

# On their marks

## North Dallas cyclists ready for 100-mile Hotter'N Hell ride

By PAUL CULP

The Greater Dallas Bicyclist Club has 300 members, ages 40 to 76. About 60 percent of the members are male, average age in mid 40s. Half are single and a large number of the members reside and ride in North Dallas.

This time of year, at least 40 of the more determined members will head to Wichita Falls for the world famous Hotter'N Hell 100-mile endurance ride Saturday, Aug. 26.

Each weekend, GDBC members gather Saturday at 7:30 a.m. at a parking lot at Preston/Forest

Shopping Center or at 9 a.m. Sundays at Preston and Royal for a 30- to 50-mile ride. There are evening 25-mile rides and all kinds of special tours and events throughout the area, but the biggest is the nationwide Hotter'N Hell event which is 100 miles of heat, sweat and more heat.

Nearly 10,000 riders from all over the world will line up at the start line in Wichita Falls. Hotels are booked months in advance for the three-day fun and challenging event.

At the starting point, the riders will be packed four highway lanes



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**BIKING AROUND:** Mike Eipper, publicist for the Greater Dallas Bicyclists Club, waits for his friends to catch up. Eipper has regularly completed the Hotter'N Hell 100-mile Wichita Falls event in six hours, including rest stops. A few top riders can make the run in less than four hours.



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**LEMONADE BREAK:** Anne Baron stops for some lemonade at her daughter Elissa's stand set up along the Northaven bike route for the Great Dallas Bicyclist Club Sunday morning jaunt to D/FW International Airport. Jack Swain, homeowner, watches.

wide and about one mile deep. Then the group moves on to back roads for a 100-mile trip ending back in Wichita Falls to cheers of thousands of local well-wishers.

"If you start at the back of the mob it can take 45 minutes just to get to the start line," said North Dallas resident Mike Eipper, publicist for the GDB club and six-time rider in the event. "The ride is relatively flat, but wind and some hills and the heat can make it tough in parts. About 40 percent of the starters will finish the 100 miles while the rest will do 65 miles. Some of the top bicyclists can complete the long course in less than four hours. Most of us finish it in six or seven hours, including rest stops."

There will be 3,000 volunteers along the route to insure safety of the riders and provide refreshment.

The official home page for the event reports the rest stops will provide approximately 20,000 (195 cases) of bananas, more than 2,800 gallons of Powerade, approximately 9,000 oranges, 10,000 gallons of water, 8,000 pickles and more than 70,000 pounds of ice. Rest stops are provided at approximately 10-mile intervals with supplies, shade and resting places for the riders.

Anne Baron, North Dallas mother of an 11-year-old daughter, took up bike riding seriously in 2001. After a hiatus of several years, Baron joined GDB and has taken part in three Hotter'N Hell races and will return this year.

"Completing 100 miles is a goal that is amazing, considering it's in August in Texas," Baron said. "This year I'm riding tandem. At least I won't be suffering by myself," she added with a smile.

Baron considers bike riding an

adventure. She has a few scars to prove it, including one nasty spill where she ended up with a cracked helmet and another time a ride to the hospital for some stitches.

"Riders should always wear the helmet. I'm proof of it," she said.

Andrea Spica, a North Dallas GDB member, has been biking for more than 20 years and last year won the Texas Senior Games cycling event in the age group 50 to 55. Next year Andrea hopes to finish in the top two so she can compete in the nationals, which are held every two years. She first raced in the Hotter'N Hell event in Wichita Falls in 1986.

"The whole town comes out for the event. Everyone is friendly. The ride really gives the feeling of camaraderie," said Spica, who will ride the Hotter'N Hell for the sixth time this year.

Philip Watson, GDB club president, who has run the 100-mile event for 15 years, joked that the ride can give you nightmares.

"Riding a hundred miles really makes the bike seat, or saddle, a crucial component of the bike. After my first HNH, that night I dreamed I was with a group of cycling friends looking for a restaurant. We found one with chairs consisting only of bicycle seats on seat tubes," he said.

Brenda Barnell, vice president of GDB, who has only been riding three years, just completed a 3,000 miles ride from California to Atlantic City, N.J., in the 2006 RAAM four-person tandem event. Her team made the trip in 8 days and 5 hours riding 24 hours a day, averaging 15 mph, despite a 10,000-foot peak they crossed.

She and her partner would ride

1-hour shifts. A second tandem team would take over. At some point in the day she would take a 2-hour nap and then get back to riding. She personally pedaled 1,200 of the 3,000 miles, but because of a problem with one of the riders, she had to ride solo for 800 miles of the trip. The bike weighs 35 to 40 pounds and is not meant to be a bicycle for one.

"We left California on Tuesday and I got my first shower Saturday in Kansas," Barnell said of her experience on the trip.

A typical team budget for the 3,000-mile trip is about \$20,000. There is a minivan that follows behind the riders for protection from traffic and another minivan that follows to help provide supplies and repair material as needed, plus an RV where the riders can rest on the run.

Barnell works for the president of Chase Dallas, who gave her two weeks off for the adventure.

"The office tracked my progress and posted it daily on a big map. The trip was physically exhausting but mentally stimulating," Barnell said. "I've only been long-distance riding for three years, but I love it for the people I meet. Saturday morning I went for a little ride and ended up doing 95 miles, so I look at the Hotter'N Hell event as just another little outing," she added with a smile.

■ For more information on the many activities of GDB, go to [www.greaterdallasbicyclists.org](http://www.greaterdallasbicyclists.org).

*Paul Culp is a North Dallas resident.*

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# BICYCLISTS

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**AHEAD OF THE PACK:** A group of Greater Dallas Bicyclists Club members takes the lead in a pack of 50 riders on a recent weekend outing from Preston and Forest to D/FW International Airport. From left are Al Davis, Barry McCarty, Paula Felix, Phil Watson, Mike Eipper, Amy Johnson, Craig Blanks and Tommy Fitzgerald.



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**SHORT BREAK:** Brenda Barnell, in the orange shirt, stops for a red light at Northaven and Webb Chapel along with a few dozen friends on the Greater Dallas Bicyclist Club's Saturday morning 30-mile jaunt to the D/FW International Airport. Barnell recently completed an eight-day, nonstop 3,000-mile ride from California to New Jersey pedaling a tandem bicycle.



SUBMITTED PHOTO BY PAUL CULP

**GROUP OF RIDERS:** About 50 members of the Greater Dallas Bicyclists Club wait for a light to change at Webb Chapel and Northaven as they head out for their regular Saturday morning bike ride of 25 to 50 miles. Of the 300 members, about 40 will participate in the Hotter'N Hell ride in Wichita Falls Saturday, Aug. 26.



SUBMITTED PHOTO BY PAUL CULP

**FIRE IT UP:** Andrea Spica stands in front of a Richardson Bike Mart display for the Hotter'N Hell event, holding a super light-weight bike that weighs only 16 pounds and costs \$10,000. Spica won the Texas Senior Olympics cyclist category for ages 50 to 55 in last year's competition. She's off to Wichita Falls' 100-mile ride for the sixth time.



SUBMITTED PHOTO BY PAUL CULP

**LONGTIME RIDER:** Philip Watson, president of the Greater Dallas Bicyclist Club, takes a break on his weekend ride to D/FW International Airport. Philip has participated for 15 years in the Hotter'N Hell 100-mile event in Wichita Falls.

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