

Why They Ride

UNH Three Notch Century Cyclists Will Go the Distance Again This Year

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This coming weekend, intrepid cyclists will pedal through some of New Hampshire's most scenic territory during the Three Notch Century, a ride to benefit Northeast Passage, the therapeutic recreation and adaptive sports program at UNH.

Handcyclists and bicyclists will set out to complete 100 miles in either one, two, or three days, riding through two of the state's most spectacular notches—Crawford and Franconia—and up and over the Kancamagus Highway—"the Kanc."

This is the tenth year of the Three Notch Century, which began when a small group of riders completed the loop over the course of three days in 2004. In 2012, ride organizers added a 40-mile route option.

Keely Ames, operations and marketing coordinator at Northeast Passage, says they're expecting about 250 cyclists this year, and 30 "very dedicated volunteers" will help pull off this year's ride.

We asked members of the University community why they ride the Three Notch Century. Here's what they said.



RIDER: Sean McLaughlin, Lecturer in UNH Department of Recreation Management and Policy

UNH Today: *Why do you ride?*

McLaughlin: It's an extremely well-organized ride. It's an amazing route. And it's for a really good cause.

UNH Today: *How many times have you done it?*

McLaughlin: Seven times. I do the one-day century ride on Saturday. I'm the on-the-road mechanic; I carry a pack with extra tires and tools. On Friday and Sunday, I volunteer for the three-day ride.

UNH Today: *What is the most challenging part?*

McLaughlin: The Kanc is definitely the hardest for the century route. The 40-mile route goes over Bear Notch, which is shorter but steeper—a really beautiful climb.

UNH Today: *What is the most beautiful portion of the ride?*

McLaughlin: Through Franconia Notch. The race organizers get permits so we can ride through the state park on bike paths, separated from the cars. It's stunning scenery.

UNH Today: *What would you say to a first-time rider or someone who is considering riding the Three Notch Century?*

McLaughlin: As far as 100-mile rides go, it's very doable. If you're apprehensive about a one day 100-miler, remember you can do it over two or even three days or do the 40-mile option. No matter which ride you choose, you'll still feel like a part of the scene. People have done the three-day ride on city bikes. There are a variety of options for all abilities.

For the endurance riders out there, this ride is run so well compared to other endurance events. Everything is really tight. The aid stations are good. Everyone knows where you are. It's great.



RIDER: Shawn Green, UNH Assistant Athletic Director, Compliance

UNH Today: *Why do you ride?*

Green: Initially, it was the urging of a good friend who worked for Northeast Passage. I was an endurance athlete, but I had never done a 100-mile ride. You can't beat the scenery on this one. And it's really a great cause. The first year I rode was in 2011 on the tenth anniversary of 9/11. There were British Special Forces who came over to ride it. They had been injured in Iraq and Afghanistan. A friend and I rode with them for a ways. Every now and then I'd have a thought like, jeez, my legs hurt, and I'd look at the guy next to me who had only one leg. It gave me perspective. I was hooked.

UNH Today: *How many times have you done it?*

Green: This is my third year. The first year, I did the two-day ride. Last year I did the full century. This year I'm doing the two-day ride.

UNH Today: *What is the most challenging part?*

Green: Crawford Notch is challenging in that you're just going so fast. You've got to make sure you don't overheat the brakes. And climbing up the Kanc is hard.

UNH Today: *What would you say to a first-time rider or someone who is considering riding the Three Notch Century?*

Green: If you're on the fence, you should absolutely try it. It's an amazing experience riding for that long—it's your own personal challenge. Above all, it's a tremendous cause and you'll have the great staff supporting you.

UNH Today: *Most memorable moment?*

Green: In 2011, just after Hurricane Irene. Roads had been washed out, and they had just opened the lower portion of Kanc that day. We got to climb the Kanc with no cars. At one point, I got separated from other riders. It felt like I was on the moon.

Photo: Shawn Green, fourth from the left, with "Team Big Guy." The team name comes from a comment another rider made when passing Green's friend on the climb up Evans Notch.



RIDER: Cory Schwartz, UNH Athletics, Coach/Coordinator of Skiing

UNH Today: *Why do you ride?*

Schwartz: The first time it was because of my connection to people at Northeast Passage. Also, the ski team had started working with Northeast Passage athletes. It was easy for me to join them in supporting the program.

UNH Today: *How many times have you done it?*

Schwartz: I've done four rides. Normally I do the one-day century ride. I've recruited some friends and neighbors, too, so there's a nice group of us who now go up.

UNH Today: *What is the most challenging part?*

Schwartz: On the bike path in Franconia Notch. You've done some good riding, your legs get tired, and it just seems to be continuous "up" from Lincoln to the top. I remember the first time we did it, my friend and I got cranky in that section. Eventually

we caught up with a gentleman who had started riding at 3 a.m. He was biking up with one leg. After that we didn't really complain much. Seeing what he was doing was very impressive.

UNH Today: *What is the most beautiful portion of the ride?*

Schwartz: I was raised in this area, and I've always loved the Kancamagus Highway. Going by Bretton Woods is also very pretty.

UNH Today: *What would you say to a first-time rider or someone who is considering riding the Three Notch Century?*

Schwartz: There are a lot of riders out there—you always have lots of support. And even though it's a good hard day, you're supporting a group of athletes that sometimes have it tough every day in doing what they have to do. They'll be cranking up the hill with their hands or biking up with one limb. It's a hard day that's well worth effort.

Learn more:

[Three Notch Century](#)

[Register for this year's Three Notch Century](#) (UNH riders can get a \$25 discount using the code UNH14 during registration.)

[Three Notch Century video](#)

[Northeast Passage](#)

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