

Support Crew: A Guide





Depending on your life experiences, crewing on RAAM will be the most amazing or awful thing you ever do, it may be both. This is coming from an adventure racer; I've put myself through hell and back all over the world. From 10 hour one-day events to 10 day non-stop expeditions through the most remote wilderness in Chile. Crewing on RAAM is, by far, the most awful of them, and amazing. I'm not saying don't do it. I'm saying do it, by all means, do it. Let's get a few things straight first.

Support Crew

By David Stiles

RAAM is a race that requires a lot from everyone involved, teamwork, individuality, preparation, money, determination, compassion, calmness, intensity, and about a thousand other things that I cannot even attempt to fit into this guide. I will, however, give you a glimpse into my experiences as a RAAM crew chief for both solo and team RAAM.



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Cover: Jason "The Hammer" Lane gets an icy cold bottle of Spiz from Mike "Pipewrench" Popik.

Inside Cover: (Top) In 2013, with the help of a seasoned and energetic crew, Jason set a new Canadian record of 9 Days 16 Hours 3 Minutes.

Inside Cover: (Bottom) Training Team BTF crew and riders in Oceanside after being asked to lead the team only one week before the start.

Page 03 Top: Tired Crew members of Team BTF sleep on the grass in a park during the race.

Middle: Crew Brandon Strickland and Kris VanGiesen in Cortez, CO cleaning water bottles and doing laundry during an "Off Shift."

Bottom: Brandon Strickland snaps a photo of Crew Photographer Daryl Peloquin in-action.

Photos By: Daryl Peloquin, David Stiles, and Brandon Strickland

Expectations & Preparation

First and foremost, expect to sleep very little, and when you do, it will in all likelihood be in a moving vehicle. Expect to go days without showering, and to eat mostly non-organic, processed food. Expect an emotional roller-coaster; one moment you'll be feeling more alive than ever, the next you're crying in a port-a-potty. Expect that, at some point, you will see the very worst and the very best of every single member of the team, including yourself.

Do not expect to "see the country," or to camp out next to an open fire. Do not expect it to be a spiritual journey or a quest you are all on together. It will become that, but only if you focus on the fundamentals. Do not expect your team or rider to do *anything* you think they will. Expect nothing and prepare for *everything*. That's what I've learned.

What To Bring

Every crew member should bring as little as possible. Really, you won't need very much. Some clothes and a few personal items. The Crew Chief should be armed with a plan and an open mind but that's another topic.

Go Bag. Every crew member, and team racer, will need to have a smallish backpack (day pack, book bag, tote, man purse, satchel... Etc) It will hold everything needed for an 8-12 hour shift in the follow vehicle. It will have original copies of identification and med cards and anything else a crew member may want (see Go Bag list).

Other Bag. There will be space for one other bag for each person and when I say "space" I am using the word in it's loosest possible form. There is no extra space. I bring mostly athletic clothes and only 2-3 sets; warm clothes are good for mornings and nights. A sleeping bag or blanket in the event you sleep on the side of the road or in a hotel that's not as clean as the side of the road. That's about it.



On RAAM you sleep when you can.

Go Bag

- » ID & Medical Card
- » Sunglasses
- » Water Bottle
- » Spare Clothes
- » Rain Gear (after Arizona)
- » Warm Hat
- » Visored Hat
- » Medication you may need (Tylenol, Advil, Epi Pen, etc)
- » Sunscreen
- » Lip Balm
- » Baby Wipes (Pseudo Shower)
- » Toothbrush & Toothpaste
- » Head Lamp
- » Ipod/personal music player.
- » Camera or Camera Phone
- » Special Snacks above and beyond crew food that will be brought for the shift
- » Spending Money

Other Bag

- » Clothes: Pants (1), Shorts (2), T-shirts (3), Underwear (4-6), and Warm Socks (3)
- » Ear Plugs
- » Eye Mask
- » Sandals & Running shoes
- » Towel



Steve Fracis catches some Zzz while waiting for a tow truck to fix a support vehicle with multiple flat tires.

Fundamentals

Prepare Mentally. RAAM will be an onslaught to your senses, it will vary from person to person, it's just the way the cookie crumbles. For instance, a crew member, of a 22 person group, competing in the 8-person category will have to deal with many different personalities, complex logistics but they will, most likely, have one or two primary jobs. While a member of a five person crew, supporting a Solo racer, will need to fill multiple roles, will not sleep very much, will have to get along with everyone on the team and will be shoved into a tiny living space for 10 days. Though different, both are very difficult.

Prepare Physically. If you are not on an exercise routine before RAAM, start one. Whatever floats your boat, but you need to be physically prepared. Regardless of where you land on a 0-10 fitness scale, you will always fall two to three pegs if you sit in a car for a week. If you have back problems or you cannot sit for a long time without your sciatic nerve flaring up you need to fix that before you arrive in Oceanside. A rather frightening statistic, in 2012, I gained 18 lbs over the two weeks we were racing!

Know Your Team. You must make every effort to get to know your team before you go. Many crews cannot gather as a group until they are in Oceanside. Often, everyone will know someone on the team but rarely will everyone know everyone. In some cases, everyone will be good friends or family but, you still need to get know each other. Honesty is the best policy. If you can, do some training together and some team building exercises.

In 2014, I was asked to chief a 4-person team just 8 days before the start. Two days later I added one of my crew from 2013 to the team as well. Other than my addition, I didn't know anyone else on the team.

I made up a confidential questionnaire for the racers and the crew. Standard questions like "what are your goals" as well as more leading questions like "Who do you think will be the first person to mentally crack?" The questionnaire had well over 30 items and took a while to get through but, everyone obliged which spoke to their dedication. I held a few conference calls and two long meetings in Oceanside. If we had not done all that I'm not sure we would have had such a pleasant ride.



Team BTF preparation meeting in Oceanside and team photo in Annapolis.

Fundamentals

Keep It Simple. As much as ideas are welcome, overly complicated ideas—even if they are good ideas—rarely workout. I don't care if it's a style of water bottle hand off, a Shermer Neck contraption, or a schedule of who drives when. You **MUST** keep it simple. The most obvious solution will be the one that works best, always.

Safety. When we talk about safety you must put into your head the reality of someone crashing or being hit with by a car. It is a fact of life on RAAM, you are putting yourself in harms way. You have to think of the worst thing you can imagine and know that it could happen. Having these thoughts will keep your mind focused on the job at hand.

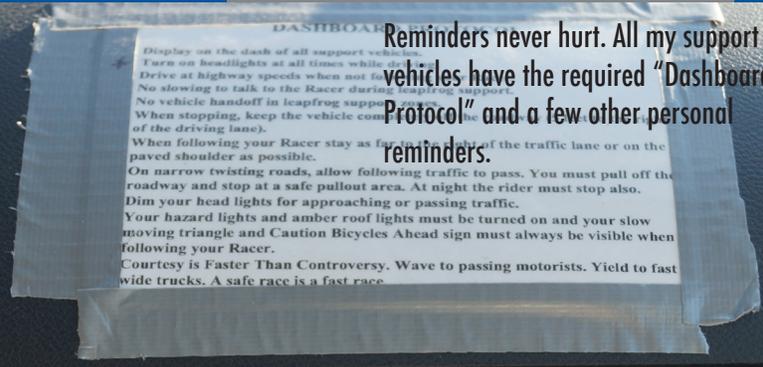
In 2012, Jason was hit, run-over and dragged in Arizona. He was lucky and finished after being released from the hospital with only road rash and bruised ribs. It was my fault he was hit.

In 2013, after cutting a sleep break short in West Virginia, he fell into an altered mental status. He thought he was in a coma and decided, in order to wake up, he would have to ride into on-coming traffic. And I, only by the grace of our long friendship, was able to recognize what was going on and pull him off the road to sleep.

In 2014, less than 12 hours into the race, I called for a left turn from behind a rider, then before he finished the turn I said “[we] would be going straight for the next 30 miles.” The rider only heard “Straight” and proceeded to swerve back to the road, as if the turn was incorrect. There was no traffic at 3AM in the desert but, after I reconfirmed the left turn over the PA—“No, no go left!”—He rode into the sand on the shoulder. He went down and whacked his knee but, lucky for him and me, he was not hurt. A week later, after all the kinks had been straightened out, that same rider was almost taken out by a random merging of a dozen cars on a dark West Virginian highway, again at 3AM. His mother was driving the follow vehicle and I awoke from a nap to panic and mayhem all around. Again, lucky for him and everyone involved, it worked out.

The lesson to be learned from this is that you have very little control over a lot of things in this race, one thing you do have control over is your focus and attention to detail. By putting into your mind the worst possible things you can imagine you prepare yourself mentally. You can then take the necessary steps to thwart problems before they develop or, at the very least, react properly if they do happen.

My worst fear has always been hitting my own rider. Don't laugh, it's happened more than once on RAAM. This is a thought I always have in my mind. It keeps me sharp and humble.



Reminders never hurt. All my support vehicles have the required “Dashboard Protocol” and a few other personal reminders.

Check bikes, flashers, tires and signs every time you are outside the van.

Choosing Crew

Choosing crew members is difficult at best. Finding people able to take off work for two weeks is the first hurdle, then you have to match those people with desirable traits. The first step is to select the number of crew members you will need. This depends on three factors: (1) Category, (2) Roles, and (3) Money.

Category. A Solo Racer and an 8-Person Team have very different crew needs. Your numbers will adjust accordingly. The Solo, 2-Person and 4 Person categories are required to have four crew members; the 8-Person category does not have a crew requirement; with the limited time racers are on the road it's very possible for them to crew for themselves but that will depend on their experience level.

I've had as many as 13 and a few as 5. I think the magic number is 8 for Solo and 2-Person and 10 for 4-Person. I like to follow the *keep it simple stupid* method.

For Solo racers I have two shifts Day (1) and Night (2). Day is from 7:01AM - 6:45PM and Night is from 6:45PM - 7:01AM. This method eliminates crew changes during Night Conditions when Direct Follow is mandatory. Each shift has 3 crew members—4 in the event of a 4-Person Team—and there is a 3rd shift I call the Crutch Shift.

Crutch shift is the hardest. It's 24 hours a day from start to finish and the members of this shift have almost zero interaction with the racer(s) on course. Their sole responsibility is to take care of the off shift crew members—and the off shift racers in the event of a team. They drive them to and from hotels, do laundry, feed them, go shopping for supplies and sleep whenever they can—usually 1-2 hours at a time 1-3 times in every 24 hour period.



Brandon Strickland gets up-close and personal with Jason's chamois while doing laundry.

Desirable Traits

- » Eager to crew and adventurous
- » Able to rough it.
- » Ability to not shower or put on make-up.
- » Ability to get dirty and keep smiling.
- » Sense of humor.
- » Thoughtful towards others.
- » Ability to avoid arguments.
- » Smart and inventive.
- » Ability to maintain some semblance of hygiene even during long stretches without breaks.
- » Total commitment to the team even if the rider(s) do not perform to their own personal expectations.
- » Ability to take short naps and still remain alert.
- » Ability to drive safely and tactically.
- » Not too verbose (silence is often golden in the support vehicles).

Undesirable Traits

- » Egocentric
- » Poor Hygiene
- » Unorganized.
- » Lazy.
- » Poor attitude.
- » Lacking enthusiasm because rider is doing poorly in the race.
- » Wants to be in the limelight.
- » Moody, sarcastic, nude, lewd, and crude.
- » Talks too much.



Rob "Ed" Edmondstone keeps the bikes safe while snoozing in Effingham, IL. The next year we brought a bike lock.

Jason and his 2012 Crew are no longer rookies after finishing their first RAAM

Roles

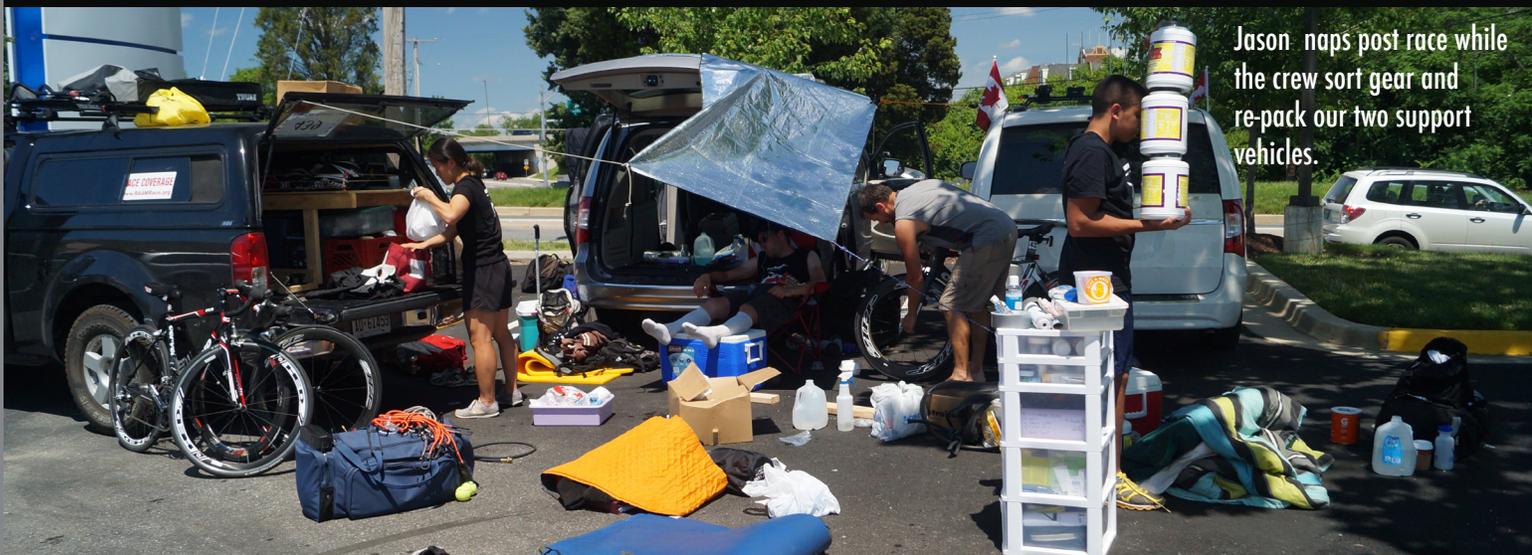
And The Many Hats To Be Worn

Roles. Every RAAM attempt requires, at least, the following roles to be filled. Bike Mechanic, Medical (EMT, Nurse, Doctor), Therapy (PT, Chiropractor, Massage), Handy Person (able to fix pretty much anything at any moment with a butter knife), Follow Drivers (2 minimum), RV and Other Drivers (2 minimum), Navigation Expert (2 minimum) Food Ambassador (champion of always having enough food for everyone), Crew Chief (the deciding vote).

These roles are not team positions (except for Crew Chief); they are hats people must wear at different times. If you have 8 crew members but no one has any experience as a bike mechanic you best fill that role before the start, either with education or with additional personnel.

For example, with our massive 2012 crew, I only had to be the Crew Chief and a Follow Driver—though I would have liked to only be the later. In 2013, we only had 5 crew and by sheer lack of personnel, I had to wear all of the hats at some point on every shift, so did my compatriots. Still, that was mundane by comparison when, in 2014, I was with 8 rookies. When we set off from Oceanside I was sure I would not sleep more than an hour a day but, by the end of Colorado, I had managed to give all my hats to eager and malleable individuals. I was able to sit back and enjoy watching a well oiled machine, most of the time.

Money. You either have it or you don't. I've had blank checks and firm budgets. Obviously the blank check is nice but, take it from me, don't get carried away and show up in Oceanside in a 45 foot RV with a pick-up truck in tow, a 7 person film crew, and a van loaded with an entire bike shop in the back, you will regret it. If organized, everything you need will fit in a couple vehicles and you can spend your money wisely on a the right size RV, the best crew you can find—or hire— nice hotels and good quality food.



Jason naps post race while the crew sort gear and re-pack our two support vehicles.

Rules

Until 2015 the rules of RAAM have been slowly growing for various reasons. The rule book itself was over 50 pages and has become complex over the years. Mostly because of tragic incidents and loop holes people found and exploited. For 2015, the rules have been simplified and re-written. For the most part, the rules themselves haven't changed. They have, however, been reformatted and are easier to get through.



Jason and I talk strategy and rules during a winter training ride along the CA section of the RAAM Route.

The organizers have gone through them with a fine tooth comb and weeded out redundancy and a few confusing sections. Every member of a team **MUST** read and understand the rules. Every year, regardless of whether, or not, a crew member is returning, I quiz my whole team--including myself.

The basics are as follows: don't block traffic, be courteous, Directly Follow your rider as much as possible, be safe, and use common sense. Every detailed rule points back to these basic points, and if you follow them you will find yourself penalty free.

A side note to all you clever individuals. If you are one of those people that reads between the lines, and you think you found a loop hole that allows you to hook up a custom made solar powered, lactic acid reducing, strobe light to the side of your follow vehicle. Don't do it. Don't even ask if you can. You are the reason the Crew Chief meeting lasts for 2 hours. This is a bike race, plain and simple. Ride your bike to Annapolis under your own power, no tricks, no gimmicks, just good old fashioned pedaling.

According to the rules you can hand off anything to a rider out the window of a follow vehicle, provided you are giving that item to the rider with a "hand to hand" exchange. This means you cannot put something on the riders bike or in his or her clothing.

That being said, you can do two types of hand offs: Rolling or Stationary.

A Rolling Hand Off is simply when a follow vehicle, engaged in Direct Follow Support, pulls along side a rider, when it is safe to do so, and hands him or her a water bottle or food or whatever you are exchanging. The few things you need to remember are: 1) Make sure you can see a long way in front and behind you before pulling out next to your rider. 2) If you are exchanging an empty bottle for a full one, take the bottle from the rider first then give them the new one. 3) Make sure the door on the follow vehicle is locked before you lean out. 4) Get almost all of your upper body out the side of the car. The driver will have to be practiced in doing this maneuver, have excellent control of the vehicle and good peripheral vision.

Hand Offs



A rolling hand off in the CA desert.

The Stationary Hand Off is when a crew member is standing on the side of the road with a bottle (or whatever it is you're handing off) and the racer is riding by. There are a lot of different styles. The method I use is very simple. The person doing the hand off stands on the side of the road facing the on coming rider, the crew holds the bottle (or popsicle, or arm warmers) by the top, with the item hanging down below their arm. The grip is the most important and will determine the outcome nine times out of ten. Hold a bottle by the rim of the cap in your finger tips and squeeze very hard. Don't let go or move, just stand there.

As the rider approaches he or she will take one last sip out of the bottle they are going to leave with you, then they will bend over and drop the bottle about 50 feet before they get to you (1-2 seconds). Note they need to drop it sideways so it will roll along the ground and slightly away from the road.

The crew should stand completely motionless with their eyes fixated on the rolling bottle, so they see where it goes. The rider, with a bent elbow, will then allow the bottle to hit them in the hand as they ride by, closing their hand around the bottle the second they hit it.

If the crew moves the rider will miss the bottle. If the crew doesn't hold tightly by their finger tips the bottle will be knocked out of their hand before the rider grasps it. If the crew holds too tightly, on second thought, you

can't really hold it by your fingertips too tightly. I call it The Motionless Top Rim Pinch, or the "MoTo-Pinch."

Jason and I are good enough at it now that I don't question doing hand offs on down grades. At the top of the Yarnell grade, in the 2013 race, I setup just past an old mercantile 500 meters downhill from the top. That moment will always be remembered as the "35 MPH Popsicle." The best part of this hand off style is that it is very easy to teach to new crew members.

Note: If handing off clothing, like arm warmers, when it is windy, you need to stop them from flapping in the breeze. Use both arms, held out straight, to stretch the clothing item into a long, rope-like, vertical column.

The Follow Vehicle, in RAAM, fills many roles. Ours is a bike shop, hotel, clothing store, refrigerator, boom box, GPS, and shield. The last one is the most important. Most people know this but few understand how to effectively use it as one. The following is a very short synopsis of the things going through my head while driving a follow vehicle.

There are two types of support you will encounter on RAAM: Direct Follow Support and Leapfrog Support. Sometimes you will be required to perform Direct Follow, other times you will be required to do Leapfrog. The rest of the race there will be no mandate. If given the choice, always chose Direct Follow (DF). If implemented properly, DF is the best way to keep track of your rider, fix flat tires fast and protect them from other drivers.



Jason and Pipewrench demonstrate a textbook stationary hand off, Canadian style.



A unique view of The Hammer from Brandon Strickland

Direct Follow



Logan Weyand of Team BTF races across Kansas with his follow vehicle in position.

Bullet Points

Special Skills. Just because you are a “good driver” doesn’t mean you will be good at DF. You will need eyes in the back of your head, the ability to multi-task under high stress, a strange combination of confidence and fear and total disregard for your own safety.

Eye’s in the back of your head. A good DF driver will spend 50% of their time looking in the mirrors, and 50% of their time looking forward. While looking back you are spotting vehicles, judging their speed, if they see you and what they appear to be doing as a result.

Multi-tasking. This isn’t rubbing your belly and patting your head; this is life and death. You take all the information you are receiving from the mirrors, from what is in front of you, and what is going on in the car and you are making decisions. You have to be ready, at any moment, to do whatever it takes to save your rider’s life.

Decisions. You see a big truck come over the horizon from behind. There is nothing but road

and your rider in front of you. The truck appears to drift toward the shoulder that you are driving on. As the truck gets closer you have to make a decision, do you simultaneously tell the rider to “hit the ditch” and the passengers in the car to “hold on” while you lay on the horn, take the lane and slam on the brakes just as your vehicle gets rear-ended, or do you notify your rider, “Car Back” and let the truck pass with inches to spare?

There is no substitute for Follow Vehicle experience. If you have the means you should have an experienced driver show you how to do it. If that is not an option, you should get out and practice with your rider(s) for a few long rides (6-20 hours). If you don’t have a rider available then put a friend on a bike and follow him or her for a ride. DF driving is the most underrated skill of crewing.

Before RAAM, I learned through trial and error over multiple training rides with Jason. He came to the desert for two 10 day winter camps. We left for our first ride at about 5AM, it was dark and I was directing him through a small city East of Palm Springs. I only “nearly tagged him” twice in the first five miles; it’s a steep learning curve at first but, like anything, the devil is in the details, and you can never have enough experience.

Before we even arrived at the starting line in 2012, I had over 100 hours of experience doing Direct Follow Support and Jason was still run over in Arizona. Granted, we were not doing Direct Follow when he was hit, but we should have been. That year the rules were ambiguous about whether, or not, DF was allowed during the day in the area he was run-over but, since then, the discrepancy has been cleared up. Direct Follow is mandatory in Navajo Nation.

You won’t know what to do until the second before it happens, but you will have to know, with 100% confidence, that you will make the right decision when the time comes. At the same time you must be terrified that you will freeze up if you do have to choose door number one. And make no mistake this must run through your head every single time a car approaches from either direction, thousands of times per shift.

Eight hours behind the wheel while in DF will take years off your life; after three consecutive RAAMs I’ll be lucky to make it to my 40th birthday.

Leap Frog

I supposed we should touch on Leapfrog Support (LF). This is where you drive up the road a piece and let your rider catch up, then pass before you drive up the road again. Throughout the first three days of RAAM you will be required to do this type of support during the daylight hours. There is simply not enough room for 75 slow moving vehicles to be bunched together and still have some form of normal traffic flow.

Bullet points

Communication. Make sure your rider has a form of communication that works. Either a cell phone (with coverage), a walkie talkie, or a blue-tooth intercom like the Cardo BK-1.

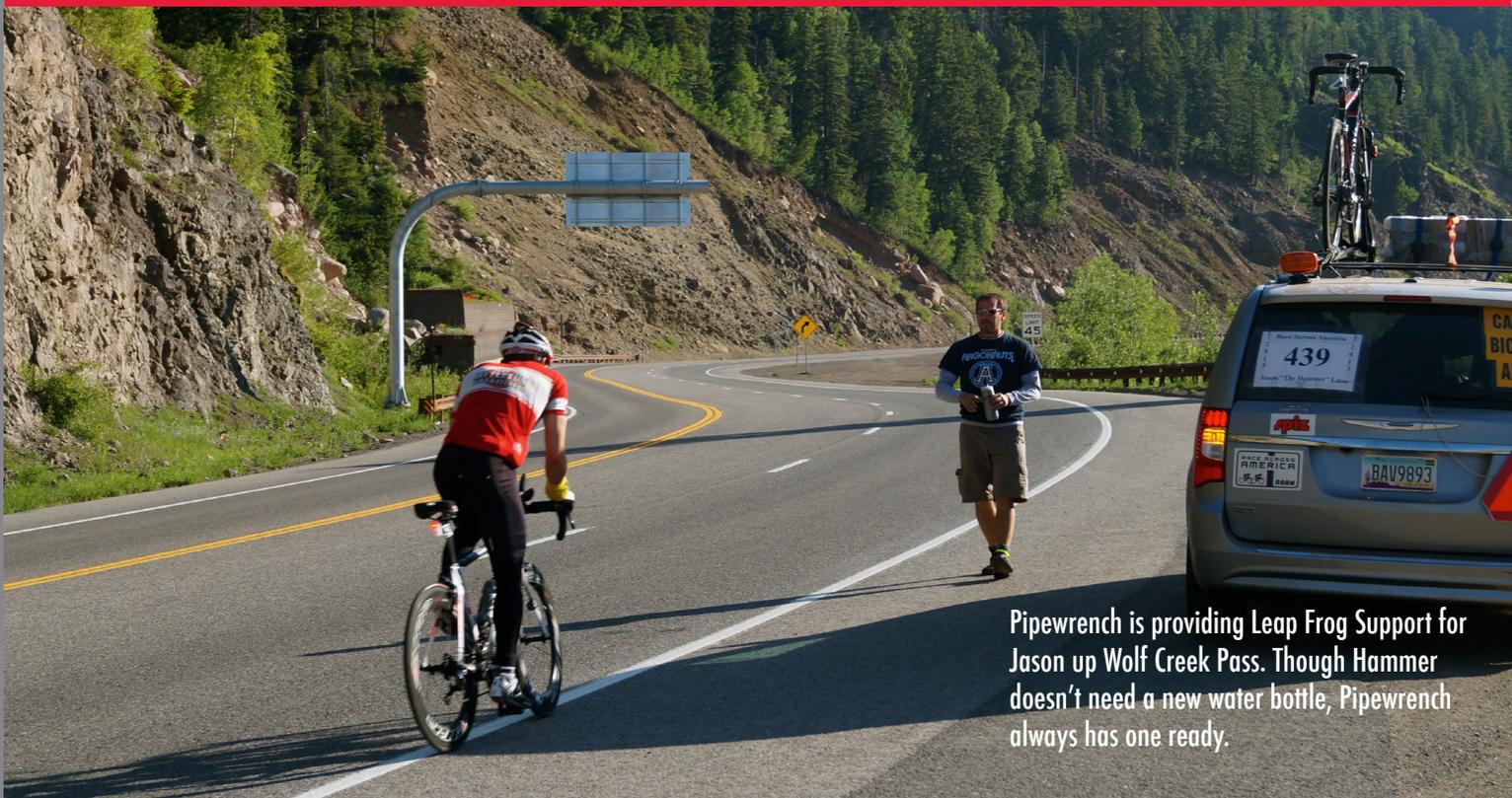
Stay Behind. Keep the rider in front of you as much as possible. Drive up the road only far enough so you lose them in your mirrors for 10-20 seconds at driving speed. Find a pull out where you can stop and see the road behind in the mirrors. Once the rider is close get out of the car and either hand off food or bottles as needed or cheer them on by dancing with your shirt off or anything you can think of to distract them from the fact they are still riding their bike.

Timing. After they go by watch them as they ride up the road, once they are out of sight start a timer. Depending on your rider, and the conditions, wait about 3-6 minutes before heading up the road to leapfrog them. If they are going downhill leave earlier, if uphill leave later. Wind and rain; leave earlier. If

pull outs are sparse leave later. If there is very little cell coverage and you only have a walkie talkie don't let the rider out of range.

Pull outs. By far the majority of LF is done in the California and Arizona deserts. You need to be very careful about choosing a pull out spot. Sand can be firm one second and car sucking loose the next. There is no way to know until you are on it. If the road is clear in both directions and you can see there is no traffic, by all means, stop in the roadway and have the passenger jump out to test it. If you can't see very well or there is traffic coming, find a better place to stop. If the only option looks risky proceed with caution.

Always slow down to a minimum of 5 mph before you leave the pavement. Every year I have passed a Support Vehicle buried up to the grill in sand. Often you can park right next to them and the ground is fine, it's just not good for braking from 35 mph to zero in 100 meters.



Pipewrench is providing Leap Frog Support for Jason up Wolf Creek Pass. Though Hammer doesn't need a new water bottle, Pipewrench always has one ready.

Matias Francis and Lucas Weyand of Team BTF do a Rolling Exchange a quiet stretch of road near Oldenburg.

Rider Exchanges

Rider Exchanges. Until I crewed for Team BTF I had no idea what sort of colossal nightmare rider exchanges were. There are two main aspects to a rider exchanges, the logistics and the actual exchange.

Logistics. In 2014, I split my 4-person team into two pods of two riders and four crew who would stay together the whole race. One pod would be resting in the RV (off shift) and the other would be riding (on shift) for 8 hours at a time. We had two support vehicles with the on shift crew, both vehicles were capable of performing Direct Follow (see rules for requirements) but only one was the primary Follow Vehicle. It was an SUV with some spare clothing, food and a set of spare wheels (one front wheel and three rears with the proper cassettes for each rider). The other we called the Rider Van— it was a mini van which held the spare bike parts, food, rider Go Bags, the off pull rider and a bed for them to nap in.

The Rider Van would shuttle up the road for about 8 miles, find a spot for the rider exchange and wait. We did 30 minute pulls with occasional changes based on terrain. The logistics were pretty simple. When the Follow Vehicle needed fuel, it's occupants needed a bathroom break, or a nap at 3AM, we would put the Rider Van in Direct Follow.

We changed shifts about every eight hours. When shift change was near, pod leaders would communicate with each other to schedule a location for crew exchange. The Rider Van would arrive first at the crew exchange and the new pod would take over that vehicle. They would bring on whatever they needed for the next shift. Food, ice, and their Go Bags were standard. The rider going on shift for the next pull would get ready and when the Follow Vehicle arrived they do a rider exchange (Full Stop at night or Rolling during the day) but, the Rider Van would leave with them in Direct Follow. This gave the Follow Vehicle crew, who was coming off shift, a minute to clean up and exchange with the crew going of shift.

The actual Rider Exchanges are like the passing of a baton in a track and field event. Rider A, of a relay team, momentarily overlap his or her front wheel with a teammate's (Rider B) rear wheel. Rider B continues racing for the team while Rider A is driven up the road. This is the most dangerous part of Team RAAM; many accidents have happened during exchanges. For this reason, there are some very specific rules that apply. Do not overlook these rules, learn them and use common sense.



Crew Member Brandon Strickland knows his job, among navigation, and driving, is to make sure Megan Camp of Team BTF stays fueled.

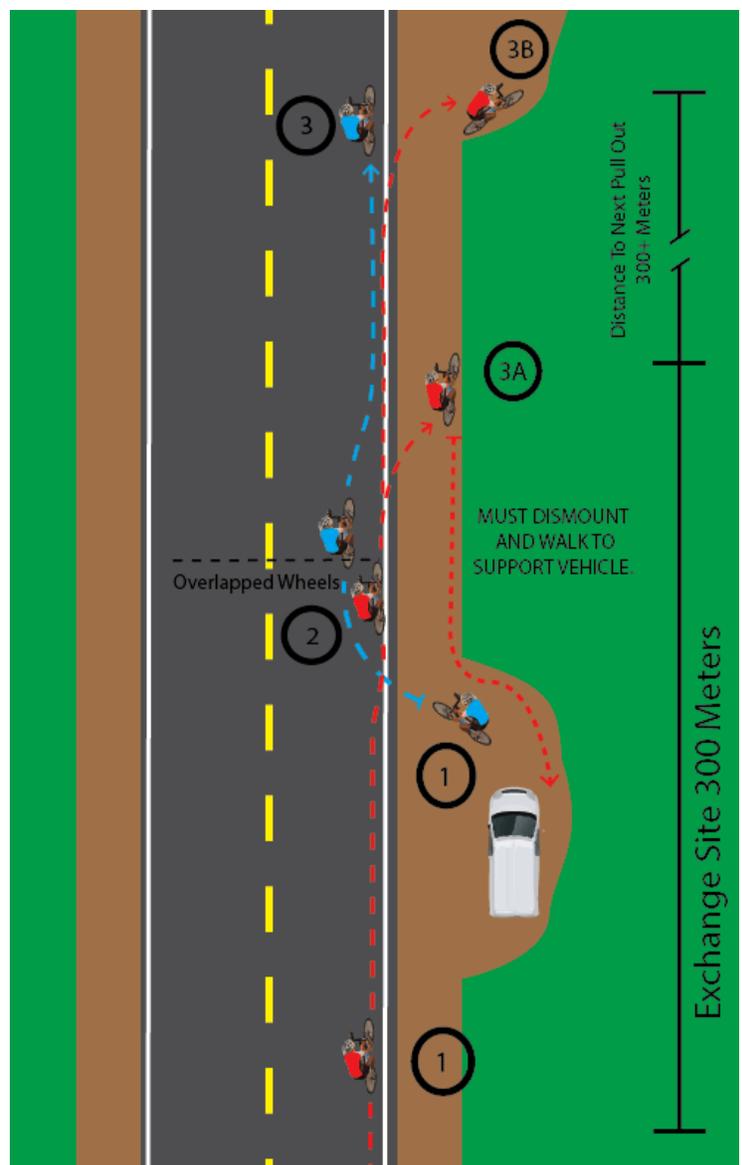
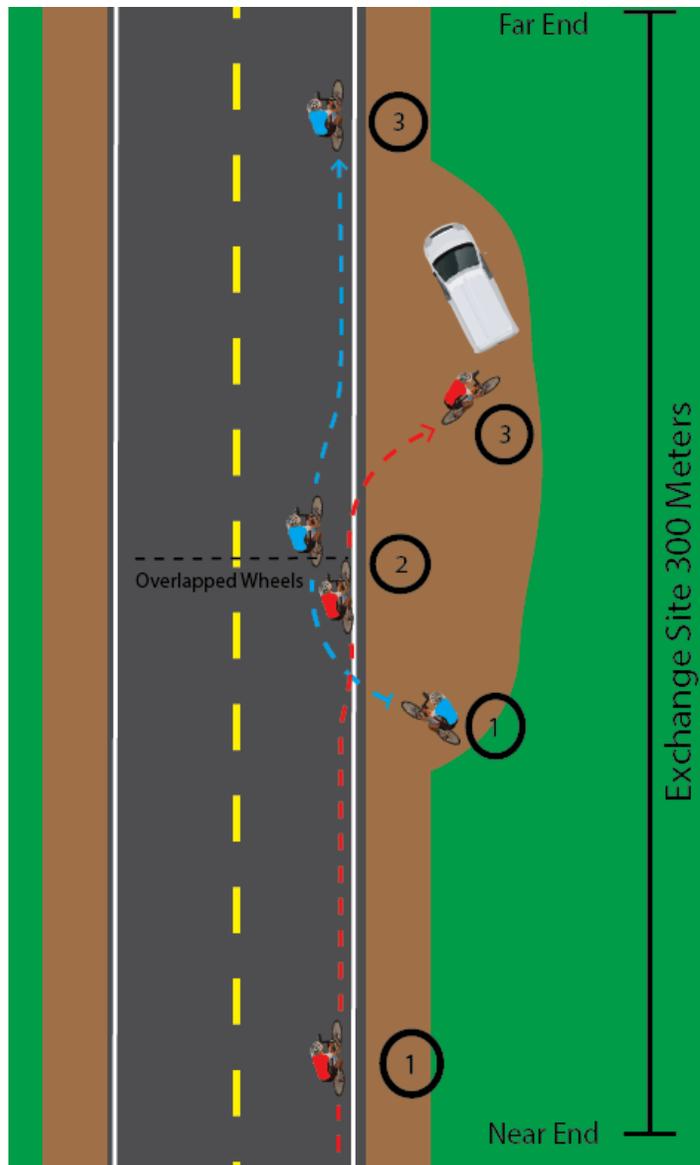
Rolling Exchanges

First of all, there are two types of exchanges, a Rolling Exchange and a Stationary Exchange. During night hours (7am-7pm local) Stationary Exchanges are mandatory.

Rolling Exchange 1. Rider Red approaches Exchange Site, Rider Blue has set up at the Near End of the Exchange Site. When Rider Red is within about 150 meters, Rider Blue starts to ride and pedals up to speed (1). It's a good idea to have a set speed for exchanges (uphill 12-15 MPH, flat 20 MPH, downhill exchanges are not advised). Rider Red catches up to Rider Blue and overlaps wheels (2). Rider Red calls "Clear" and then Rider Blue has the "baton" and can start racing. Rider Red then, using the space Rider Blue has provided by setting at the Near End of the exchange site, can exit the roadway at the Support Vehicle (3).

Rolling Exchange 2. In the situation below there is little space for Rider Blue to set up early. Sites like this should be avoided, however sometimes you must exchange at this type of location.

The Exchange is the same except, after Rider Blue starts racing, Rider Red is in a bit of a pickle. By RAAM Rules they cannot ride back to the Exchange Site. Rider Red has two options after the exchange, either pull off the road quickly and walk, on the shoulder, back to the support vehicle (3A). Or, if there is another Pullout near them, they can stop on the side of the road and wait for the support vehicle to come and pick them up (3B).



Final Thoughts

At this point I have outlined the basics of Crewing but there is no substitute for experience; assemble your team and get out there to practice. Try everything you can, including: Hand Offs, Rider Exchanges, Leap Frog Support, Clothing types, Gear Storage and especially Direct Follow Support. Every Driver should practice it, in busy and rural areas. Develop systems and allow them to evolve. This is the best way to find out what works and what doesn't.

In the end, remember that Crewing is much more of an art than a science; Crew Chiefing even more so. Approach the task with the understanding that, you will strive to follow the rules and the systems you, and your team, have established but, you will also be learning along the way. You will have to change plans more often than not, you will break the rules in the name of safety from time to time but, you will always try to find a way back to your system.

If, however, you approach RAAM with ridged protocols and systems that must be followed at all costs, you will fail. You may finish but you will not be successful. Each team has a unique list of goals and they vary a great deal but, every single team wants to "Enjoy The Ride." Keep this in the forefront of your thoughts and make the best decisions you can in any given situation .



Having slept only 30 minutes since he left Oceanside nearly 72 hours prior, Jason must take a ten minute, unplanned, nap at the top of Wolf Creek Pass so he can make it to the bottom without falling asleep .