

## GCG RAAM Facebook/Newsletter/Blog summary

**Nov 10, 2008:** Dave Armento, Frank Fuerst, Coach Tony Myers and Jerome Rossetti register the Georgia Chain Gang for RAAM 2009!

**Dec 10, 2008:** Georgia Chain Gang officially becomes a Team in Training team, dedicated to raising funds for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS).

**Dec 11, 2008:** We've received 2 lead gifts, one from Jack Margeson, the other from Mirome LLC, to kick off our fundraising. Each donation is for \$3200! THANK YOU for such generous commitments to our team and cause!

**Dec 12, 2008:** Our on-line donation page at Team In Training is now open to accept donations to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society:

<http://pages.teamintraining.org/ga/ambbr09/gachaingang>

**Dec 17, 2008:** Atlanta Cycling (<http://atlantacycling.com/>) signs on as our first sponsor - committing to supply the team with bikes, lighting, spares!

**Dec 31, 2008:** With fund raising just beginning, we raise almost \$8000 by year end.

**Jan 9:** We now have commitments from 8 crew members.

**Feb 7:** See the GCG featured in the Proud Moments column of the Atlanta Journal Constitution:

<http://www.ajc.com/living/content/printedition/2009/02/07/proudmoments0207.html>

**Feb 10:** Mel Zinger, CMT and LMT, joins the crew as the massage therapist.

**Feb 14:** Rider Frank takes a tumble on the Silver Comet Trail, breaking his hip and collar bone. He should make a complete recovery and is still hoping to ride in June.

**Feb 20:** We pass the \$10,000 mark in our fundraising for the Leukemia Society.

**Mar 2:** The GCG is proud to announce the addition of our fifth team member - Brennan Simkins. Brennan is 7 years old and recently diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia. Brennan is the true hero of our team and represents all those who are bravely battling blood cancers right now. He will be undergoing a bone marrow transplant in June at Children's Hospital of Atlanta. While he recovers this summer, he will serve as the emotional backbone of the Georgia Chain Gang as we both fight for a strong finish.

**Mar 5:** David Dowdakin signs on as our alternate rider, ready to ride if any of the original crew has to drop out before race day (after the race starts no subs are allowed!).

**April 5:** The GCG completes the Heart of the South 500, 517 miles, 35,000 ft. climbing, 24hr/day, in 30:22. This 5 minutes behind the record for a 50+ 4-man team. David Dowdakin rode as the sub for Frank, who is still recovering from his broken hip. See the link below for photos. Marshall and Debra Priest, Al Bodine, Chuck Murphy and Frank crewed.

**April 17:** We pass the \$20,000 mark in our fundraising for the Leukemia Society.

**May 1:** The team heads to Alabama for the weekend and 300+ miles of riding, including the Cheaha Challenge on Sunday.

**May 7:** GCG and LLS are beneficiaries of the first annual Atlanta Classic Bars Tour on May 23rd:

<http://www.atlantaclassicbartour.com>.

**May 8:** We pass the \$30,000 mark in our fundraising!

**May 27:** We pass the \$40,000 mark

**May 30:** We finalize the team roster, substituting David Dowdakin for Frank, who will move over to the crew.

Riders: Dave Armento, David Dowdakin, Tony Myers and Jerome Rossetti

Crew: Albert Bodine - chief, Debra Priest - chief, Jason Allison, Warren Bruno, Christi Condra, Frank Fuerst, Chuck Murphy, Marshall Priest, David Rossetti, Melanie Zinger

**June 1st:** Bowen-Hanes signs on as a team sponsor! Thank you Jay Bowen! (<http://www.bowenhanes.com/>)

**June 8th:** Atlanta Classic Bars Tour donates \$2400 of their proceeds to LLS for the GCG!

**June 10th:** The RV, one of 3 support vehicles, leaves Atlanta for Oceanside.

**June 11th:** \$50,000 raised!

**June 14th:** Jerome and Tony fly to Oceanside.

**June 16th:** \$60,000 raised!

**June 18th:** Everyone assembles in Oceanside and spends the day reviewing race plans and configuring the vehicles. Race photos are here: <http://picasaweb.google.com/georgiachaingang4>

### **June 19th1am: Greetings from Oceanside!**

The entire team and crew assembled together in Oceanside on Thursday and spent the day configuring vehicles, tuning bikes, meeting other teams, buying hats and t-shirts and scouring local bike stores and Wal-Marts for all the things we forgot. We even had time to take a walk along the beautiful beach here.

We did not meet up with our competition in the 4-man 50-59 age group. Jerome thinks they heard we have a Dawg on the team and are in hiding.

We barbequed and ate dinner around the pool of the luxurious Quality Inn, where several other teams are also bunking. Coach Tony finally relaxed a little even though there are many final details to work through.

Today we have all our official meetings with Race organizers, including bike and vehicle inspections. If we are even one minute late to meeting they will give us a 15-minute penalty! We are also all cramming to memorize the 70-page rule book.

Hey check out the Picasa album with Thursday's photos. Be sure to look at Jerome and Tony's handiwork on the rooftop sound system. Tony's iPod is loaded with all our favorite ATS music. We've tested the sound range to be at least 10 city blocks! This is the second set of speakers we've installed. The first we lost somewhere on the freeway in yesterday's trip to the San Diego airport....

June 19 late: News from Friday

A full day of meetings and inspections and official photos. We passed our inspections with flying colors thanks to Al and Debra's diligent and detailed preparation.

Our speaker system has turned out to be very popular with other riders and inspired at least one other team to rig up something similar.

### Oceanside Sights and Sounds

The beach and pier are popular hang out spots, although we didn't get to spend too much time hanging out. The biker/surfer bar will remember the GCG, especially Jerome when he showed up in his best pressed seersucker shorts. All that was forgiven when the bartender poured the last drop of Jagermeister...

#### Race Stats

Total entries - 59

Solos - 28

2-Person - 4

4-person - 18

8-person - 8

Countries - 11

Distance - 3022

#### Tactics - Rotation

Our PLAN is to split into 2 mini-teams, 2 rider on each. Jerome and Tony will ride first, alternating 2 hours on the bike, 2 off, eating and resting in the queen size air mattress in the back of our cargo van/pace vehicle. After 12 hours, Dave and David will start their shift, while Tony and Jerome will move to the RV to eat some more, get their massage and try to sleep as much as they can. Then the cycle repeats all the way to Annapolis. Of course this just a plan and it will be adjusted as needed as we progress.

The crew is also split into 2 teams - 5 members in each. While the riders will sleep in the RV, the crew during their off-shift will check into a few rooms at a motel. We'll move to a new motel every 24 hours, or about 400-440 miles.

Laird Hamilton, a world renowned surfer, has teamed up with Bally Total Fitness founder, Don Wildman, Rage Against The Machine bassist, Tim Commerford and Ironman participant, Jason Winn to form Team Surfing USA. They arrived in style with 3 mini-vans and a giant RV and were still configuring their vehicles 20 minutes before inspection. But then so were we....

#### June 21: News from Saturday and into Sunday

Sorry for the delay but we had no connections at the crew's "luxury" accommodations outside Borrego Springs CA. In fact we had no water, no electricity, no cell. No kidding! Once we all changed our mindset to accept that it is just going to be like a week long camping trip we stopped complaining.

Now we are sitting at time station 5 (mile 346) in Congress AZ (population 3000) doing laundry, getting groceries and enjoying the local hospitality. David Armento is about 5-10 miles away. But to backup...

The start was amazing. Teams from all over the world, assembled at the pier in Oceanside for photos and introductions by the race's celebrity spokesperson, Gabrielle Reese. Her husband, surfer god Laird Hamilton, had paddled down from Mailbu the night before as a warm up for the race.

All four of our riders rode out together. Once out of town the two Daves circled back to the RV, while Tony and Jerome began their 12 hour shift. Jerome hit some big climbs quickly, including Mt Palomar and on to 4500'. Tony took over for the huge descent down from the "Glass Elevator". The view from the summit was incredible. So was the wind, which buffeted Tony all the way down, making it hard to really descend at full speed.

Somewhere along here our rider got off course and was 15 miles down the road before the pace vehicle found him. This is not good, but also not uncommon. Jure Robic, the solo leader, got 30 miles off course on the first day.

Once down from the mountain we hit the desert and the riders had a 30+ mph tail wind that blew them along the course. Jerome and Tony rode until 5:00 am (2am local time) and gradually picked up time on a number of teams. Dave and Dave continued that through the early morning hours. Sunrise was at 5:30 and the temp has been climbing steadily ever since. Today is going to be one of the hardest of the race with the combination of the heat and big climbs into Prescott in the middle of the day (up and over 6000' pass) and then later in the day through Flagstaff (over 7000')

## **June 22 am: 425 miles in first 24 hours!!!**

As predicted the riding through the middle of AZ was some of the toughest riding in the race. Sedona was beautiful, but the route was very steep, temps hot, no shoulders and a lot of traffic. Every rider did their time and (mostly) kept their humor. Another long climb out of Flagstaff then a long long descent to Tuba City, AZ where we did a crew change. After driving for 16 hours all we could do was shower and fall into bed.

The team rode through the vast Navajo Indian reservation during the night Sunday, and crossed into Utah this morning. RV spent the night in Monument Valley and the riders woke to incredible views. Tony and Jerome are showering in the RV park right now, soon to catch some more sleep before starting to ride again in 4 hours.

The GCG has been racing neck and neck with the German team throughout the race. Tony thinks he "put them away" during the night. We have been close to a number of teams throughout the race and are ahead of at least 2 8-man teams. We have also observed at least one team beginning to show some signs of disintegration. Our team and crew are doing an amazing time keeping their cool and dealing with the sleep deprivation and fatigue.

Amazingly we are within 30 minutes of our ride plan and prediction of where we'd be after the first 36 hours. We'll be in CO soon.

## **June 23 am: The Rockies - Been There Done That!**

We rode through the toughest parts of the Rockies on Sunday and early Monday morning. Tony rode over the Continental Divide outside Chama CO Sunday afternoon. Jerome took it over the highest point on the ride, 10,250', between Chama and Antonito CO near midnight on Sunday. At 3:00 am, outside Taos, the pace vehicle had a flat tire which our Nascar worthy crew changed in 20 minutes. Dave and David took over in Taos NM (mile 1044) at 5:00 am Monday morning and soon completed the last big Rockies climb at 9,835'. From there it is all down hill to the Mississippi. Near Springer, NM (Mile 1140) the pace vehicle had its 2nd flat, which we scrambled quickly to fix. David D left Springer at 10:43 am and started down the road to Clayton NM. A swirling tailwind which can help but is also tricky.

Note the team completed 850 miles at the 48 hour mark!

Outside Springer the RV stopped to drop off a new tire with the pace vehicle and got stuck on the side of the road when the transmission got stuck in park. After 2 hours we finally got through to technical support (David Rossetti) to learn the secret switch to press to unlock it.

The RV is now in the rear chasing our other two vehicles to catch up before Clayton.

Meanwhile our off-shift crew is driving ahead to destination unknown to find a place to bunk... Fargo Springs KS, population 833 sounds inviting.

The best place to get the latest info on where we are is the RAAM site itself. You can find the location of the last time station we checked into (every 50-90 miles), our average speed, position versus other teams and even predictions of when we'll finish: [http://www.raceacrossamerica.org/raam/rcrankraamteam.php?s\\_N\\_Year\\_ID=2](http://www.raceacrossamerica.org/raam/rcrankraamteam.php?s_N_Year_ID=2)

Follow 'coachtonan' on Twitter, If you don't know what that is please do not ask Tony for instructions. He will answer you when he should be sleeping.

Our Route is incredible. We are taking the backroads "blue highways" tour of America. Some of you may be wondering if it would really be fun driving across America at 20 mph. Only the pace car is truly driving that slow with the rider. The other 2 vehicles are driving normal speeds leapfrogging ahead or catching up. We are seeing the good ole' US of A up close, including a lifetime share of RV parks, laundromats, local diners, bike shops and a Bates motel or two. Riding in the pace car has been fun as we get to blast our inspirational music (ATSers know what we're talkin' about) along the way. Of course all that may change as we enter Kansas...

Thank you for all your support during the race. Emails, Facebook notes, Tweets, texts and calls are all appreciated and

welcomed. Don't expect immediate response as any of us could be sleeping at any hour of the day.

FINALLY - Since the race started we've received another \$8000 in donations, getting us within spitting distance of \$70,000!

THANKS EVERYONE FOR THAT SUPPORT!

June 24, 9am: Kansas - Does it ever end?

Half way point at Pratt Kansas 5:00 am - 1509 miles in 3 days 11 hours 56 minutes!

Since descending from the Rockies in eastern New Mexico the riders have really taken advantage of the flats and some tail winds, averaging 21-22 mph consistently. They've gotten their overall average back up above 18. After leaving NM Tues afternoon we sliced through the panhandle of Oklahoma and entered Kansas late afternoon. By 5:00 am this morning the team was less than half way through the state, but past the half way point in the race.

IF we can maintain this overall pace we will make it to Annapolis by 5:00 pm on Saturday, just under 7 days.

Temps in Kansas hit 98 on Tuesday and we expect the same today. We've seen storms off on the horizon, but haven't hit a bit of rain yet. In addition to the temps and long monotonous distances the other hazard we've experienced are bugs. During the night time rider changes a passerby would think we were all doing a rain dance as we hopped around swatting monster mosquitoes while trying to get bikes off and on the pace vehicle.

Riders are all doing well, blood pressures normal and showing no signs of dehydration. All are being careful with hydration and a steady supply of electrolytes (attention Zipp Fizz, NUUN, Thermolytes it's not too late to sign up for a sponsorship!). Sleep is still their major concern. We've adapted our plan some to get each 2-person team (Jerome/Tony and Dave/Dave) into a motel for at least 4 hours a day for a good rest. They also catch what sleep they can on the airmattress in the pace van and also in the RV. Even with the huge levels of daily exertion and continual sleep deprivation the riders are all in great shape mentally.

Our biggest issue with the riders is that Tony's 450 song playlist is not long enough or diverse enough. The pace crew has a new responsibility to edit the playlist on the fly based our knowledge of each riders tastes. Jerome likes good rock avoids techno. Tony loves techno and even gave us a lecture about how the techno "artists" have a lot in common with Bach. I think he was hallucinating. Dave A music tastes are like his food tastes - he ingest whatever is in front of him. We watched him eat 2 buffalo burgers, 2 mile shakes and a mass of fries at one dinner stop. The only one who can eat more than Dave A is David D, whose already enormous appetite is now running at warp factor 10.

While riding, the riders ingest the usual mix of synthetic athletic juices, goos and powders, although each have their special favorites. We also fix a continual flow of PBJ and deli sandwiches, throwing in vegetables and fruit as we can. We are half way through the supply of frozen Rossetti lasagna and it is by far the favorite of riders and crew.

The crew is also in great spirits. We have gotten to know each other REALLY well. We struggle to get enough sleep too and are fielding a constant barrage of planned an unplanned tasks, but all have managed to keep our senses of humor and adventure. We all had some doubts, but it is turning out to be a great experience for us as well. The riders are eternally grateful to Mel our massage therapist and Christi our nurse and all around caretaker. We all do our share of laundry, shopping, driving and navigating. Warren is only 10% of the way through his joke repetoire and giving us sensitivity training. He is also another hero on our team.

Progress Forecast: We should be crossing the border into Missouri at 5:00pm today, 96 hours from the start. Missouri starts flat but will be some good climbing in the Ozarks. All times are race time (EDT).

## **June 25th am: Kansas - Check! Missouri - Check!**

Kansas was tough. We recorded temps of 104 in the shade during the day. Dave A and David D rode from 5am to 5pm on Wed through the worst of the heat, but still kept up a 20+ mph pace the whole time. Total mileage on Day 4 was 469, after doing 425/425/419 the three days before. We've reported on some of the hazards in Kansas yesterday. The riders also discovered they needed to watch out for turtles crossing the road. Jerome avoided several only to hear them get crunched by the pace vehicle behind. Tony tactic was to just ride over them. RAAM took its toll on the turtle population.

We rode through Ft Scott, last town in Kansas, at 4:55 pm on Wed. Just as we were leaving town one of Jerome's crank arms fell off from a loose bolt. While he got on his other bike we worked to do the repairs. By the time we had it fixed he was 20 miles down the road. 40 miles later we ran into a major thunderstorm with high winds and had to pull Tony off the bike for 45 minutes.

Most of Missouri passed in the dark. We crossed the Missouri River 3 times and will be across the Mississippi by noon today. Then on to Illinois and Indiana.

We've had our share of lost ride time so far: 40 minutes one day when our rider made a wrong turn, 20 minutes near Taos for our first vehicle flat, and the the storm. Still we are proud to say we've gotten no time penalties.

You may have heard that the same day Lance Armstrong made a plug for the surfer team on Twitter, one of their riders had a fall and broke his ankle. They also had vehicle trouble. Late last night they pulled out of the race. Jerome is disappointed as he wanted to challenge Laird Hamilton to a Jagermeister drinking contest in Annapolis.

Our two mini-teams of Jerome/Tony and Dave/David seem to be well matched. J/T are constantly advising/coaching/enabling each other, and Jerome knows when to just say bull\*\*\*. Tony is a joy to be with as he knows everything, and even if really doesn't he makes it sound convincing. They also both like to share a footlong subway turkey and swiss plain. Dave A keeps the crew jumping with a constant stream of requests (yes men can also be called high maintenance), whereas David is so polite and happy to be here he is asking the crew if he can do anything for them. The crew also knows Dave A has a standing order for cheeseburgers. Dave D takes one too, but also vegetables of any kind we can add at the same time.

We are making our 2nd urgent care stop for one of our crew members. Marshall got a couple of shots in Oceanside (he CLAIMS it was for bronchitis or strep throat...). Warren seems to be getting a sore throat too, so we are stopping near St. Louis this morning for a quick checkup. We knew he was starting to get sick when he said "I got a joke stuck in my throat" as his jokes normally flow fast and furious.

Overall the riders are still doing great. They are averaging 18.1 mph overall and riding well on the flats and rollers and climbs. Still 2 and a half days to go and the hardest section of the race lies ahead in West Virginia. We will be there on Friday. They've had some minor aches and pains, but nothing serious so far. Jerome is wearing 2 pairs of bike shorts to help with some saddle soreness; Tony has had some stomach upset. Dave A, who a year ago was not riding (just swimming 4 hours a day to train for a swim across the English Channel), doesn't seem to have any problems - or if he is he is not letting on. Dave D is just race horse.

The crew is also doing well and in good spirits. Special kudos to Al and Debra for keeping this caravan and all of us together with such grace under fire. In addition to all the well wishes, we also appreciate all the suggestions and requests for info. For those of you who've gotten no response or not seen your suggestion implemented, do not feel bad. We aren't taking ANYONE's suggestions. We just don't have time to do anything but tend to our own and the riders needs in a 24x7 race.

Some of your great suggestions that will have to wait until next time include: "can you transmit a continuous stream of lat/longs to a map so we can get a real time view of where you are. You can probably pick up the equipment you need by calling around to a UPS hub..." "can you get some small web cams to mount on the riders helmets, probably have them at Radio Shack..." "There is a wonderful spa outside of Sedona where that you can get a great massage and meal for the riders..." "I might fly in to see you, can someone pick me up at the airport in St Louis..." All well meant, and great additions to the book we will be writing on RAAM logistics.

Annapolis arrival forecast: 5:00 pm on Saturday 6/27. Be there! The team will stay at the Courtyard Marriott. The big party is Sunday at Pussers at the Marriott Waterfront. We'll be celebrating on Saturday night too.

June 25th late:

Today was a very rough day for the Chain Gang and in particular for our teammate Dave Armento. Late this morning, outside of Effingham, IL, the route went on a couple mile section of very bad road, with a lot of gravel everywhere. While negotiating a turn Dave fell. Even though he was going slowly he fell hard on his hip. It looked bad right away as Dave was not able to stand on it and was in intense pain as the crew helped him into the pace van. Fortunately there was a hospital just 3 miles away and we got him to the emergency room. X-rays revealed he broke the very top of his femur. He is scheduled for surgery Friday afternoon to pin it.

Dave's wife Carrie is flying out to be with him on Friday and transport him back to Atlanta a few days later. Team nurse Christi is staying with him as well.

The team, with Dave's insistence, is continuing the race with 3 riders, but the riders and crew do it with heavy hearts.

Dave is extremely disappointed. He has been training for this for the last year, putting in all the time needed for such an huge endeavour. He was also shouldering his share of the effort every mile of the race. He seemed to come off the bike more psyched each day. Some of you may know that he has an incredible record of personal achievement, climbing mountains all over the world, completing an Ironman triathlon, swimming around Manhattan Island and a first attempt to swim the English Channel. RAAM was as fun and challenging as anything he has ever done.

Please keep Dave and his family in your thoughts and prayers as he goes through his surgery on Friday and the rehab that will follow.

### **June 26th:**

Dave's accident initially threw the entire crew for a loop both mentally and physically. We all struggled to get that Georgia Chain Gang mojo back. The normal 16 hour crew shift turned into 24 hours; riders had to get back on the bike early; we all worried about Dave and missed his constant good cheer and optimism. We also missed Christi who stayed behind with Dave. Two people out of 14 might not seem to be a huge difference but it is. With crew it is all hands on deck at all times. Of course with riders it means they now ride 8 hours a day instead of 6.

But RAAM is all about being resourceful on the road and we are doing that. The riders are very strong and are stepping up to the challenge. We are adjusting their schedules to maximize down time in the RV. That means skipping their motel layovers. They are getting sleep but not "freshening up" much.

After leaving Effingham we hit the Indiana border at dusk. Most of Indiana passed by in the night. We encountered a lot of rain and had to stop riding for over an hour at the Time Station in Bloomington IN. Many thanks to the TS crew in Bloomington for the great set up they had for riders in the CVS parking lot. Many thanks to Courtney of the College Mall Chick-Fil-A there too. Chick-Fil-A is providing us with free food along the way. When it became apparent we would not make closing time at College Mall, Courtney insisted on waiting with all our food in warming packs in her car in the parking lot. She's also a Gator! We love you Courtney!

At 8am this morning we were at the Ohio border and the skies were clear again.

By 1pm today the crew has caught up with their sleep (at least by RAAM definitions) and we can get back our normal rhythm. Al, Jason, Warren and I are in Oldenburg IN about to pack the mini-van and hit the road. The 3 riders along with David R, Chuck, Mel, Debra and Marshall have been cruising through OH all day after. Right now they are about 50 miles from crossing the Ohio River into West Virginia.

This remaining section of the route is the toughest of the race because of the constant climbing, but the riders are

beginning to smell the barn.

Update on Dave

The hospital staff in Effingham have been great to both Dave and Christi. Dave is much better spirits this morning. Carrie should be arriving shortly and he'll have surgery this afternoon. He will begin physical therapy the next day. Carrie will drive him home on Sunday or Monday.

### **June 27th: Day 7 - A Race to the End**

Today should be the final day of the race and it is exciting. Right now the Georgia Chain is locked in a battle with the German and Brazil teams for 7th place overall among all 4-person teams (all ages and sexes). At 1:45 we passed time station 48 (mile 2837 and 180 miles from the finish), the German team is 20 minutes ahead of us and the Brazil team is 45 minutes behind. We've seen these two team throughout the race, but it has gotten to be really tight here on the last day.

It has been hard riding ever since we entered West Virginia (mile 2600) around 6:30 pm on Thursday (yesterday's report was wrong about how close we were -- sorry reporting was done about 200 miles behind the riders as we drove to catch up). The West Virginia and western Maryland sections of the route are the toughest in the race. The climbs, overall fatigue and the loss of one rider, took their toll and overall average mph dropped from 18 to 17.25.

Still our riders are all healthy and riding well, just hammering out the miles. they know that many family and friends are waiting here at the finish line to cheer them in.

Note that the Chain Gang is the only 4-person team now riding with 3 riders.

Update on Dave Armento

Dave had his surgery Friday afternoon. His wife Carrie was with him when he came out of recovery. Dave's spirits and good and he has already begun a little therapy and gotten himself into a chair. When we talked, however, all he was interested in was hearing how the team is doing. He is already planning a come back and recruiting existing crew and team for another shot in the future.

That thought is daunting, but also a testament to what a wonderful time both riders and crew have had and how we all truly worked as a TEAM in a race that is as much about logistics, preparation, resourcefulness and mental toughness as it is about physical endurance.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Your support and encouragement continue to be so inspiring to everyone. Many apologies to all for the emails, calls, texts that were never acknowledged or answered. The dazed and harried state of the crew is the only excuse, not to mention our overall need to protect and care for the riders.

### **June 28th 1:26 am - Finish Line**

7 days 8 hours 6 minutes!

Amazingly, after 3000 miles it turned into a real race to the finish as the Georgia Chain Gang was close to several other teams all day Saturday.

At time station 51, 50 miles from the finish, Team Brazil had a 20 minute lead on our guys. Tony and Jerome decided to ride together in a pace line, taking turns drafting and pulling each other in an all-out effort to catch them. David Dowdakin traded off with T & J and rode solo when needed to give them a break, and never let the pace flag for a moment.

When our guys finally caught Team Brazil they blew by them. The Brazilians made a vain attempt to catch up by making frequent rider changes, but it was too late. The Chain Gang arrived at the finish 10 minutes ahead. They had made up 30

minutes in that last 50 miles.

You may notice that our team is the only entry in the 4-Person Male 50-59 Age group, so for comparison we marked our times against the youngsters racing in the 4-Person Male Under 50 group. Our time would have placed the team in 5th place in that group. Across all 4-Person teams (all ages and including Mixed teams) the Chain Gang would have placed 8th.

Of course the real accomplishment was finishing and especially doing it as a 3-person team for the last 1000 miles.

For riders this will undoubtedly be one of the greatest achievements of their lives, something they will never forget. For crew it was an incredible experience as well, nothing like anything any of us have ever done. We won't ever forget it either.

We all miss our fallen team mate, Dave Armento, he was in all our thoughts as we celebrated at the finish in the wee hours of the morning.

**June 29th** - Heading back to Atlanta. Over \$75,000 has been raised to-date!