



*Endurance News talked with ultra cyclist Kenneth Phillbrick just after his victory in 2005 Race Across Oregon, where he set a new course record.*

**Steve:** Kenneth, congratulations on your win at this year's Race Across Oregon (RAO), where you finished over three hours ahead of second place and set a new course record of 35:23:23. When you entered the race, did you have any idea that you would do so well?

**Kenneth:** I had no idea how well I would do at Race Across Oregon. A number of riders, whom I greatly respect, had told me they thought I could do well, but to me just finishing was going to be an enormous accomplishment. I thought if I did snag a win it would be close. I had envisioned a sprint finish on Timberline and definitely not winning by over three hours.

I had trained and planned to race last year, but after a nearly a year of planning and training an 11th hour knee injury sidelined me. At the time I was very depressed, but I picked up the pieces, changed my training, and arrived at RAO this year with a burning desire to just smack the hammer down. Going into RAO, the plan was to race perfect. This included everything from training, recovery, fueling, equipment, and building the perfect crew.

I really can't thank my crew, and especially my crew chief and training partner, Ben Larson enough. They executed the race plan flawlessly keeping my off the bike time, including stop signs and lights, to 25 minutes.

**S:** What changes did you make in your training between 2004 and 2005?

**K:** In 2004 I'd really enjoyed attending the three-day RAO race camp. Going into 2005, I decided to up the number of camps I attended. At the end of March I attended a week-long PAC Tour camp and then followed it up with both RAO race camps. The great thing with cycling camps is they make it very fun and easy to engage in intense training and up the mileage significantly.

To attempt to increase the quality of my winter/indoor training this past year, I incorporated CompuTrainer training and Power Crank training into my regular roller repertoire. To improve recovery, and avoid the knee issues I'd faced before, I



Kenneth Phillbrick on his way to setting a new course record at the 2005 Race Across Oregon.

incorporated yoga, regular massage twice a month, and I used a COMPEX unit to further boost recovery. I found the COMPEX unit to be particularly beneficial at the PAC Tour Desert Camp, where day-to-day recovery was critical - I was averaging 100 intense miles per day for eight days.

**S:** When did you realize that you were on course record pace?

**K:** At Time Station 1, I learned that my pace was right on track with previous records and then promptly forgot about the whole record thing as I settled into my own race. After Prineville, Time Station 4,

my crew told me that I was still on pace. After Prineville, I completely forgot about it again, and just focused on my single goal of getting to the finish ASAP. In the end, I didn't actually realize that I'd just snagged the record, by 1 min 40 seconds, till a few days after the race.

Before, RAO, I'd talked with just about everyone I could think of from the ultra community, trying to get any advice I could going into RAO. All the advice basically boiled down to one thing: Ride your own race. To that end, over the length of the race, I rode the whole course pacing off a Polar heart rate monitor. I only paid slight attention to my actual speed and time splits. It's all very athlete-specific, but in my case, I never wanted to see a heart rate over 150 BPM.

**S:** Describe what the weather was like throughout the race this year.

**K:** The morning of the start was fairly typical for the Northwest: cool, overcast, etc, but not raining like in 2004. Then, once on the eastern side of the Cascades, the weather changed dramatically, it was sunny, and hot for Oregon, mid 80s, with little to no wind. Saturday night the

temperature fell quite significantly, dropping down to the mid 30s, and a weather system rolled in bringing with it intermittent rain, lightning, and a fairly constant headwind. The closer I got to Mt. Hood on Sunday, the stronger the head wind grew, at one point climbing out of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation between the head wind and the climb the best I could do at max power was a whole 5 mph - the slowest I ever went on the whole course. Climbing Hood, it began to rain intermittently and by the time I reached Timberline Lodge at the finish line it had begun to snow.

**S: You were one of only seven solo riders (of 19) to complete the course. What do you think caused so many DNF's this year?**

**K:** The number of DNF's really surprised me too. The final 90 miles of the race were just brutal. Bruce Carroll, fellow solo competitor who has raced the course the last three years, thought this year, by far, had the most challenging weather conditions he had seen. Rain was a factor at night but more decisive were the relentless head and cross winds. Given more favorable conditions, I'm sure the number of DNF's wouldn't have been quite so high.

In general DNF's come down to one of three things: mental willpower, preparation and fitness, and lack of proper nutrition and supplementation. The extreme hot/cold temperature variation made tools like Endurolytes quite critical. At one of the camps, I learned a real trick with the Endurolytes, if you get behind on your supplementation, chew one up. It's quite gross, but it really works fast. I strongly believe to avoid stomach difficulties it's critical to train to fuel, just as one trains to ride.

**S: If I remember correctly, you've been using a variety of E-CAPS products in your training and during RAO. What did your supplement program for RAO look like?**

**K:** All winter long I incorporated the same fuels and supplements I planned on using at RAO. For recovery, I've been using Hammer Whey religiously. While training down at PAC Tour Desert Camp I experimented with Recoverite. Leading up to RAO, to maximize the benefit of my training and get every possible edge, I pre-loaded with Race Day Boost for the four days prior to the event. Then at RAO in the morning I started with my morning supplement pack (3 fish oil, 1 packet Premium Insurance Caps, 1 baby aspirin, 3 Race Caps Supreme, 3 Mito-R, 4 Anti-Fatigue, 4 Tissue Rejuvenator). Before the race I'd made up

packets for each hour using the Hammer pill zip lock bags. For even hours I took 1 Race Cap Supreme, 1 Mito-R, 1 Anti-Fatigue, and 1 Tissue Rejuvenator. On odd hours I took everything in the even pill bag and added 1 one Super AO pill. In addition to the nutritional supplementation, I supplemented with Endurolytes, running 3 - 6 an hour, varying with the heat.



Wearing the champions crown.

**S: How about your fueling?**

**K:** During the race, I ran almost exclusively on liquid. For fuel, I used: Perpetuem, Sustained Energy, Hammer Gel, and some other non-Hammer nutrition shakes. The only caffeine I took for the entire race was the little caffeine I

ingested around 6AM on Sunday via my espresso Hammer Gel. Sustained Energy was a real savior for me. During a few parts of the course I found it very difficult to continue to eat any fat. The no-fat profile in Sustained wasn't something we had planned on using, but it became a critical component in my race nutrition.

**S: What were the high points for you during the race? What sections of the race route were your favorites?**

**K:** I really felt quite good over most of the race; an especially high point for me was racing down HWY 97 from Terrebonne to Madras. My crew had just left, to stop for gas and crew related duties, and I had just learned I was a little over an hour up. I had some back pain, and it mysteriously all vanished, even with a fairly strong 90 degree side wind I cooked along at round 30 mph before turning into to the wind and descending down into the Indian reservation. I learned after the race, that on this section, I caused my crew a slight scare, as they thought they had lost me as I was much, much farther down the road than they had expected me to be.

**S: Any low points?**

**K:** Yes, about 40 miles out from the finish, I came down with a respiratory infection. Climbing up Hood, breathing became harder and harder. I got quite severe pains in my side. Through all this, I kept thinking both about how good I would feel at the top, and the ultra cycling motto, don't stop for something that will clear up in a week or two. The respiratory infection was more than just painful. It was very, very frustrating. My legs felt relatively good, but without air, I couldn't quite deliver the power I wanted to the pedals.

**S: What advice would you give someone interested in doing an ultra distance event, such as RAO, for the first time?**

**K:** If at all possible pre-ride the course! Race Across Oregon holds three and four day camps one month out from the actual race. In 2004 I rode the three-day, then in 2005 I rode both camps. The importance of previewing the course isn't as much about logging miles which can be done anywhere, but rather about becoming intimately familiar with the climbs, turns etc. If you know where you are on a given climb they don't feel nearly as long and if you know the route you can anticipate every turn and never lose time getting off track.

**S: So what's next for you race-wise? Any thoughts of RAAM in 2006?**

**K:** On the 9th of July, in less than a month, my crew chief from RAO, Ben Larson and I are going to be racing the two-person format at the Fireweed 400 in Alaska. The plan for 2006 is to race as a two-person relay at RAAM. Ultra distance racing is evolutionary - races build on each other. Racing the two-person format in 2006 will help me build towards my ultimate goal of racing solo RAAM in 2007 or 2008.