

DOUBLE WORLD CYCLE TITLE HOLDER 07/01/2014

South Pole double world record holder Maria Leijerstam arrived at Heathrow today to a crowd of welcome supporters. The other two challengers to cycle to the Pole, American Daniel Burton and Spaniard Juan Menendez Granados are still cycling.

Maria was suffering from chronic knee pain when she arrived, but having become the first person in the world to cycle to the South Pole in the record breaking time of 10 days, 14 hours and 56 minutes, her delight overshadowed the pain.

“I was adamant to peddle every metre of the way,” said Maria, 35, from the Vale of Glamorgan. “Even in areas of deep snow drift and sastrugi I was able to propel myself forward with the assistance of my hands on the wheels and shifting my weight in order to gain traction.”

Maria cycled a unique polar cycle, built by Inspired Cycle Engineering of Cornwall with three wheels to give her stability and allowed her to sit in a recumbent position to optimise aerodynamics in the katabatic Antarctic winds.

Maria’s route took her from the edge of the Ross Ice Shelf up the Leverett Glacier which has been virtually unexplored by adventurers.

Against the stunning backdrop of mountains she spent 26 cycling hours climbing 2,941 metres up the Leverett Glacier at an incline of over 20% at times.

“My mind is constantly busy as I try to calculate the best way forward with every revolution of the wheel. In order to maintain a steady speed I had to focus hard on avoiding deep snow drifts and sastrugis which ultimately stopped me in my tracks.”

Maria’s knee became increasingly painful after climbing the glacier with her 55kg of kit. She had to resort to strong painkillers to relieve her dislodged knee cap. A constant battle against frostbite was also at the forefront of her mind.

Back in Wales she is planning another full season of Burn Series multisport events which introduces people to adventurous sports. www.burnseries.co.uk

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