

# Motorcycle racer bikes across the U.S. to raise TBI awareness

Heidi Toth - Daily Herald | Posted: Thursday, June 30, 2011 12:30 am



Josh Morros, center, competes with his former physical therapist, Reuben Jessop, far left, through an obstacle course on Wednesday, June 29, 2011 at the Utah Valley Specialty Hospital in Provo. Three years ago Josh Morros was injured in a motorcycle off road racing accident but after a long recovery Morros is riding his bicycle across the country to raise awareness for traumatic brain injuries. On Wednesday, June 29, 2011 he stopped by the Utah Valley Specialty Hospital in Provo where he spent 26 days of recovery.

**PROVO** -- It's not common for doctors who work with traumatic brain injuries to see their patients again.

It's almost unheard for them to see a patient who came to them in a coma come back to visit on a bicycle, nine days and 600 miles into a cross-country ride that he's doing, well, because he can.

So 19-year-old Josh Morros's triumphant bicycle ride into the parking lot at Utah Valley Specialty Hospital on Wednesday morning was about more than just taking a bike ride. The first person to greet him was Reuben Jessop, the physical therapist who worked with Morros for almost four weeks after Morros, who was a professional off-road motorcycle racer, wrecked going more than 80 mph during a race in the Salt Flats in 2008.

"He's challenged me to a race, which I fully expect him to win," Jessop said.

Spoiler alert: Jessop was right. But he made a good run. More on that later.

Morros is riding from his home of Reno, Nev., to Vienna, Va., home of the Brain Injury Association of America. That first day at Intermountain Medical Center in Murray -- day one of a 24-day coma -- a doctor took Teresa Morros aside and told her Josh had severe traumatic brain injury.

"I said, 'Explain severe to me,' " she said. "He said one word. He said 'death.' "

Once that fear was gone, the amount of brain damage he'd suffered raised the question of how much would be permanent. Racing was who Josh was, Teresa Morros said. He had been racing for years, and in 2008, at age 16, he turned professional. After the accident, he had to relearn life skills. Gone were the 80 mph rides, to be replaced with slow, painful progress on exercise machines and therapy bars. Some things, though, Josh didn't forget.

"He was super competitive before," Jessop said. "As soon as he woke up, he became competitive."

After 26 days, he walked out of the specialty hospital. He didn't want to walk for long.

"I was just like, 'are we going racing?' " he remembered. "I was pretty pumped."

Not yet, his parents answered, but they knew it was coming, and they weren't going to stop him.

"He's wicked fast on the motorcycle again," his mother said.

Not fast enough, Josh Morros said; he remembers how racing used to feel, he remembers the competitors he used to beat. But it's coming back.

In the meantime, he's taken a break from the motorcycle and picked up the bicycle. The ride is to raise awareness of traumatic brain injury, since most people don't walk or ride away from it with the same success he's seen. He's since met other youth who have suffered TBIs.

"They're not really able to return to what they love to do," Morros said.

That's why he's dubbed his 2,700-mile trip the "Because I Can" Ride. He also set a goal to raise \$250,000 for the association; hospital employees kicked in \$5,000 more during his stop Wednesday.

Because he can also is why he challenged Jessop to a contest. They did this during rehab, Jessop said; Morros usually won, although Jessop holds the table tennis title. This race was the rehab triathlon: around the ambulance bay in wheelchairs, running through rehab equipment without touching the ground and biking around the block.

"I'm warmed up now," Morros told Jessop shortly after pulling in. "You wanna do it now?"

"I guess so," Jessop responded, before pointing to a 10-speed bike with a child seat on the back amid laughter from the crowd. "I've got a bike for you, though."

For more information on TBIs, go to [www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org). For more information on the ride, go to [www.becauseicanride.org](http://www.becauseicanride.org).