Proposed RAAM Qualification Standards for 24-Hour Events

Background

The RQ System as presently configured is comprised of 44 races - 32 Road Races and 12 Time Trials. Two of the Time Trials are fixed-distance races run on a time trial course concomitantly with 24-hour time trials – The Gulf Coast 511 and Tejas 500. In addition, there are two events that do not fit in either of those 2 categories – the PAC Tour Elite Transcontinental and HardCro Ultra Race.

RAAM started in 1982. The first RAAM Qualifier in 1984. The RQ began as a way to screen out unqualified racers – that is those who were unlikely to finish RAAM.

Completing a RQ does not prepare you for RAAM – it's but an initial step on the road to RAAM.

From our perspective, today RQs serve two main purposes within the sport of ultra-bicycle racing: 1) attract "local" riders to the sport of ultra-bicycle racing; and 2) provide an opportunity for those riders heading for longer events to develop their ultra-racing skills. We recommend all racers heading for RAAM – both solo and team – participate in one or more RAAM Qualifiers.

You must endeavor to make your event a great event irrespective of its status as a RAAM Qualifier. Most of your riders will likely be local/regional. Your event must stand alone. Having RAAM Qualifier status helps provide global recognition, but it will not insure your event will be successful. Toward that end we both must promote your event. You should focus on attracting local/regional riders. We will promote your event on a national/global scale. Together we'll work to promote recognition and participation. If all goes well, you will begin to attract the top riders from around the world. This almost certainly will add to the cachet of your event and help it grow.

Recent History of RQ Standards for 24-Hour Time Trial RQs

Shortly after taking control of the RQ System we made the decision to simplify the standard for RAAM Qualification. Over the past couple of years, several event owners have expressed concern that they might be losing riders to other races because, with the single 400-mile standard, some riders may opt for the flatter, easier courses to qualify for RAAM.

We're not sure how often that actually occurs - we think less than one might expect. We think more often than not riders come to race. Truth be told, that is not the best way to approach RAAM. In any case, we believe other factors have greater influence on where they choose to race.

Another concern, which is of greater significance, is that the single 400-mile standard does not recognize the differences between men and women. One of our long-term goals is to attract more women to the sport. Based on our analysis of RAAM finishers the difference between the speeds of men and women is roughly 7.5%.

Time for a Change

After studying the problem and testing different standards these past couple of years, we're ready to make a change. There are 2 fundamental ways to approach the problem: 1) develop and apply a rigid ranking system which establishes a standard for each course; or 2) take a simplified approach, focus on the most important factor(s), and use this to establish several groups in which like courses would fall.

Factors Affecting Difficulty

We believe the most important factor is elevation gain – feet/mile (meters/kilometer). The nature of the elevation gain – number, frequency and gradient – play a role as well. And, of course, weather.

Ultimately, we chose the simplest approach:

1. Compute elevation gain for each course
2. Establish a "flat course baseline" – 400 miles for men
3. Group similar courses in several categories
4. Adjust the standard for women by 7.5% - "flat course baseline" – 370 miles

We looked at ten 24-hour Time Trial RQ races. Following are 4 broad categories, the RQ standards for those categories, and the RQ standards for those ten courses:

0 – 25 feet/mile – RQ Standard: Men 400 miles/Women 370 miles

- Mid-Atlantic (Washington, NC) – 6.9 feet/mile
- Bessie's Creek (Brookshire, TX) – 9.1 feet/mile
- Sebring (Sebring, FL) – 10.2 feet/mile
- 6-12-24 Hour WTTC (Borrego Springs, CA) – 18.9 feet/mile
- IL24TE (Urim, Israel) – 24.1 feet/mile

25-50 feet/mile – RQ Standards: Men 380 miles/Women 350 miles

- Melfar (Middelfart, Denmark) – 35.1 feet/mile
- A new yet to be named event – 39.1 feet/mile
- Texas Time Trials (Glen Rose, TX) – 47.7 feet/mile
- Pace Bend (Austin, TX) – 50 feet/mile

50-75 feet/mile – RQ Standards: Men 360 miles/Women 335 miles

No races at present

75-100 feet/mile – RQ Standards: Men 340 miles/Women 315 miles

- Brands Hatch (London, UK) – 88.8 feet/mile

Some of these events are run on a single loop and others a combination of 2 or 3 loops. To calculate elevation gain for the multi-loop events, we weighted each loop based on the estimated number of

circuits of the loop and/or time spent on each loop. These vary depending upon event rules. We used the best available information.

Finally, please bear in mind, the proposed standards would not be “cast in stone” as to RAAM Qualification. For example, if weather conditions are so bad, that nobody meets the qualification standard, we may upon analysis and consultation with the race director, issue RQ status to certain of the riders.