

Laurie reaches for the sky

WHEN YOUR HOME is England's highest village deep in the heart of the North Pennines, hills become a way of life. Local man Laurie Lambeth's latest fitness challenge was to climb the height of Mount Everest — 29,000ft — in just one day...



Great Dun Fell to Lambeth's tenacity

Photos by Mairi Kerr

Andrew Hamilton/Louise Mahé

Laurie Lambeth grew up with bikes and entered his first mountain bike race when he was just nine years old. After a long break from cycling in his teens and early twenties, Laurie rediscovered the joy of cycling and started entering a few races. It was then he realised that while he was accomplished enough on the flat, it was when the road pointed upwards that he truly excelled. "I guess it's down to my riding background," says Laurie. "My everyday rides are probably hillier than the hilliest ride many cyclists have ever done!"

In 2012, Laurie fancied trying his hand at road cycling and bought his first road bike. "I liked the idea of taking on some really hilly sportives", explains Laurie. After getting some sportives under his belt, he took on the brutally hilly Fred Whitton Challenge — 112 miles and 12,500ft of climbing across the Lake District earlier this year. While training for this, Laurie heard on the grapevine about a new challenge called 'Everesting', where the goal is to pick a hill and ride up and down it as many times as needed to ascend 29,029ft — the equivalent of climbing Mount Everest!

"While training for the Fred Whitton, I'd clocked up 17,000ft of ascent in a single ride, climbing and descending a local hill over and over, so I thought that while it was incredibly hard, it was probably achievable" says Laurie. "I also knew the ideal place to go Everesting — Great Dun Fell,

TRY IT YOURSELF

Preparation

As with taking on any sporting goal preparation is key. Recceing your climb is a good idea, as this gives you an idea of gearing needed and how long each ascent should take. Knowing how long each ascent will take is vital, to give yourself a guide for how long you'll be riding. Remember to also factor in the descent time when making your plans to give a truer estimation of how long your entire attempt will take.

Low gearing is a must to take the strain of your legs so add a few gears even lower than you think you may need for those times when you're really struggling. Training-wise you don't necessarily have to practise doing repeated efforts of the same climb, though this may help you mentally. Try long, steady, hilly rides and don't push too hard up the hills just try to keep an even pace.

If you ride mostly on the flat then you will need to practise your climbing technique so it becomes second nature. Training for Everesting should be as much about getting used to riding for long periods not just climbing. You'll struggle if you're just doing hour rides or shorter hill efforts. Make sure you get used to riding for several hours in the saddle with no real rest.

"At 6.30 am on Thursday June 26, Laurie parked up at the bottom of Great Dun Fell, kitted up and started his Garmin GPS"

REFUELLING TIPS

Nutrition and hydration

During your recce, look for the best places to take on food and drink during your descent and have a practice. It'll be best to eat on the descent, but this depends on the length and type of climb you've chosen as it may be too steep and fast or too technical to do it while descending. If this is the case find a flatter part of the climb, preferably near the top, where you can refuel. It'll be easier to eat on the way down. You can stop for meals during your Everesting attempt, but eating little bits on the go is more time-efficient. Remember it often takes at the very least 10 hours to do an Everest climb without sleeping, so minimising the time not riding is crucial. Taking in food and drinking continually, right from the off, is key. Don't leave it until you feel hungry; start from inside the first hour.

Little and often is the way forward. Don't try to eat loads in one go as it'll just sit in your stomach and you'll struggle to digest it while riding. Not eating enough will cause you to bonk or just run out of gas. You might not feel it right away, but it'll definitely have a negative effect on your attempt. Vary your food intake with sweet and savoury, natural and energy products.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Mental strength

It's not just the physical strain of this type of feat that is hard, but the mental monotony of repeating the same climb over and over. Often when doing 24-hour epics the route is ever-changing, but depending on the length of the climb you may be doing repeats of the same road over 100 times which is enough to drive anyone crazy. Mental fatigue is often what causes the pace to drop before your body actually gets too tired. However, training yourself to press on even though you feel tired is possible. Doing specific training rides after a long day at work, or early in the morning before work, will help emulate that feeling of those final few hours. Just as the body responds to physical training, the mind adapts too so it becomes used to riding for longer before *real* mental fatigue actually sets in. Having lots of support can help in this area too. Get friends to ride with you — chatting about anything can help take your mind off the monotony and pain of hill reps. Ensure they're not the type that will half-wheel you though, as if you're struggling this is exactly what you don't need. Having a friendly face, or someone new to come and cheer you on halfway through can also give you a big lift.

which at 2,782ft has the highest tarmac road in the UK, and is just down the road from here.”

Laurie's preparation was brief; he'd heard rumours that someone else had their eye on Everesting Great Dun Fell, and since the first person to Everest a climb can claim it for themselves in perpetuity, he wanted to get in quick. “I could have put some more training in I suppose, but I knew deep down that the years of hill training and my recent 17,000ft ride would stand me in good stead.”

At 6.30am on Thursday June 26, Laurie parked up at the bottom of Great Dun Fell, kitted up and started his Garmin GPS. However, during the first ascent, the wind was proving extremely gusty, nothing like what was forecast. As Laurie explained: “I honestly thought this is not the day to be doing this. I'll just do a few ascents as training and head home. However, four and a half hours into the ride, the wind had eased. I'd ridden five ascents, climbed over 10,000ft and was feeling OK.”

By 1pm, Laurie had ridden 64 miles out of the 140 he needed for his Everest. The weather had picked up and he was feeling boosted thanks to riding support from pals at his Penrith-based cycling club, Beacon Wheelers. Less promising was that during the 10th ascent Laurie began to suffer from knee pain. Fortunately, one of his support riders was a sports masseur and an impromptu massage in a gravelly layby surrounded by curious sheep eased the stiffness enough for him to continue.

Laurie slogged on, passing first the 20,000ft and then the 100-mile mark. At the end of ascent 13, it was 7.30pm. He'd

HOW IT WORKED FOR ME:

Laurie's tips on Everesting

- **Pick a hill to 'Everest' that really means something to you. The thought of being able to claim it as your own will help keep you motivated when the going gets tough. A local hill will make it easier to arrange support.**
- **Test the water first — make sure you can climb 10,000ft comfortably before you even consider an attempt at Everest.**
- **Ensure the gearing on your bike is appropriate — to make it to the end, you need to be able to complete**

- each ascent without having to push too hard.**
- **Enlist all the support riders you can, especially for later in the day when you'll need them most.**
- **Site your support vehicle and refreshments/other half at the top of the hill, not the bottom. The thought of refreshments at the top will help keep you motivated on each ascent and you'll also have chance to digest your drink/snack during the descent.**
- **Drink and eat little and often. Take a really wide**

- variety of foods as you'll be surprised what your body craves towards the end of an Everesting attempt! Save caffeinated drinks/gels etc for later in the ride when you'll need the boost.**
- **Think of the halfway point of your ride as 20,000ft — not 14,500ft!**
- **Don't stop immediately when your GPS device shows an ascent of 29,029ft. They're not always completely accurate so add another 1,000ft or so to make sure you've really cracked it.**



Return ascender: Lambeth spent 15 hours in the saddle

been riding for 13 hours and had covered 120 miles and climbed 26,950ft. The penultimate ascent was ridden solo, but with Laurie's girlfriend now parked on the summit providing some much-needed moral support.

The final ascent began at 8.45pm. A strong coffee plus the sight of one of Laurie's friends who had returned to give more riding support gave him a big lift. “We didn't speak much on that last rep,” says Laurie. “When the wind got strong, Nigel would simply pull in front to offer me some protection. But I knew I'd cracked it and with just over a mile to go, I got out of the saddle and gave it everything! After 15 hours 17

minutes, 140 miles and 31,234ft of climbing, I was totally empty, but I'd 'climbed Everest' — it's a day I will never forget!”

Your turn...

Under official Everesting rules, to achieve 'an Everest' you can choose any one hill or mountain. It doesn't matter how long your ride is as long as you climb more than 8,848 metres (29,002ft) and it's ridden in one attempt (i.e. no sleeping in-between). You can't ride different routes on the same hill/mountain and each repeat must be ridden both up and down (you can't get driven down each time). Rides must be full ascents each time — Strava segments or the accepted 'traditional' route will generally be the best guide for this. You also need to keep your Garmin recording the whole time.

Only the first Everesting ride for each climb will be added to the official 'Everesting map'. If you copy a ride that someone else has already done, it will still be listed in the hall of fame, just not on the map. For more details on Everesting, visit:

www.everesting.cc/



Everested! The Fell enters the Hall of Fame

TRY IT YOURSELF

Pacing

Often when out on a club run or during races it's about pressing on up the climb and maintaining your effort over the brow of the hill. An Everesting attempt is not like that. It's all about pacing your effort and achieving the magical 8,848 metres of climbing in one go. Going into the red at any point is a big no-no, and could be detrimental to achieving the end goal. However, maintaining a steady pace may see the effort level change as you go through different phases of suffering, so go with the flow of how you feel. If you want to put in a bit of an effort to reduce the monotony and open the legs up a bit this may work, just bear in mind that going too hard near the start could cost you later on so always leave a bit in reserve and don't go flat-out. Using a low gear will help you maintain a steadier pace and will mean you're relying more on aerobic fitness and not sapping the strength from your legs.

Naturally, when climbing, your cadence will drop by around 20rpm. Try to avoid this by selecting and using your gears wisely. This may mean changing a cassette over to give a bigger range of gears that gives you an escape for those steep ramps where you're really struggling.

While Everesting can include stops for meals and have a little rest, it has to be done in one go without sleep. This may mean over 24 hours of riding depending on your pace and the climb, so try and make any breaks you have as short as possible. Also remember that stopping may cause that 'cafe legs' feeling as they seize up making starting up again tough. If you don't want many, or any breaks, use the descents as a bit of a breather. Getting out of the saddle to give your nether regions a rest and freewheeling will help too. Otherwise spinning your legs out on the descent, in a nice low gear, will help keep the legs ticking over and prevent them from seizing up.

EVERESTING ESSENTIALS

Must haves

As well as having a bike that's working smoothly, there are a few integral pieces of equipment you'll need.

GARMIN

A Garmin, or similar device, that will record your ride in one go. To be a certified as an Everesting attempt your ride must be logged on Strava. As batteries often only last for 15 hours or so, you'll probably need to charge your device while riding. Ensure you have the necessary equipment to do this without the Garmin resetting itself and losing data. A Power Monkey or similar is by far the easiest and most portable option.

LIGHTS

Your attempt will take at least 10 hours and, depending on the time of year, this could mean riding in the dark. Ensuring you have adequate lights to see and be seen is vital — so make sure yours are fully charged!

SUPPORT

Whilst Everesting is doable on your own, without a support crew it's a lot harder. If you decide to give it a crack on your own, keep in contact with people and ensure someone knows what you're doing. Then if you end up really struggling or having any issues there's someone who knows where you are. Organising support from friends and family is always a good idea.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Technique

Staying seated for longer is the best method. This will engage the larger muscle groups of your glutes and quads and also help you to maintain a steadier pace. Getting out of the saddle may tempt you into going hard, which could be detrimental. That said, climbing out of the saddle for short periods, while maintaining a steady pace, will change your body position. This can prevent you from stiffening up as well as give your muscles a slight rest.

It sounds obvious but sit upright and look ahead — don't scrunch over the bars no matter how much you're suffering. Concentrating on your posture when it's getting tough mentally will help to distract you. Sitting upright will open your chest and ensure that more air flows into your lungs, thus increasing the amount of oxygen that gets to those working leg muscles. Rest your hands on the bars, change position regularly to prevent stiffening and soreness and don't grip too tightly.