

With Stamina on the Bike!

Reinhard Geisler, PG O3, completed his first Paris – Brest – Paris ride

Bicycling 1,200 km (750 miles) for four days straight, day and night, with only nine hours of sleep may sound impossible, but not for Reinhard Geisler, manager in PG's Service Operations (O3) in Orlando. He recently completed his first Paris – Brest – Paris ride, an exhausting 1,240.9 km bicycle trek from Paris to the port city of Brest and back, which must be completed within 90 hours in order to be a successful finisher. Geisler did it in 87 hours, 57 minutes – for a distance that is the equivalent of going from Orlando to Washington, D.C. He won a medal commemorating his finish, and got his name in the book of all cyclists who have beaten the 90-hour deadline since the race began in 1891.



Reinhard Geisler (left) on his bike during the Paris – Brest – Paris ride. The ride has a long tradition that goes back to 1891, the very beginning of the sport of cycling in France.

"THE HARDEST PART was the hills. Endless hills. It would take 15 minutes to go up one side, and then three to four minutes traveling at up to 40 miles-per-hour to go down the other side. Then you did it all over again. It was grueling," Geisler remembers. He completed a total of 10,390 meters (34,100 feet) of uphill cycling during the race.

More than 4,000 riders from around the world competed in the event held August 18–22, 2003. Geisler's group started at 10:30 p.m. "The nights were hard," he recalls. "The temperature would drop to around 6.6 °C (44 °F), which made you feel more tired. And many roads had no white lines, making it harder to see the pavement, even with lights."

Endurance was the winning ingredient in this event. "The

difficult thing was to let people pass and to pace yourself," he says, "And to have a strategy. I approached it like I would at work. I set objectives for myself, timetables, scorecards to measure my progress and remained focused on my final goal."

There were 15 control stations where racers checked in and had their ID cards swiped to record arrival times. Geisler was one of only few riders who used a Global Positioning System (GPS) to track his progress. He programmed the complete route, and the GPS told him his exact location, the time and distance he had to go to the next control.

His fondest memory is the enthusiasm and support of the French people. "I went through one small town at 1:45 a.m., and the town baker was outside with his family passing out bread, cake and water to the cyclists for free. It was fantastic!" Geisler exclaims.

Training period of only two years

Geisler's win is impressive considering he just started long-distance road cycling in November 2002. Since then he trained rigorously and completed enough brevets, or timed rides, to not only finish the Paris – Brest – Paris ride, but also to become the first Central Floridian to win the coveted Randonneur 5,000 km Award in the history since 1961 (Randonneuring is long-distance unsupported endurance cycling). Most cyclists take up to four years to cycle all necessary events. Geisler did it in one. "The entire experience has built up my confidence to accomplish things that I didn't think I could," he says. "I had fun! I didn't expect it to be so good!" ●