



(Rain cancelled the first day of the MS-150 but approximately 13,000 riders met early on the second day in LaGrange, Texas, for the ride to Austin.)

Ride for a Good Cause—MS 150

Newfield has developed a cycling culture among its employees and their families. One person who can attest to this culture is Matt Kovich, a two-year participant in the MS 150 Houston-Austin bike ride to benefit the National Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Society. He was captain of Team Newfield during 2008-09. As an avid cyclist, Kovich rides 60-75 miles per week to train during the year and participates in various charity rides besides the MS 150. He is no stranger to the preparation required to succeed and be safe in such a large and grueling event.

This past year, Kovich, along with the rest of Team Newfield, was sidelined by inclement weather during the first leg of the 2009 MS 150.

“Due to intense flooding around the site of our overnight campground in LaGrange, the first day of the ride (Houston to LaGrange) was cancelled,” said Kovich. “So on Sunday, all the riders drove to LaGrange and rode to Austin to complete the second day of the ride.”

Stormy conditions were just another hurdle to overcome in this year’s ride, which got off to a rocky start due to malfunctions on the new registration website.

“As soon as registration opened, the website was overwhelmed,” he said. “The registration cap is 13,000 riders and the ride was full in six hours!”

This accounted for a smaller turnout for Team Newfield this year. However, it's never too early to begin thinking ahead for next year's ride (April 17-18, 2010) if you are interested in having fun, getting a good work out and supporting a great cause. Due to the problems with registration this year the MS Society has put in place priority registration in October for people who are 2009 Club 300 members and two guests (representing the top 300 individual fundraisers), participants in the 2009 ride that raised \$1,000 or more by July 31st and the 2009 top fundraising teams.

Registration marks only the first step in the journey to prepare for the MS 150. Kovich's main tips for riders are:

- Begin training for the MS150 around the start of 2010 and gradually increase mileage throughout training. Most injuries typically occur when new or inexperienced riders try to do too much, too soon. Take your time and slowly add miles as you train.
- Plot a weekly training schedule from the first of the year to the weekend before the race.
- Get properly fitted on your bike and for your helmet by a bike shop specialist, especially if you are a new rider.
- Take a bike safety and bike maintenance course.
- And finally, practice a few group rides before the big day. It's important to learn how to ride in a group safely and comfortably *before* the MS 150 weekend. Riding in a group also makes the training less painful and more enjoyable.

The MS 150 is not the only race that supports a good cause. Kovich's main ride every year is the “Get Your Guts In Gear” (GYGIG) ride supporting research and raising awareness for Crohn's and Colitis diseases, an especially important cause to Kovich, whose wife, Wendy, has Crohn's disease. Kovich will be riding, and his wife volunteering, in the GYGIG ride this August in the Seattle area.



“My reason for riding is to raise money and awareness for great causes: to fund research to find a cure for MS and Crohn’s and Colitis and to provide assistance for those living with these diseases,” he said, “I love riding on our team and being team captain in the MS 150 because it gives me a good opportunity to ride with fellow Newfield employees. This is a good excuse to train and participate in a well-organized ride while raising money to fight MS.”

For more information on priority registration for the 2010 MS 150 (registration in October 2009) please visit: The National MS Society at <http://www.nationalmssociety.org/chapters/bp-ms-150/join-the-ride/index.aspx>.

To learn more about the Crohn’s and Colitis Get Your Guts In Gear ride go to <http://www.ibdride.org/>.

- Julia Shatilo