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Bicyclists pedal through town on global trip

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Steve Smith didn't start out on his voyage as your typical muscular jock. But by the end of his four-year journey around the world, he may very well turn into one.

Smith, 29, and college buddy Jason Lewis, 28, both of London, are attempting to become the first to circumnavigate the globe solely on their own power.

"It's a first. Very few things you can say nowadays are first," Smith said last week during a stop in Flagstaff. "The originality inspired me as soon as I thought of it. Going around the world is the most ambitious and romantic kind of travel ... (and) the method is very important."

The pair will kayak, cycle, propel a pedal boat and skate their way into

the record books, all the time struggling to stay one step ahead of starvation.

"People are quite surprised to hear we never trained for this at all," Smith said. "I think it's 90 percent mental, anyway. We were always confident that we could manage this and get fit on the way."

Instead of the bulging muscles you might expect from someone who's spent more than a year pedaling across land and sea, Smith seems almost undernourished. He sports a shaved head, and a deep, red cut snakes up the back of one thin calf.

Smith and Lewis, collectively known as Pedal for the Planet, have no sponsors and often no place to stay when they coast into town. They've relied on their own money and wits, as well as help and dona-

tions from strangers they've met along the way.

"We're winging it, really," said Smith, who quit his job as an environmental research scientist at the University of London to pursue the record. "We'll look around for people who want us to do a little slide show. It is quite an ambitious thing ... (Staying alive) does take a lot of time on its own."

But he also says he's able to get by on the basics.

"If you've got food, water and the ability to maintain your temperature, you can carry on until you're 80 years old," he said.

Smith makes a point of visiting schools, where he talks to kids about following their bliss. He said that's one of his and Lewis's favorite things about the journey.

"We enjoy seeing the kids get a

little gleam in their eye," Smith said.

Smith and Lewis, who used to sing in a rock band, started out on bicycles from London in July of last year, then spent 111 days propelling a pedal boat 4,500 miles across the Atlantic.

They parted company in Miami earlier this year, where Jason decided he would in-line skate across the U.S. while Steve cycled. Jason had never been on in-line skates before, but has been averaging 60 to 70 miles a day. On bicycles, Smith and camerawoman Eilbhe Donovan, who's making a documentary about the trip, have been pedaling 70 to 80 miles a day.

Smith and Lewis will meet in San Francisco this month, then again part ways. Lewis will pedal across the Pacific by himself, hopping from island to island, and Smith will

kayak and cycle his way through Canada and Alaska to Siberia.

Smith said boating through the frozen north will have its own challenges, but he's already looked death in the eye. During a storm in the Atlantic, he was flung from the pedal boat.

If his foot hadn't caught in a rope and the boat, true to its design, hadn't self-righted, Smith is convinced he would have drowned.

"My luck has certainly increased since I started following my heart and doing what I really wanted to do in life," Smith said.

They've also got a page on the World Wide Web. That address is: <http://www.tach.net/public/orgs/pedal/pedalplanet.html>.