

2019 American Randonneur Award

SPENCER KLAASSEN

BY JOHN CAP'N ENDE

Mild mannered Midwestern Pharm.D. by day and super rando once the road turns into the wind. He's a humble fixed-gear devotee who brushes off derailleurs as too complex for his kind. His more than 130,000 kilometers of fixed-gear riding in forty-two states is impressive but are not the palmarès that led him to receive the most prestigious of RUSA's awards.

Sure, he is the first American to be awarded a Woody (Woodrup 5000), but that is recognition from Audax Australia, and this did not tip the balance in Spencer's favor for the 2019 American Randonneur Award.

Spencer epitomizes the quiet volunteer that keeps randonneuring

alive in the US. He currently serves as RBA for two regions: Kansas City, MO, and Nebraska. While Missouri and Nebraska share a small common border, the starting locations for rides in these two regions are separated by great distances. This year RBA Spencer will offer ride starts separated by 1200 kilometers: Springfield, MO, to Gordon, NE. Counting rides in both regions, Spencer will offer eighty-nine events during the 2019 and 2020 seasons, helping our sport to thrive in the American heartland. Additionally, he is constantly looking to innovate and draw new riders to randonneuring. He has added gravel events, multi-day tours of Nebraska, and flexible course structures that allows 1000km DNF riders to rejoin the course and ride in with continuing riders while earning credit for a shorter distance ride. In

2015 and 2016, Spencer served on the RUSA Board as the RBA liaison.

If you really want to know why Spencer Klaassen is the worthy recipient of the 2019 American Randonneur Award, you should do one of his rides and talk to the riders in his regions. He is extraordinarily encouraging to new riders. In fact, I think he rides fixed wheel so that he has an excuse to hang back with the lanterns rouge and encourage them. Spencer loves seeing new riders enter the sport, and he revels in their conquest of new distances. His courses are designed to prepare riders to meet their goals of conquering 1200kms far and near.

He is unflappable. Once while on a 1000km that he was hosting in



Post ride celebration HCH (Herentals, Cosne Sur Loire, Herentals) 1,200k. When in Belgium...

—PHOTO JOHN CAP'N ENDE





Nebraska, we were faced with 200km straight into a strong headwind. It was an epic slog westward. Spencer quietly ground into the wind without complaint and eventually we made the next control, barely. Later I found out what he had been thinking; he was working out how to evacuate nine riders from Western Nebraska as he thought that we all might DNF due to the headwind. These are the thoughts that go on inside the heads of our dedicated RBAs

while the rest of us just try to survive.

I consider myself fortunate to have shared tens of thousands of kilometers with Spencer and to have learned from his experience. I've never heard an unkind word towards anyone from him and we've certainly been put under stressful conditions. He epitomizes self-sufficiency and selflessness. Please join me in congratulating the recipient of the 2019 American Randonneur Award, Spencer Klaassen. 🚲

Spencer leads riders deep into the Sandhills of Nebraska on a 1,000k ride.

—PHOTO JOHN CAP'N ENDE



Stopping to smell the pastries in Sizun, PBP 2019.

Typical scene Western Nebraska.

—PHOTOS JOHN CAP'N ENDE