

MARIA LEADS IN SOUTH POLE WORLD TITLE BID

British adventurer Maria Leijerstam is well ahead of her two male rivals in the race to claim a world first cycle title.

Although Maria, 35, from the Vale of Glamorgan started weeks later and took a different route to the South Pole from the edge of the continent, her average of 40 km per day is putting her well in the running for a first.

American, Daniel Burton and Spaniard, Juan Menendez Granados are cycling the most common route from Hercules Inlet to the South Pole on Fat Bikes.

Maria's polar cycle is different. Developed after two years of extensive research and later teaming up with experts from Inspired Cycle Engineering of Cornwall, her three wheeled recumbent cycle has every chance of achieving this record.

Maria expedition started on December 17 from the edge of the Ross Iceshelf. After the first 80km she spent the next two days cycling up the Leverett glacier against very strong head wind and some fresh snowdrift in the track. This slowed her progress down to just under 2km per hour.

With the glacier conquered she has 500 km on the polar plateau to complete. Fresh snow is making the task difficult and increasing the drag but with 13 hours of hard cycling she has just put another 40km under her belt.

After a 13 hour day cycling just getting her tent up in the ferocious winds is a challenge. Cold feet is one big problem and the moisture build up in her boots has turned to ice in -25 degrees. During the evenings in her tent Maria has been using a multi-purpose stove to dry out her kit and melt snow to produce water to mix with her dried food.

So while you are tucking into your Christmas turkey on Wednesday spare a thought for this British adventurer. You can follow her progress on www.whiteicecycle.com and also donate to her favoured charity the Alzheimer's Society.