Cycling club offers healthy alternative to running

Photo by Spc. Amburr Reese

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While rotating out with XVIII Airborne Corps. Maj. Dan D. Streetman, El Dorado Hills, Calif., and strategist with the Multi-National Corps Iraq command group, discovered a small group of cyclist that had been riding together on and around Camp Victory, Iraq.

Now, with some advice from his cycling club president Mike Berretta back home, Streetman has been able to formally establish the Victory Base Complex Cycling Club.

"If someone has had biking experience this is a great place to get some time in," said Maj. Dan Streetman.

Photo by Spc. Amburr Reese

"The team is 16 members strong and meets on a regular basis," Streetman said.

The club meets Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays for a variety of rides that include Signal Hill, a loop around Camp Liberty and a more advanced ride that pushes the cyclists 48 miles when they ride twice around all of Victory Base Complex to include Baghdad International Airport.

While riding on the roads here one of the main focuses of the club is safety.

"We require everyone on the team to ride with a quality helmet, eye protection and we encourage gloves," Streetman said. "Every team member wears either the bright yellow Army jersey, or if they are a Marine, they wear a bright red Marine jersey so we can easily be seen. While riding on busy roads, we ride in a single file line-up, which also helps us be more efficient. "

Maj. Scott LaRonde, Dripping Springs, Texas, and intelligence planner with MNC-I C-5, has been riding with the VBC cycling club for about a month.

"This is the first bike club I have been a part of," LaRonde said. "I compete as a triathlete at home, and cycling is my weakest leg in the competition. This is a good opportunity for me to improve my riding."

A lot of the members of VBC cycling club have been riding throughout their lives for teams and with cycling clubs back in the states.

The level of experience in the group allows more novice athletes to benefit from their experience.

"Leading the group has been a great chance to share some enthusiasm with Soldiers," Streetman said. "It is great exercise, and a good alternative to running. Plus you get exposed to lots of different areas; I know where everything is on VBC."

The club is always looking for new members.

"If someone has had biking experience this is a great place to get some time in," Streetman said.

"I am not good yet, but I am getting better," LaRonde joked. "I never expected to leave Iraq as a better cyclist."

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Col. Steven R. Grove, a member of VBC cycling team here on Camp Victory, Iraq rides around Lost Lake, Aug. 16. Lost Lake is the common meeting place for the team before every ride.