

## **Team Youghal Start Their Journey In America**

Team Youghal started their Race across America on June 18<sup>th</sup> at 10:40pm, Irish Time, leaving Oceanside, California, for a three thousand mile journey across the continent of the USA. All eight team members were on the start line and were applauded by spectators and some ex pats who turned up to cheer them on. Christy McCarthy from Youghal Pipe Band, and also a member of Team Youghal, played the National Anthem on the bagpipes to a huge reception which boosted the spirit of all the Team and anyone with Irish connections that were there for the start.

The Blue Team of Alan Sheehan, Christy McCarthy and Ger Flanagan cycled the first 142 miles to Brawley CA which included the Palomar Mountain which was 2,000ft high. They were supported by Ray Flanagan and Gordon Nicholson. The weather was very hot and humid but the scenery was breath taking especially from the top of the glass elevator at 4,227ft. The team made excellent time reaching Brawley a little after 6am, Irish Time.

The red team of Brian Hehir, Brian Fitzgerald, Kieran Groeger, Michael Hines and Tommy Roche, supported by Jill Kinahan and Peter Roche then took the night shift to Parker Arizona. On the way they followed the Colorado River northward towards Arizona and entered the Colorado River Indian Reservation. They battled on through the night and met with the Blue Team outside Parker AZ, between a town called Bouse AZ and Hope AZ, at 1:00pm, Irish Time.

The Blue Team then set off for Prescott AZ via Skull Valley in the sizzling Arizona heat. They reached Prescott at 10:26pm, Irish Time. At this stage Team Youghal covered 440 miles during their Race Across America. Red Team then took over and went down the Prescott Valley and up through the Hickey Mountains with Cottonwood AZ in sight. The Red Team blasted through Verde Valley and reached Flagstaff AZ on Monday at 05:44am Irish Time and handed back to the Blue Team.

The Blue Team, Ger Flanagan, Christy McCarthy and Alan Sheehan, supported by Peter Roche and John Sanders, then headed for Tuba City AZ, entering the Navajo Indian Reservation on the way and skirting the edge of the Grand Canyon. They continued on to Kayenta AZ where they met up with the Red Team of Brian Hehir, Brian Fitzgerald, Kieran Groeger and Michael Hines at 3:06pm, Irish Time.

The Red Team then left Kayenta and continued on to Cortez CO seeing spectacular scenery through monument valley and when passing Mexican Hat UT and the tombstones. During this stage the Red Team interacted with another, Californian based, eight man team, called Team Learning 4 Life. The Red Team were tussling back and forth with the American team throughout the stage but Michael Hines got the better of them and pulled away. The Red

Team then handed over to the Blue Team in Cortez CO at 11:15pm, Irish Time after Team Youghal cycled 813 miles across America for The Emer Casey Foundation.

For the Team there were two things that stood out for every one of the team members.

The first was the helpfulness and friendliness of everyone that they met at the start of the race and through all the different stages that they cycled through. Ger Flanagan said; “Without the support from the American people and the Irish this endeavour would be twice as difficult as it is. We would like to thank everyone who helped or gave advice in any way as it meant a great deal to everyone involved. We would also like to thank all the followers on Facebook, whose comments are a great boost to us when we need a little push.”

The second was the unbelievable scenery that they encountered going through Arizona and on to Utah. Crew Chief, Aonghus O’Broin, said; “When you see the sights in reality that nature has created it lifts the spirit and helps you to continue with a renewed energy.”

813.7 miles done, 2175.81 miles to go, next stop Durango CO.