

SKI ACCIDENT VICTIM TO TAKE ON 1,000-MILE CHARITY RIDE

The medical marvel

Keith Bingham

TO describe Gavin Rees as a 'medical marvel' is no exaggeration, as *Cycling Weekly's* June 1 Fitness Case Study revealed.

We've revealed the science, now here's the man.

Since the horrific and bloody skiing smash in 2003, in which the Welshman suffered extensive facial, head and brain injuries and a broken leg, Rees the skier has turned into Rees the long-distance cyclist.

"I'm stubborn, see," Rees laughed, when he told us.

Amazing comeback

Like Lance Armstrong and his remarkable comeback from cancer, Rees is proof of just what a human being is capable of achieving when he is advised to forget about leading an active life again.

In fact, it will come as no surprise to learn that Rees was motivated after reading Armstrong's first book, *It's Not About The Bike*. Since then



Rees (right) in training for his 1,000-mile challenge

he's read all the books he can find on Armstrong.

Cycling is one of few sports his injuries will allow him to take up. Now the 29 year old is planning a 1,000-mile bike ride this August, from Swansea to Geneva, with a grand finale up Alpe d'Huez, the famous Tour stage finish. The ride is called CycleGENEVA, and the aim is to raise money for the two hospitals that saved his life.

That's not bad for someone who hasn't ridden a bike before, but for a guy with the sort of injuries Rees sustained it must be off the scale.

Three years ago, Rees, a teacher at Bryncethin Primary School near Bridgend, collided with other skiers in the French Alps. His friend and teaching colleague Duncan Edwards, from Reigate, was also injured, sustaining cuts and cracked ribs. Rees was airlifted to the University Hospital Geneva, where he underwent a 19-hour operation. He has had three major operations to put his face back together. "Professor Michel Richter and his team saved my life," Rees said.

We can rebuild him

A month later he was transferred to Wales, to the Maxillofacial Unit at Morriston Hospital, Swansea, where he was in the care of surgeon, Mr Adrian Sugar, who carried out follow-up surgery.

The accident left him with eyesight problems, including double vision. He's had various corrective operations to improve his eyesight. Now he has single-field vision: in order to look to the side, must move his head in that direction.

"I have always been an active sportsman, playing football, climbing and skiing," said Rees. "In hospital all I could do was read. I've read all of Lance Armstrong's books, marvellous; also Ellen McArthur's. I was inspired by Armstrong. But I'd never cycled before."



Rees sets the pace for his friend Duncan Edwards

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