

The Miami Herald

Posted on Tue, Oct. 30, 2012

Dolphins Cycling Challenge goes 170 miles over two days

BY JANEY TATE
jtate@miamiherald.com



DANIEL BOCK / FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

Miami Beach resident David Podein trains for the upcoming Dolphins Cycling Challenge, Wednesday, Oct. 24, 2012, in Miami. The two-day, 170-mile ride will raise funds for the University of Miami Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center.

After 150 miles and more than 30 hours of riding in last year's Dolphins Cycling Challenge, David Podein said a fellow cyclist's words gave him the extra push to finish the ride.

"I'm doing this for people like you, cancer survivors like you. People like you are an inspiration," recalled Podein, 29, who has been cancer-free for the past six years. "That was amazing. That was really special for me."

This weekend, Podein will be among an expected 1,500 cyclists, including more than 60 cancer survivors, who will ride in the third annual Dolphins Cycling Challenge. Proceeds will go to the University of Miami's Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, which has facilities in Miami, Kendall, Plantation and Deerfield Beach.

Michael Mandich, the Challenge's CEO, has been involved from the start. His father, Jim "Mad Dog" Mandich, the former Miami Dolphins tight end and popular Dolphins broadcaster was the grand-marshal of the first DCC held three years ago. He died in April 2011 at age 62 after a 14-month battle with bile duct cancer.

"I got involved right from the start because it's a cause near and dear to me. In doing so, you see how many other people are affected just like me

from their family members and loved ones," said Mandich, who was asked earlier this year to head the Challenge by Miami Dolphins chief executive Mike Dee.

Last year, more than 800 riders raised \$1.07 million.

"I'm happy to say that we've already past that number this year," said Mandich. "We are trying to get it above \$2 million."

The final amount will be announced on Nov. 25 during the Dolphins game against the Seattle Seahawks.

"We've been able to double participants each year. It's one of those events that's going to grow each year," said Mandich.

The longest route is 170 miles, going from Sun Life Stadium through Broward and Palm Beach counties, with an overnight stay in Palm Beach County. Riders can opt to complete shorter routes like the Miami 30, a 30-mile ride from the stadium to the Miami Beach Marina. The rides also start at Huizenga Plaza in Broward and at CityPlace in Palm Beach County.

Along the route riders will be provided food, drinks and medical attention, if needed. After the ride, participants will gather at Sun Life Stadium to honor all the fundraisers.

Podein is happy to participate this year. He is planning on completing the 170-mile route, raising at least \$1,200.

"People try to use that to challenge themselves to do as many miles as they can," said Podein, who has been training for the past few months. The University of Miami Law School graduate battled cancer while he was still a student. He takes that approach to completing the Challenge.

"It was tough, but I'm a really determined and tough person," said Podein. "I knew I was going to finish no matter what. I go to the University of Miami Sylvester for all of my checkups so it's a very important cause."

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