

July 31, 2007

Bikers carry message for kids

Cross-country trip makes stops at Boys & Girls Clubs, detention centers

By Will Bigham, Staff Writer



Kristian Dorcen of Canada picks up his bicycle before heading out on a 10-week cross-country trek to New York City. The team, named "Unleash America's Passion," plans to stop in 25 cities along the way to speak with teens about positive self-development. (Will Lester/Staff Photographer)

CLAREMONT - Equipped only with water, sunscreen, and food in "goo" form, a duo of long-distance cyclists embarked on the first leg of a cross-country journey Monday afternoon from Pitzer College.

The cyclists, Kristian Dorcen and Ali Amiri, are co-directors of a cycling squad named "Unleash America's Passion."

The cycling team will travel from Claremont to New York over a 10-week period, stopping in metropolitan areas to give motivational speeches to young people.

Dorcen and Amiri planned to take service roads alongside the 15 Freeway during their trip Monday to Hesperia, a distance of about 50 miles.

Today and Wednesday, the duo will make the 200-mile trip to Las Vegas facing temperatures forecast at nearly 110 degrees.

"It's a mode of exercise, and when you're on a good bike, and you're connected to that bike, in motion, sweating, there's nothing like it," said Dorcen, a native of British Columbia, Canada. "There's nothing like being in an activity for hours on end."

In Las Vegas, Dorcen and Amiri will be joined by two additional members of their cycling team. A fifth member will join the group in Chicago.

The group is scheduled during its cross-country journey to give motivational speeches on the subject of passion to Boys & Girls Clubs of America in 25 cities and juvenile detention centers. The aim of the group is to teach young people to identify what makes them passionate and encourage them to pursue it rather than drinking alcohol or doing drugs.

The young people benefit from "knowing that somebody wants to do something like this for them - this is empowering for us and them," said Dorken, 29.

In 2005, the cycling squad made a 4,000-mile journey by bicycle across Canada, stopping to give motivational speeches to young people.

Following the calling of their own passion - "Our passion is to cycle," Dorken says - the group decided to make a repeat trip, this time across the United States.

The journey will take them through some of the continent's harshest deserts, over the Rocky Mountains, and across the Great Plains to end eventually in Manhattan.

"We love facing challenges and inspiring people to work for what they want in their lives," Dorken said.

For transportation, the duo will ride six to eight hours a day on the same bicycles they used for their trip across Canada. Dorken estimates that his bike, a 20-speed Litespeed model he named "Storm," has logged 8,000 miles.

Each cyclist will travel with four water bottles, and for food the group will subsist by eating only from tubes of liquid food they call "goo."

"You don't want to eat when you're cycling for long distances," Dorken said. "Your body will reject it."

After delivering a half-hour presentation to about 150 young people who attended this year's Claremont SuperCamp, Dorken and Amiri strapped on their helmets and cycling shoes and mounted their lightweight bikes.

Campers lined the road and screamed enthusiastically as the cyclists rode off the Pitzer campus.

In 10 weeks, after biking 3,500 miles, Dorken and Amiri hope to get a similar reception in New York City.

Staff writer Will Bigham can be reached by e-mail at will.bigham@dailybulletin.com, or by phone at (909) 483-8553.