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The one-pedal wonder

Biker delivers message of resilience

By Justin Rocket Silverman
amNewYork Staff Writer

Riding through Manhattan's traffic-choked corridors as a bike messenger is among the city's most daring professions, but to do the job with only one leg is to defy death on a daily basis.

"People ask me, 'How can you ride a bike?'" said Dexter Benjamin, who may well be the city's only one-legged bike messenger. "They ask, 'Why aren't you in a wheelchair? Why don't you get government help and food stamps?' Well, I tell them I don't need any of that. I can make it on my own."

Benjamin, 44, lost his right leg 20 years ago in a bike accident in his native Trinidad. Riding home from work, he swerved to push a child away from an oncoming truck, Benjamin said. The child was fine, but Benjamin was struck by the truck and woke up in the hospital.

"I was sent home a few days later and thought I could ride normally. But I fell right over onto my stitches. That's when I actually realized that I had lost my leg. I didn't ride again until I got to New York."

Benjamin first came here to run the New York City



Dexter Benjamin, who lost his leg 20 years ago, is a bike messenger and owns a courier service. (Lane Johnson)

Marathon on crutches (a feat he has accomplished six times), and liked the city so much that he moved here in 1988.

After a brief stint panhandling, he managed to earn enough money to buy a bicycle, and went to work as a messenger. Now the owner of his own company, B&L

Courier Service, Benjamin navigates the city's concrete canyons and taxi drivers to pick up and deliver packages from Wall Street to Harlem. He keeps a pair of crutches strapped to the side of his bike, and goes from riding to walking and back to riding in almost one fluid motion.

"I should be able to enter any city bus or building with this bike because to me it's a wheelchair," he says. "But police yell at me for riding it on subway platforms, and bus drivers won't let me on."

Benjamin also made headlines a few years back after fighting with a 300-pound transsexual on the subway. He was acquitted of hate crime charges in the case and now lives on Roosevelt Island with his fiancée, Charmaine Wright.

"He does all the housework and won't let me go to the grocery store alone," she said. "People look at him in awe."

Perhaps no one has more respect for Benjamin than other bike messengers, who know that even with two legs, theirs is one of the most dangerous jobs in New York City.

"If you think you have challenges, all you need is to see him ride by on his one-pedaled bike, and it's enough to put things into perspective," said Roberta Lopez, a former messenger and avid cyclist.

"Dexter is a legend. He is my idol. Whenever I see him riding, I have to stop and pay homage to him."



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Subway buff rides for record

Teams with pals to beat 26-hour time

By Chuck Bennett
amNewYork Staff Writer

A group of Regis High School grads will reunite tomorrow and attempt to break the competitive subway riding world record by navigating their way through all 468 subway stations in less than 26 hours.

"This'll be an interesting high school reunion," said Bill Amarosa, 28, of the Upper East Side school's class of 1996. "I lost touch with a lot of them, and this is a way to bring us back together."

Amarosa's quest will be

the second such subway challenge this year. In August two college buddies, Matt Green and Donald Badaczewski, rode the trains through all the stations in 24 hours and 2 minutes. Their feat, however, didn't meet Guinness World Record standards because they didn't stop at every station — they took express trains and just passed through some stations.

"We've notified Guinness World Records and are prepared to document and certify everything," said Amarosa, who works as a customer-relations analyst.

Unlike Green and Badaczewski, who described their challenge as "moronic," Amarosa, a self-described subway buff, is



Bill Amarosa and his friends Michael Boyle and Andrew Weir will leave from the Rockaway Park station tomorrow at 3:30 p.m. (Jefferson Siegel)

taking his quest seriously.

Kevin Foster set the Guinness World Record of 26 hours and 21 minutes back in 1989. But Amarosa said his crew can break Foster's record. He's been dreaming

of this since high school, he said, and spent more than 100 hours planning the route.

"This is something big that hasn't been done in a long time," Amarosa said.