



Six days fifteen hours and 28 minutes after leaving San Diego, Team Donate Life triumphantly biked onto the Boardwalk at Atlantic City NJ and crossed the finish line of the 24th "Annual Insight Race Across America" at 8:49am EDT Tuesday, June 28, 2005.

The UC Davis Health System team of surgeons, physicians and nurses who traded in their scrubs for helmets and bike shorts rode 3051 miles at an average speed of 19.14 miles per hour, placing 2nd in the Corporate Challenge Division and were the 6th team out of 51 to finish the race overall.



The Team riders were (left to right): Back row: Eric Heiden MD, Chris Bowlus MD, Jason Weckworth, Felix Battistella MD. Front Row: Richard Perez MD, Paul Duncan RN, Lorenzo Rossaro MD and Jeff King PharmD. Jason is a living donor who gave one of his kidneys to his father and the physicians are all from the UC Davis Medical Center. Team Donate Life rode to promote awareness for organ donation and transplantation.

At the Start Line, San Diego Transplant surgeons and physicians, along with organ recipients and their families rode along with the Team for the Ceremonial first 13 miles of the Race. As they journeyed across the country, the Team took the time to share their message with people who came out to support the Race, giving out green "Donate Life" bracelets (similar to the yellow "livestrong" bracelets inspired by Lance Armstrong).

Driving a caravan of four minivans and three motor homes, the Team was supported by a crew of 15 which included many UCDHS employees, a 2005 UC Davis graduate and two organ transplant recipients. The challenges of the road included a few flat tires and a windshield cracked by a flying rock. Communication between the crew vans was frustratingly difficult and sometimes nonexistent due to poor cell phone coverage as they traveled through the Rockies and the Midwest.

Team Donate Life's strategy was to ride in two four-man relay teams for 8-10 hours at a time. While one team rode, the other team drove ahead about 200 miles to find a motel for a quick meal and a few hours of sleep. Sleep deprivation was the hardest challenge for both the riders and the crew, sometimes going two days with only 2-3 hours of sleep. The Team jokingly noted that their hospital career experiences put them at an advantage over the other riders because they were used to functioning in a sleep deprived state.

The race course took them through the heat of the desert, strong headwinds and various weather conditions. They encountered grueling climbs in elevation, at one time rising 3000 feet in about 40 miles of riding. On the last full day of riding, one of the relay teams rode from 4:30am to 7:30 pm through the mountains of West Virginia and Maryland, climbing a total of 18,950 ft.

Everyone is elated and proud to have crossed the finish line, agreeing that this was a life altering experience. "We started out with an idea of eight guys riding across the country for a good cause and ended up with the creation of an incredible team of people", said Rod

Weckworth, crew member and organ recipient, "We came together in a way you can never experience in normal life."

Team Donate Life has returned to Sacramento and will continue their mission of raising funds and awareness about organ donation. Visit their website at www.teamdonatelife.com

For the complete Press Release entitled from the race "**The Records, the Hardship, and the Glory of 2005 Insight RAAM**" click [here](#).

About "Insight Race Across America":

The Insight Race Across America has run every year since 1982, and since 2003 has followed its current route from San Diego, California to Atlantic City, New Jersey. *Outside Magazine has called it "The World's Toughest Race" and others have described it as "The Tour de France done the American way". Top individual racers pedal roughly 350 miles per day, burning 9,000+ calories and sleeping just 90 minutes. Two-person and four-person relays comprising men and women race non-stop, covering over 500 miles per day. The race's senior management and ownership is in the hands of Race Director Jim Pitre, current co-holder of the 2-person 55+ Team record, and Head Official Lon Haldeman, 2 time solo winner in 1982 and 1983. For further background and race history, please visit www.raceacrossamerica.org.

