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Adventurer Squash

Falconer, 32, of Thulston, set a world record by riding around Europe for 3,000 miles on an ElliptiGO, a cross-training machine which combines running with cycling. She talks about her trip.

IN December last year, I received an e-mail from a friend, Dave Cornthwaite. Attached was a picture of an ElliptiGO and the e-mail said: "Squash, do you fancy doing a 1,000-mile journey on one of these?"

I said "Yes" - and the 1,000 miles soon became 3,000 miles!

After a few months of planning, the Go Trek was born. A 3,000-mile journey on ElliptiGOs through Europe, taking nine weeks, sharing our adventure, encouraging people to say "yes" more and all in aid of breast cancer awareness charity Coppafeel.

On April 30 we set off from Everton Football Club in Liverpool where all the players train on GOs. To engage with as many people as possible we had a series of presentations planned, usually in exchange for a meal and a bed. For the rest of the time our plan was to camp or stay with friends.

The first night set a precedent for the rest of the trip. It was about 6pm, we were just outside of Stoke and de-

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SQUASH FALCONER

cided the next suitable camp spot would be where we would stop.

A cyclist, Joe, came past and inquired what we were riding. We chatted and Joe asked where we would be staying that night. I told him we were going to camp and he said, "You could stay at my house if you like". We had the loveliest evening.

We covered over 400 miles in the UK. It was funny that home, Derby, was en route, and the weather was stunning for the ten days we took to ride south and to Harwich, where we got the ferry to Holland.

The ElliptiGo is a wonderful invention. It's like a cross trainer with wheels. It looks like a bike with no saddle but the action is running - running without impact. As far as challenges go this was something very different, because usually I am climbing mountains.

Without a support crew we carried everything in trailers. It has been calculated that an ElliptiGo requires 30% more energy than a normal bicycle and with our 25-30kg trailers, we were working considerably harder.

We arrived in Holland to rain and it rained every day. The flatness was a joy after the hills in England. It was an



Squash Falconer said that during her 3,000-mile journey she was overwhelmed by the generosity of friends, family and strangers who donated to the charity Coppafeel.

My record-breaking trip of 3,000 miles aboard an exercise 'bike'



Squash riding the ElliptiGO, a cross-trainer on wheels which takes around 30% more effort to ride than a normal bike.

honour to meet Prince Pieter Christiaan, who rides an ElliptiGo.

From Holland we went to Germany, a country that I had not known very well but that I soon became very fond of. The people were kind and generous and as we followed the path of the Rhine, the countryside became more and more stunning.

Now well into the trek, I was beginning to feel the physical benefits of riding the ElliptiGo every day. I was 3kgs lighter; I was leaner and had muscles in new places. In Switzerland, six weeks after we set out and almost at the 2,000-mile mark, Dave injured his back lifting something and decided to pull out of the trek when we reached the south of France.

This was a tough time. Not only was I losing my teammate but continuing meant I would be going solo - something I have never done before on any trip.

It also meant I would have to step things up a gear. In order to do the 3,000 miles that we had set out to do before we reached our end point in Paris, I still had another 1,000 miles to do and only two weeks left to do it.

This is where the ElliptiGo really proved itself as a remarkable machine. I was get-

ting stronger and fitter each week.

My body was ready to go again each day. I began doing 12-hour-plus days. During the trek I did nine days of 100 miles or over and the longest was a 14-hour 130-mile effort.

Throughout the journey I was overwhelmed by the generosity of friends and family, and from complete strangers who were donating to our chosen charity, Coppafeel.

Although the last few weeks were long days with big mileage, they were also through the French Alps and along the south coast which was absolutely beautiful.

I reached the Eiffel Tower in Paris on July 5, having done 3,074 miles - a world record for the longest distance travelled by elliptical bicycle.

The icing on the cake was the money raised for Coppafeel. My aim was to raise £3,000 for 3,000 miles and the total is now well over that and still rising.

The Go Trek was a wonderful adventure and it just goes to show what can happen when you use that little three-letter word, "Yes"!



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