast is weather. Racers train hard, sometimes years, aiming to reach their physical peak by the start. Crews work hard to have their routines dialed in. But, these efforts can be derailed by weather. This year, the solo field faced some of the most brutal weather in RAAM history.

This year 30 solo racers started – 25 men from 11 countries and 5 women from 4 countries. The weather, generally good through the West, deteriorated upon reaching the Rockies. By the time the race leaders rolled into Kansas, storms

with high winds and driving rain made racing unbearable. Speeds dropped precipitously. Portions of the route flooded, necessitating re-routing. The solo field was plagued by this storm system for much of the way.

Jure Robic (Slovenia) and Gerhard Gulewicz (Austria), openly battled for the title of 2010 RAAM champion. Four-time RAAM champion Robic came to the start with two goals in mind; 1) to win his 5<sup>th</sup> RAAM; and 2) to break Pete Penseyres' 1986 speed record. Robic, arguably the greatest endurance cyclist in RAAM history, had something to prove. Last year he chose to withdraw with only one time station remaining, a decision that disappointed his fans and one which he personally regrets. He came to put his stamp on the race.

Gulewicz, participating in his 4<sup>th</sup> RAAM, had something to prove as well. After finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Austrian mountain bike racer, endurance athlete and motivational speaker came to the start with one objective - to beat Robic and become this year's RAAM Champion.

The two racers spent most of the race separated by less than 3 hours. It didn't seem to matter what Mother Nature threw at these riders—wind, hail, massive thunderstorms, heat - the difference between them remained 2 to 3 hours for much of the race. Finally, in the Appalachians, Robic pulled away, increasing his lead to nearly 12 hours. Robic finished with a time of 9d0h46m and Gulewicz 9d12h51m.

While weather prevented Robic from beating Penseyres' 1986 record, he clearly put his stamp on the race recording his record 5<sup>th</sup> win.

After congratulating Robic on his 5<sup>th</sup> victory, RAAM President, Fred Boethling, jokingly pointed out that there was someone else who had more solo RAAM wins. Robic smiled and said, "Oh yes, I know that." That title belongs to Seana Hogan with 6 wins. We can't help but think Robic will be back to get that distinction, along with another crack at Penseyres' record. After all, Robic is still in the prime of his career as an endurance athlete.

Although the fight for first was an impressive one, Matthew Warner-Smith (Australia), quietly made his mark on this year's race. The 37-year-old rookie and relative newcomer to the endurance cycling world finished in 3<sup>rd</sup> place with a time of 9d15h3m beating out many RAAM veterans. A United Nations civil servant by day, Warner-Smith's endurance race experience consisted mainly of marathons and Ironman-distance triathlons. Warner-Smith earned Rookie of the Year honors. According to RAAM Race Director, Rick Boethling, "Warner-Smith has the tools. He can win this race."

When asked to speak at the Finishers' Banquet, he commented, "Now is the time for me to thank my sponsors, except, oh yeah, I don't have any." With an exceptional first effort at RAAM, expect to see Warner-Smith back on the starting line, sponsors in tow.

Rounding out the top five in the men's field were race veteran Tony O'Keefe (Canada) and first-time racer Thomas Strebel (Switzerland). O'Keefe finished the race in 10d8h21m and recorded the fastest finish by a Canadian, while Strebel finished in 10d10h3m for fifth place. Kevin Kaiser (USA) completed the race in 6<sup>th</sup> place and was the first American to finish this year's event. Another notable finish in the men's solo field went to Tim Woudenberg (USA) who broke the record for fastest finish in the Men's Solo Recumbent (50-59) Division with a time of 10d23h14m.

Not so long ago, age 60+ solo racers were unheard of. As the post-war baby boomers age and become increasingly focused on maintaining their fitness, and as technology allows for pushing the limits, there are now age 60+ solo racers every year. Although 60-year old Dex Tooke dropped out, he made a credible showing in his rookie year. We believe Tooke has what it takes to finish RAAM. After all, current 60+ record holder and oldest solo RAAM finisher, David Jones, DNF'd in his rookie year.

In the women's race, it was a battle of the standard bike versus the recumbent with five racers aiming for the title of RAAM champion. Riding recumbent-style bicycles were Barbara Buatois (France) and Sandy Earl (USA) and racing on standard bikes, Sabrina Bianchi (Italy), Michele Santilhano (South Africa) and Amy Xu (USA).

Barbara Buatois, took the lead early among the female racers and never looked back. Buatois currently holds the record for fastest woman on a bicycle having ridden a fully-faired recumbent bicycle 75.46 mph. Letting her accomplishments speak for themselves, this petite and unassuming cyclist now also holds the title of 2010 RAAM Women's Champion, is the first female to finish RAAM on a recumbent and is the first French woman to complete the race. She finished the race in a time of 11d19h48m.

Sabrina Bianchi and Michele Santilhano raced for second place. Santilhano racing in her 3<sup>rd</sup> RAAM (2<sup>nd</sup> solo endeavor) held a bit of an edge over Bianchi for much of the race. However, as the race took its toll on both women, the lead exchanged hands and Bianchi edged out Santilhano for second place with a time of 12d16h36m. Santilhano finished shortly behind with a time of 12d18h31m.

In the end, roughly one-half of the solo field finished – 14 of 30, or 47%. This is a bit less than normal, probably owing to the poor weather conditions. Roughly 44% of solo men finished (11 of 25) and 60% of solo women finished (3 of 5).

As with every year, this year's race is full of tales of triumph and defeat, of sacrifice and reward, of joy and pain, and finally the knowledge that the ability of human spirit to conquer and achieve is immeasurable. Congratulations not only to this year's winners but also to everyone with the courage and the determination to attempt solo RAAM.