

INTO THE RIDE #79

## Team RANS Wins RAAM

by Randy Schlitter

### **BUZZ JOB...meeting half the team and part of the crew on 6-23-09**

I tell you this has been a 100% intense thrill to be involved with RAAM 2009. Team RANS is the realization of implementation of many things, each important and in combination making a winning effort. Intense or not, I had to meet these people, and they were passing within 85 miles of Hays! I hopped into my fastest plane and buzzed south. Before landing at Greensburg where the runway actually meets the very highway Team RANS would pass by, I searched for signs of the team. They were already past Greensburg! That dashed my clever plan of standing by road at runways end, with plane standing by to wildly cheer them on. Instead I made a very low pass over the follow van and rider. The rider responded with a wave. It was Tim on the bike! I could recognize him from the air! Maybe it was the green tennis balls in his ears? I wagged my wings and he waved again.

I raced back to Greensburg and waited for Jerrell Nichols (our dealer in Montezuma Kansas) to arrive. He was there within 2 minutes of the scheduled ETA and we bolted down the road to intercept the team, armed with camera, home made cookies, and a fresh batch of RANS T-shirts (racers always love the gift of cookies, and clean shirts!). We reached them a few miles from Pratt, right on top of a rider switch. I had a chance to meet Glenn the fast Aussie, Sandy the crew chief, and Mark the mechanic who was expertly swapping a rear wheel, and Glenn relaxed and ready to do a shift. Then in an instant, off Glenn went as Tim came rolling up. Glenn was in the zone, and he is strong, and very strong on not only winning this thing but also posting a record time. The whole crew is in the zone; the two rider changes we witnessed were smooth like a choreographed dance. Sandy the crew chief is stellar, made me want to be a racer. She almost teared up at the sight of fresh clothing, such an event is not a rolling luxury hotel.

I felt part of something historic watching them work! My RAAM fever went up a few degrees beyond safe.

Tim's sprint ended with Glenn back on the road; I jumped in the van to chat. Tim was in great spirits, just like Glenn. We talked about the bike, and he said they have not used the F-5 yet, they like the Xstream, great power transfer, comfy ride, climbs on equal with a High-Racer. Then the visit was over - Tim's turn to ride.

They said to rush ahead and we might catch the RV at the Pratt TS. We rushed ahead but did not sight the RV. There was the unmistakable Team RANS van, with spare bikes on the roof, parked outside the Pratt TS.... which was the local Wal-Mart.. We went inside looking for team members and netted nothing in our 10-minute search. I assumed they were doing important shopping, since keeping 4 bikers fed and a full compliment of a crew going does have challenging logistics, so we decided to break off the search and head back to Greensburg, sad we missed the RV. *Instead I started hatching a plan to meet the whole crew in a couple of days.\** Besides we wanted to see the riders one more time before heading home. We popped out of the WM just in time to see them passing by. From the point we left them, they had to be hitting a solid 26 MPH average. Tim and I had discussed the heat and the wind, and how the southerly crosswind might actually be helping them over the DF riders; he seemed to agree, and enjoyed what little cooling effect the winds were having. I was happy that the speeds were not suffering for the lack of a tailwind. We waved to the passing Team RANS, cheering them on.

I was so glad to get the chance to meet and talk to at least part of the crew. I feel very confident about the effort and by Friday we all should know what this great effort would net -- I am hoping for nothing short of a win.

Some say it is about the bike, others the riders. As the designer of the bike, you would think it is all about the bike. I think it is always going to be a combination of things, because we don't just ride with our lungs and legs -- we ride with heart, and Team RANS for RAAM 2009 has a mountain of that.









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That heart took them to a victory, and a decisive one at that, beating the closest 4-man team by several hours, and even passing most of the 8 man teams. Team RANS crossed the USA in 6 days, 3 hours and 40 minutes, at an average speed of 20.46 MPH. What made this race so different than prior attempts

by other bent makers? Everything -- the competition, the weather, the course, the crew, the team, and the bike all added up to be RAAM 2009. You win the race you're in, not past races. Grading a victory against past efforts is great for analyses, but the impact of this victory is the same, it rang a bell loud and clear that recumbents are made for ultra racing. We hope that message will continue to ring, and maybe other teams will start adopting the platform. That is a tall wish, since the athletes that compete in this event are using it to spotlight their ability to sponsors. But our victory could catalyze more bent makers to sponsor teams, and if that happens, and if the starting line up at RAAM has an increasing percentage of recumbents in the line, it could be the beginning of a trend. My brother has done this race 3 times, in four and two man teams, then solo. The impact has been positive, and helped pave the way for our attempt. If all things had been equal, John's four-man team would have beaten us to the finish line by 36 miles, or 1:45 min. That is the calculated outcome using their average speed for 2005 by our time on the road for the 2009 course. Again it only makes sense to look at the numbers from one race to another if you are the competition. And we do look at the numbers and what past efforts have wrought. The RAAM race brings out controversy, good and bad character, and lots of testosterone. It also brings out the winners, and no amount of hindsight or speculation will take away our victory for 2009. Bacchetta owned the fast end of recumbent racing until things got a little "Xstream" at RANS.

## About The Bike

The Xstream was designed for this race. It took a few years to get it honed and into the starting line up, but the results are clear: it is a good platform for ultra racing. Perhaps the two main assets the Xstream has to offer are the comfort of a long wheelbase with low drag. There is great power transfer, and the seat is light and comfy. Over all it is a friendly riding bike, once you have the handlebar set dialed in. Getting a handlebar I really liked was the biggest challenge in developing the bike, and many sketches of articulated steering were done, but in the end the simple, reliable, and light riser/bar combo won. The idler is also a concern when it comes to real powerhouse riders. The team instantly worn down the stock idlers, and lucky for us all Pat Frantz jumped in almost overnight with a solution. Additionally, a titanium version Xstream was raced, along with aluminum bikes. I have not gotten the official conclusion if this bike is favored or not, but I noticed both Glenn and Tim riding it. Nobody bothered to weigh the bikes; they did install different (maybe lighter) wheels and switched out cranks, shifters on some. The frame, fork, and seat were stock, which is the core of any bike. My guess is the bikes were between 23 and 25 lbs. The racers seemed pretty dialed into the bike. I noticed Rick had his seat the most upright, and he was also the newest to recumbents. Karta looked like a perfect fit, and pretty aero. The reports I got was the bike was a comfortable ride to the point they weren't anxious to get off the bike after a shift. Karta was our MVP; as part of the reward he gets to keep the ti-Xstream. Great job Karta!

## Future XStream Development

What happens next? We think it is a great platform for racing, and with that proven it will be worthy of more investment of more development. Where that leads could be many directions -- carbon, Ti, and tweaking of a few things we learned racing. The main thing is the bike is becoming iconic and has the potential to be a top dog in racing. The design, although named Xstream, centers on being practical. Low seat height and stable handling made it easy to use, and therefore easy to love and fun to race. That being fun could have perhaps been one of the biggest assets towards our victory, and result in a bike that can have wide appeal. It is not a beginner's bike in the sense of performance, but plenty of first time riders have taken to the Xstream. Overall the mid-racer platform is something I am sure will we see more of from all corners of the bent world.

All of us at RANS offer a huge thanks to Team RANS for bringing recumbents into the lime light at RAAM 2009. And another huge thanks to all those who sent their well wishes and support for the

racers. Until next month ride safe, ride a lot, race a little and as always stay...into the ride!

*\* That did not happen, but we have hopes of meeting sometime over the next year, perhaps a 2010 RAAM pre-race meeting?*

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