

SPORTS

'85 Race Across America offers stiff challenge to Aggie cyclist

By ED CASSAVOY
Sports Writer

The distance between Huntington Beach, Calif. and New York City is 3,000 miles as the crow flies. But Bob Benorden won't be taking the straight trip or following any crow's path. He's going to use a bike.

Eleven days of grueling competition, starting July 21, is what's in store for Benorden as a participant in the 1985 Race Across America (RAAM).

The race is an elite competition of between 30-40 cyclists who must overcome a number of problems — in and out of the race.

For Benorden, a senior computer science major at Texas A&M, it's only his third competitive race, his

first RAAM. Despite that, he has set realistic goals for himself.

"My first goal is to finish the race," says Benorden. "I have to finish in less than 48 hours (of my divisional winner's time) to be an official winner. I think I can do that."

"The second goal is to help me prepare for next year's race. It would allow me to be a lot more competitive in the next race. And if I do well, it will be easier to get sponsors."

Sponsors are a major concern of Benorden's for one big reason — money. Because he comes from the ranks of the unknowns, companies are a little leery of sponsoring Benorden.

"All the major bike companies are

taken by the top riders," Benorden says.

Benorden estimates that the top cyclists will each spend \$10,000 to pay costs incurred in competing in the '85 RAAM.

Benorden hasn't got that type of financing yet, but he does have \$2,000 of his own money committed to the transcontinental race.

"I have five proposals out to different companies," Benorden says, "and I will have some money coming in. I may get clothes and other equipment for the race."

And how did Benorden get involved in this rather unusual competition? In a rather ordinary way.

"I used to be a marathon runner," Benorden says, "but I developed

knee and hip problems. So, to keep in shape, I switched to cycling.

"I entered the Spenco 500 (bike race) and then found out about long distance racing. I have been training since last year (for the RAAM)."

Benorden says there are two ways to enter the RAAM; either you're invited, which is the case with top riders, or you have to qualify.

Benorden qualified by placing sixth in the 700-mile John Marino Open bike race in Capon, Ill., on May 20.

But even though he's qualified for the RAAM, Benorden must solve a manpower problem.

"I need a two to three people, college students, (for a support crew) and I prefer someone who knows something about bikes," he says.

Benorden says committing to work as a RAAM crew will probably mean volunteering for 2½ weeks during July.

He says the crew would drive his truck during the race, usually about 20-22 hours a day, and make any repairs that the bikes might need. Benorden says fixing flats will be the majority of the work.

"They would have to follow about 10-feet behind me during the night, so I could see with the (truck's) headlights," Benorden says. "During the day, they would have to keep in touch with me every hour to give me water (especially on the hot roads of New Mexico and Arizona) and switch bikes if case of a breakdown."

Benorden has two bikes for the race — a Peugeot PGN10 12-speed and a Schwinn 18-speed.

He says he estimates it will take him 11½ days to finish the 3,136-mile race.

"I figure I can do 1,000 (miles) in three days," Benorden says. "It's new territory after that. That's when you're looking at another seven days ahead of you."

"That's where the crew comes in. They can help keep morale up."

As for his hopes of getting a crew assembled before the race, Benorden says, "I'm not sure I'm going to have much choice in the matter."

Anyone wishing to help Benorden on his Race Across America team should contact him at College Station home before 10 a.m. at 693-6786. He can be reached at work by calling 845-4802.



Photo by ANTHONY S. CASPER

Race Across America hopeful Bob Benorden (above) — "I figure I can do 1,000 (miles) in three days. It's new territory after that. That's when you're looking at another seven days ahead of you. That's where the crew comes in. They can help keep morale up."

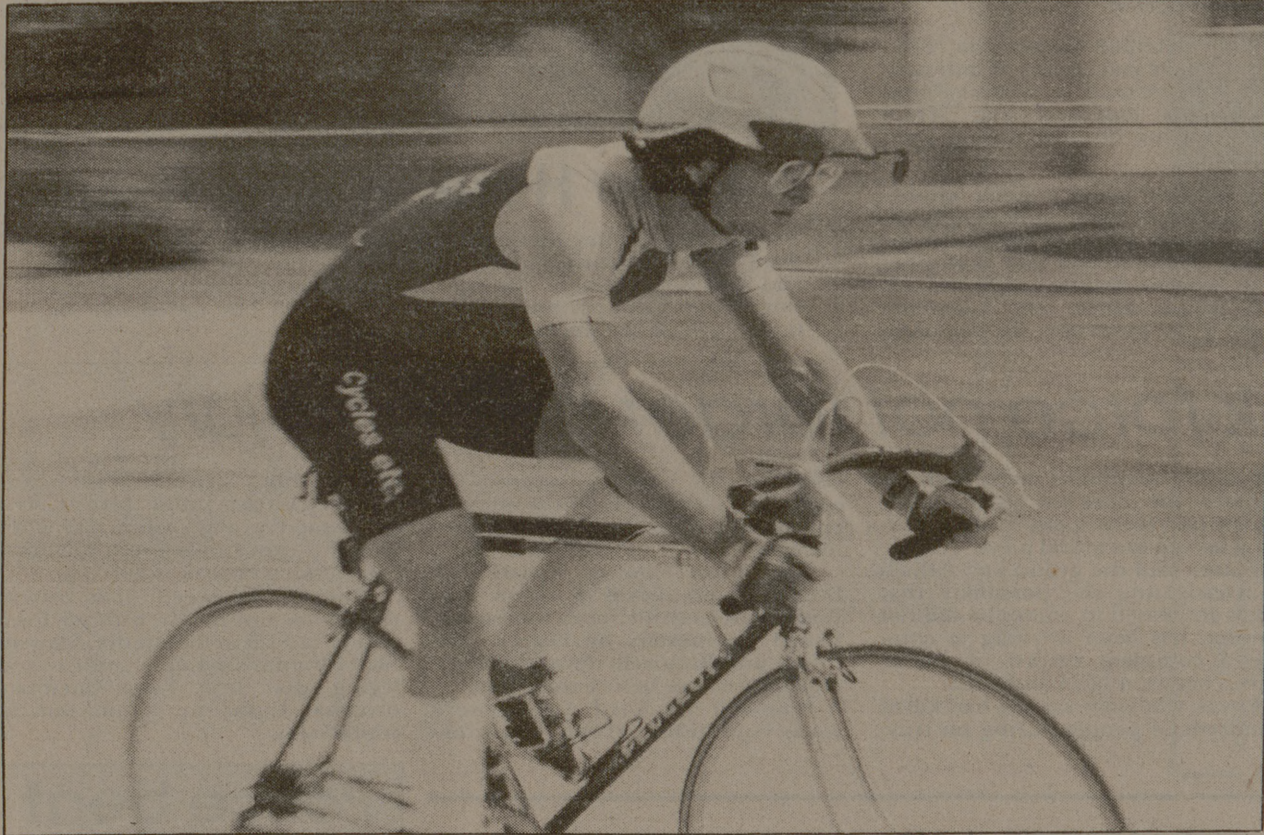
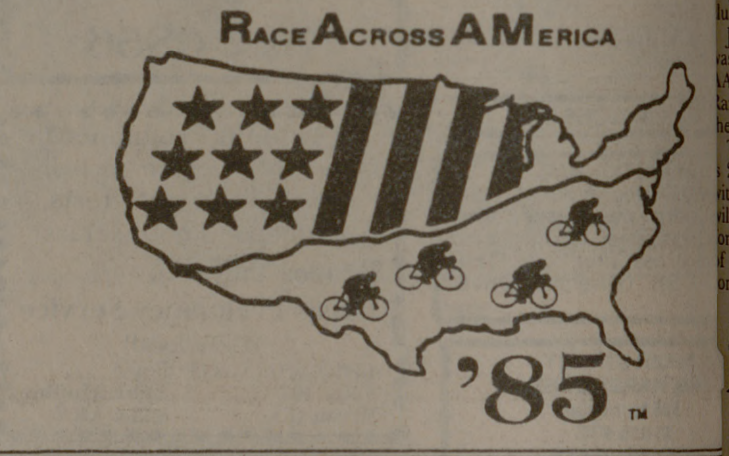


Photo by ANTHONY S. CASPER

Texas A&M senior computer science major Bob Benorden (above) trains on the streets of College Station for the upcoming 1985 Race Across America, a grueling 3,136-mile bicycle race from

shores of Huntington, Calif. to New York, N.Y. The '85 RAAM begins July 21 with nationwide television coverage being provided by ABC's Wide World of Sports for the fourth straight year.



Spurs near agreement to shift home court for '86

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — The San Antonio Spurs and the Freeman Coliseum Advisory Board are near an agreement that would move the National Basketball Association team to the coliseum by 1986, a board member says.

John Steen Jr. said the two sides have not reached an agreement, but one is imminent on a 10-year lease on the coliseum.

Spurs owner Angelo Drossos earlier had said he wants to move to the coliseum this year because of heavy construction around the Convention

Center Arena.

The Spurs have been playing at the arena for 12 years.

Drossos said earlier the NBA franchise will have to play another season at the arena because modifications at the coliseum could not be

made in time for competition.

"I want to stop short of saying we have an agreement," Steen said. "But there was a lot of skepticism about this and we felt like we should let people know that we have made lots of progress."

The coliseum is owned by the county and operated by members of the Coliseum Advisory Board, who are appointed by the county commissioners.

Steen said the Spurs have tentatively approved a plan to pay for \$3

million in improvements on building.

Some improvements would be paid for with county revenue under the plan.

Improvements will include lighting, seating and sound systems.

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