

CYCLIST'S BID TO COMPLETE FAMOUS BIKE ROUTE IN 24 HOURS



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IT WILL be one day and night he will never forget.

Cycling-mad Richard Rothwell is about to embark on the challenge of a lifetime.

The school travel plan adviser will tackle a 210-mile Coast to Coast ride in one sitting, over 24 hours.

Richard, 38, will ride unaided through the gruelling trail, based on Wainwright's walking route, cycling through the night and not even stopping to eat or drink.

He hopes to become the first person to complete the route in one go and do it in less than 24 hours, between noon on May 16 and noon on May 17.

The route, which involves 8,000m of climbing, will take Richard through the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales, and North York Moors, from St Bees in Cumbria to Robin Hood's Bay in North Yorkshire, across some of the most challenging mountain-biking terrain in the country.

Because he is riding unsupported Richard will have to carry all the food he needs for the trip – a hefty supply of carbohydrates – with him.

He will be tracked using a GPS system so people can follow his progress on the internet using Google Maps.

He said: "I've done 24-hour races for a few years and the riding tends to be a little bit tame. So I decided I wanted to take on a really hard 24-hour race and this is about as hard as you can get."

"I've spoken to people in the mountain biking press and they think I'm a bit mad. According to all my research no-one's ever done it in one go and no-one's even thought of it."

"If I do it in 24 hours I will be over the moon."

Richard commutes by bike from his home in Morpeth to work in

Coasting into record books



GEARING UP: Mountain bike enthusiast Richard Rothwell, of Morpeth, is tackling the 210-mile coast to coast route in one go

North Shields, a daily round trip of 40 miles and even goes to meetings on his bike.

Though he has long used cycling as a means of getting about, Richard's competitive streak has only emerged in the last few years.

He has rapidly moved up the

ranks of the sport's elite and now takes part in endurance mountain bike races ranging from 10 hours up to 24 hours.

In July he will compete in the 24-hour solo World Championships in the Canadian Rockies and he is now training with a coach to build his

stamina. His preparations for the Coast to Coast, which he is completing as part of the Seven Deadly Spins, a series of national 24-hour challenges dreamed up by Richard and endurance race pals Rob Lee and Dave Buchanan, will involve eating and sleeping well, avoiding alcohol and making sure he is thoroughly hydrated.

On the day he will get up quite early, have a big breakfast, then wait two hours before getting going, riding all day and night and eating small amounts of food as he goes along.

Then it will be down to the weather to decide how quickly Richard will be able to finish.

He said: "The first 80 miles is the hardest, lots of massive climbs and big descents."

"Riding overnight is difficult but I really enjoy it, it's the best part. It's so atmospheric when there's no-one around, going across the fells on your own."

"At the end you're absolutely floored."

"When you stop you feel like you're dead and you can't do anything for a couple of days afterwards."

To follow Richard's progress visit www.the7ds.com

Move backed

CHILDREN in the region are in favour of new measures to cut tobacco promotion, according to a survey by Cancer Research.

The national survey of 11 to 16-year-olds, which included North East teenagers, shows 64% of youngsters want cigarettes put out of sight in shops.

Fresh Smoke Free North East is calling on Parliament to back new moves to make smoking history for more children in a crucial vote in the House of Lords tomorrow.

Ailsa Rutter, director of Fresh, said: "Cigarettes are marketed as the ultimate forbidden fruit. They're advertised in lavish displays, yet teenagers aren't allowed to buy them."

Cheats guilty

MORE than £9,000 of illegally-claimed benefits have been recovered from four cheats.

Wayne Smeaton, 40, of Wilberforce Walk, Gateshead, pleaded guilty following a probe revealed a bank account he failed to declare. He received a 12-month community order.

Sean Hopkins, 32, of Stainton Drive, Gateshead, pleaded guilty to illegally claiming more than £2,500 in benefits. He was fined £100.

Shaun Findlay, 24, of Heyburn Gardens, Benwell, Newcastle, pleaded guilty to illegally claiming more than £700 in benefits. He was fined £150.

Kevin Morley, 46, formerly of Burnhills Gardens, Greenside, pleaded guilty to claiming more than £1000 in housing benefit and was fined £100.

Fitting fusion

KARATE and aerobics have been combined in a new class called 'karatercise'.

The unusual fusion has been created at Gateshead's Go Maru Defence centre in Fewster Square, Leam Lane.

The new class puts kicks and punches together with traditional aerobics moves, all performed to music.

Instructor Mike Farrow has spent the past year developing the techniques and has even come up with three levels of karatercise.

Beginner classes take place on Tuesday mornings.

But Mike hopes to extend the sessions to afternoons and evenings when people move on to the next level.

For more information call 0191 4206286.