



EVERY MILE A MIRACLE

TEXT BY: JENN SHEPPARD

Jimmy Button was just kind of sitting around last year during Thanksgiving when he realized he has a pretty good life. "I'm pretty lucky," he said. "I've got a great wife and good family and friends, a job and all of this other stuff, but it was like I felt compelled to do something."

He decided he wanted to raise \$1 million for spinal cord research. Everyone in the motocross community has been touched by someone who's been paralyzed, he said.

"That was kind of my motivation behind it and so if I can do a little part and try and raise \$1 million for some research, I think it's well worth the effort that I'm putting in for it," he said. Back in 2000, the former factory Yamaha rider suffered paralyzing injuries and doctors told him to prepare for life in a wheelchair. Slowly but surely, he said, he was able to walk again.

"Yeah, I mean, you know, I got pretty lucky with my injury that I was able to regain movement and kind of become quote unquote like a normal person again," he said.

Button progressed slowly, he said, and was able to walk better and move better as time went on. "I can do everything on my own pretty well," he said.

Last year, when he called his old trainer Cory Worf, he pitched him an idea.

"I asked him, 'Is this something that's kind of realistic?' and he said, 'Well, it certainly isn't right now, but if you can train right and put your mind to it, you can certainly do it.'"

Button said he had not been on a bicycle in 10 years at that time. So, he started training. "You know the first day was 15 minutes on a spin bike and it about killed me," he said, "But I kept at it and kept working and working and working."

Now, just a little more than a year after he started training, Button said he's ready to ride the 2,500 miles across country on a bicycle.

"I would be ready physically to do it tomorrow," he said. "I ride nearly every single day and normally my rides are 30-40 miles. It's kind of tough with work and everything but I jump out at lunch and I'll go ride for a couple hours at lunch and then on the weekends we'll do three or four hour rides on the weekends."

The ride will take off on Sunday, Feb. 20, the day after the San Diego Supercross where Button was injured.

"I think the first couple of days are going to be definitely the most difficult because of getting out of San Diego," he said. "There's a lot of hills and a lot of climbing, but once we get over into Arizona pretty much for all intents and purposes, the rest of the ride all the way to Florida is pretty flat."

Along with his trainer, who will be doing the entire ride with him, Button said there will be people who are going to ride for one or a few days as they make their way across the country. "There's already 12 people signed up to do it," he said. "I think the most anyone is going to do is two days at this point."

Button is hoping they can get 100 people to join the ride. "When you sign up, you have to bring in donations of course, so if they all bring in 500 bucks in donations that would be great and that can be \$50,000 toward our goal," he said.

Another goal is to average about 60 miles a day, Button said. "We're going to come across Interstate 10 for the majority of the way and it's pretty flat," he said. "I think that our average will probably pick up a little bit going across that part of it, but for a few days getting out of San Diego we might be a little bit under our average. I think in the end that 60 mile a day type of average should be right on point."

The pace, at 15 to 16 mph, should take them just over a month. "We expect it to take somewhere between 35 and 40 days total," he said. "We're expecting to be done somewhere around the first week of April."



Ahead of the ride will be a motorhome where the cyclists will sleep every night. "A motorhome will go ahead every morning and prepare lunch for us," he said. "And then I'll have a chase car that will be behind us with extra bikes, wheels and tires, food and drink you know for the daily ride."

They plan on hitting "major cities," like Phoenix, Tucson, El Paso, San Antonio, Houston, Biloxi, New Orleans, Tallahassee and Jacksonville on the way to Daytona Beach.

And there's a reason Button said he decided to end the ride in Daytona Beach. "Daytona's the world center for motor sport," he said, "And if they could cure spinal cord injuries, it would sure make a lot of motor sport people in this world rest a little bit easier."

Button said he's setting up a YouTube Channel for people to keep tabs on what's going on. "I'll have somebody that will be filming it and we'll also be doing a nightly upload on our website," he said.

Of course, Button said he will be tweeting "like crazy."

A number of sponsors have already pledged to help them get across country, including Sette Bikes, Monster, Oakley, Continental Tires, DC

Shoes and Pearl Izumi.

"We're pretty fortunate," he said. "I've got a lot of sponsors that have come on board whether it is with product or with money and finances or whatever it is because this is not a cheap endeavor to go and do this thing. Right now I'm spending a lot of money out of my pocket to get this thing off the ground, but it's okay it's worth it to me."

The website, www.milesformiraclestoday.com is set up to take secure donations. "If you're a cyclist and you want to join the ride, you can help out and raise some money that way, or if you want to donate \$5 bucks or \$1,000 bucks, whatever you want to do, every little bit helps," he said. "Also if you want to text, you can text the word 'Bike' to 85944 it's \$5 bucks for every text that you do. There are a number of different ways. It's just kind of whatever's in your price range or whatever you're up to, anything helps, that's for sure."

Button said he's excited to meet the challenge. "There's going to be some tough days on there but I'm looking forward to it and hopefully we can make a successful journey out of the whole thing and raise some money and some awareness," he said. "There's a lot going on with spinal cord research right now and there's not a lot of activity on spinal cord research. I just wanted to do something."

