



DOUG CHARNOCK | CENTURYCYCLES

Cyclists Kevin Madzia, rear, and Ray Query, on day two of their epic trek from Northeast Ohio to the Tierra del Fuego region of Argentina. Here in Peninsula, the riding was easy. The pair expects harder going in the heat of Texas and mountains of Central and South America.

# Cyclists on long trek for cancer awareness

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*Plain Dealer Reporter*

Most amateur cyclists aspire to one day riding a “century,” 100 miles in a single outing.

If that benchmark seems impressive, consider the quest two local bikers have undertaken, an epic journey for charity that could amount to riding 150 grueling centuries back to back.

Century Cycles employees Kevin Madzia and Ray Query set out Aug. 24 on an eight-month, possibly 15,000-mile tour from Northeast Ohio to the southern tip of Argentina, in a bid to raise money for skin-cancer research.

If successful, the pair will enter

the Tierra del Fuego region in April, exhausted but elated with the \$20,000 they’ll have raised.

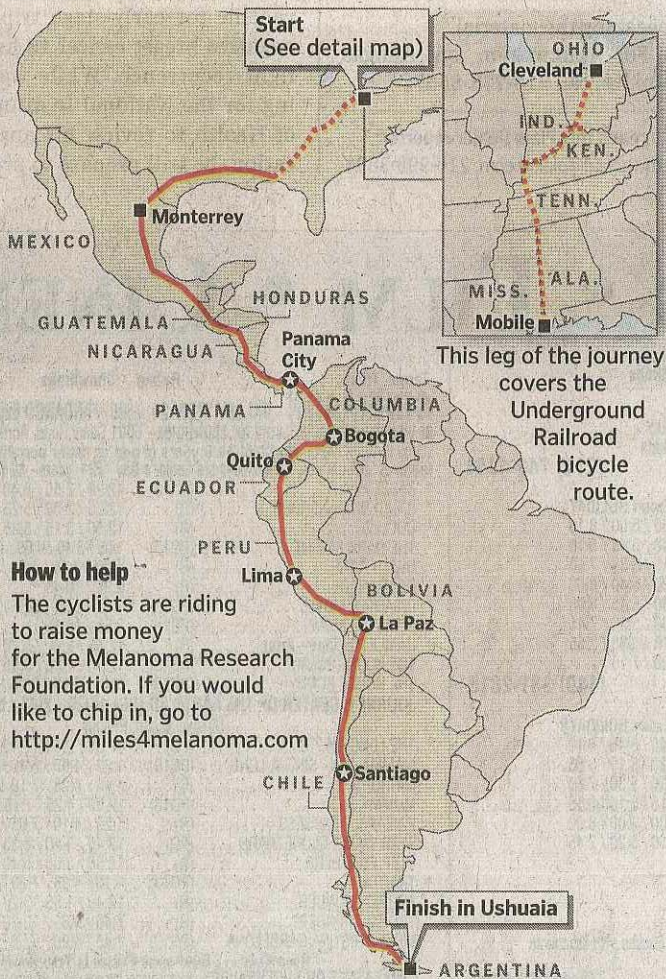
“I’m sure there’ll be days when we question our dedication, but we’ll get through them,” said Madzia, via cell phone from a rest stop in Mifflin, Ohio. “We’re going to try to push for 100 miles every single day [we ride].”

Were they to ride in a straight line, Madzia, 44, of Peninsula, and Query, 43, of Lakewood, would need only to ride about 6,700 miles. Most of that, though, would be off-road and over oceans, a magical journey not even their steel-framed Diamondback bikes — donated by Raleigh — could handle.

**INSIDE**  
See the route that the cyclists will bike. **E5**

SEE CANCER | **E5**

**A long, long way for a cure**  
Ray Query and Kevin Madzia have begun a journey estimated at 15,000 miles, from Cleveland to the southern tip of Argentina, to raise money to fight skin cancer.



## CANCER

FROM E1

### Cyclists on trek for funds, awareness

Reality demands they take a more circuitous route, through Mexico, Central America and along the western rim of South America. By map, their route appears to span about 10,000 miles, but the pair estimate they'll really cover more like 15,000.

Not all of this will be hospitable. "I think they're going to find that not all the roads are perfect," said Jim Sayer, executive director of Ad-

venture Cycling Association, a Montana-based nonprofit that promotes large-scale rides.

"But that's the glory of cycling ... The thing you hear most about these kinds of trips is how liberating it is to cover such great distances under your own power."

As it happens, both have experience covering great distances. In 2004, Madzia joined an organized tour across the United States, and Query once pedaled from Anchorage, Alaska, to Cleveland.

Also on their side are Query's fluency in Spanish and a 10-day cycling and camping trip Madzia took last fall in New Mexico. Together, the experiences provided a critical education in adventure cycling, Madzia said.

MORE INFO

### About melanoma

**What is it?** Most serious form of skin cancer. If caught early, it is almost 100 percent curable. If not, cancer can spread and be difficult to treat.

**Signs:** It can be a new mole, or one that has changed in size, shape or color. In men, it often shows between shoulders and hips, head or neck. In women, it often appears on lower legs. In dark-skinned people, it can be under finger- or toenails, palms of hands or soles of feet.

**Sources:** [www.melanoma.org](http://www.melanoma.org) and [www.melanoma.com](http://www.melanoma.com).

Still, nothing they've done truly mimics their current project, in which they'll cook their own food, speak a foreign language, tote everything in panniers and map their own routes. What's more, the only way to train is to keep pedaling.

"You can plan to a certain extent, but you have to stay flexible," Sayer said. "If you're too rigid, it's harder to succeed."

Madzia and Query left from Lakewood and are riding south along a route prescribed by the Adventure Cycling Association that traces the historic Underground Railroad. Occasionally, the pair will visit stores and plants affiliated with Sherwin-Williams, the Cleveland-based paint company whose TriFlow bike-lubricants division is a sponsor of their trip.

The only place they plan to be tourists is at Machu Picchu in Peru. "This is their version of the Tour de France, with a couple of extra miles thrown in," joked Mike Conway, spokesman for Sherwin-Williams, alluding to the 23-day, 2,200-mile bike race.

The pair will turn west through Mississippi and Louisiana, then traverse Texas along the Gulf of Mexico. This, Madzia said, could

toughest leg.

"We've heard tales of woe about Texas," he said. "It's just very big and very hot."

As it happens, of all the weather-related elements the pair will encounter, the sun probably is the one they've considered the most. Madzia's father, George, passed away six years ago, at 62, from melanoma, a form of skin cancer related to excessive exposure to sunlight.

If caught early enough, melanomas can be removed. Otherwise, they tend to spread and become more difficult to treat.

Thus, in addition to raising money for the Melanoma Research Foundation, the pair's goal is to raise awareness about the disease.

"A lot of people, if they think about melanoma at all, they don't think it's serious," Madzia said. "But it can be much more deadly."

Of course, an epic cycling journey through North, Central and South America would seem to be every bit as dangerous, if not more so. No doubt the ride also will be tough on the Madzia and Query families, who'll keep in touch via GPS link and phone calls wherever the pair gets a cellular signal.

But for anyone worried about safety, Sayer offers a consoling word. Cross-continental bike rides are extremely rare, but they're almost always two-way trips, he said.

"People who attempt these epic rides usually come home safely. They may have mishaps or even injuries, but they generally make it home."

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