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NIU professor wins Race Across the West

By Troy Murray - Daily Chronicle



Paul Carpenter leaves work on the NIU campus for his bike ride home. Carpenter rides to and from Batavia each day, rain or shine. EMILY OLSON | emolson@daily-chronicle.com

Some might think a 1,044-mile bike race would satisfy any health enthusiast or bike rider's hunger for exercise. Not in this case. Not for a guy who practically has “exercise” in his job description as a kinesiology department head at Northern Illinois University. Not for a guy who commutes 60 miles total by bike everyday from his home in Batavia to his job at NIU. And definitely not for a guy that dominated the competition. Paul Carpenter was the only official rider to successfully tackle his surroundings and finish the Race Across the West - which ran through California, Arizona, Utah, Colorado and New Mexico while giving the United Kingdom native an opportunity for sight-seeing while on his bike - traveling at an average speed of 12.51 mph. “This was the most challenging ride I've ever done,” Carpenter said. “It wasn't an easy thing to do. Some people can't understand why you do it, it's so incredibly hard. The hardest thing to deal with is the peaks in the desert. It gets up to 116 degrees. There are some very long climbs up there in the desert also, 10, 12 mile climbs. They get very hard because of the heat.” The terrain and temperature peaks kept the competition's seven other riders from finishing in the allotted time. Riders were given three days and 20 hours to complete the race. Carpenter finished in three days, 11 hours and 27 minutes and had confidence time wouldn't be a problem even before the event. “For me, the satisfaction was completing the event,” Carpenter said. “That was my primary goal. The goal wasn't to win. I didn't gain any satisfaction from the fact that other people dropped out because of medical reasons or fatigue or exhaustion. I know they were disappointed and I was disappointed for them.” Now, Carpenter is turning his attention to a ride nearly three times as long as

the Race Across the West - the event's 3,000-mile sister competition, the Race Across America (RAAM). By winning the July 8 Race Across the West, Carpenter officially qualified for the Race Across America for the next two years. The only thing that stands in his way: funds. Carpenter estimated that RAAM costs between \$15,000-\$20,000 - money raised with the help of friends, family and local businesses - because of costs dealing with his trailing crew and the gas and mileage that goes along with following a biker for that long of a race. "These things aren't cheap to do," Carpenter said of his very long-distance bike competitions. "They cost a lot of money for the support crew that you need and all the vehicles you need. It takes time to raise the money, too. I don't know if I'll have enough time to raise the money for next year, but I'm definitely going to continue riding."