

# Baker beginning epic Pac-12 quest

*Texas accountant losing weight by biking*

**Ben Handel/Moscow-Pullman Daily News**

People passing by Martin Stadium on Monday may have noticed an exuberant man defiantly holding his bike over his head.

That man was Ford Baker, a 50-year old who is beginning the quest of a lifetime while seeing some of his favorite sites. During the course of the next few weeks, the Texas accountant will bike down the coast from Vancouver to Tijuana - a distance spanning more than 2,000 miles - and touring the Pac-12 schools in the process.

In early 2012, Baker weighed in at 340-pounds and was hobbled by several medications. Knowing he needed to turn his life around quickly or face dire long-term consequences, he joined his wife and son in a healthier diet, cleansing sugars, red meat, dairy and other things from his daily meals.

"For most people who struggle with obesity, we want our snacks, our comfort food right now," Baker said. "We can't wrap our heads around what the consequences might be in two years or what could happen long term if we try and turn things around."

Baker and his family saw some results, but the real sparkplug was a trip to his eye doctor that revealed a brown spot on one of his eyes. The doctor showed Baker another more extreme case of a patient with a brown spot on his eye and explained the only way the more extreme case could be treated was with monthly injections into his eye. That was the final straw.

"I did not want to have a needle shoved in my eye," Baker said. "Keeping my vision is very important to me."

In July 2012, Baker started walking in conjunction with eating healthier. At first, he only walked 15 minutes per day, but day-by-day he went a little farther, a little faster.

Inspired by Connecticut men's basketball coach Jim Calhoun and encouraged by the progress he was having walking, he decided to take the next step and start cycling. On Aug. 22, 2012, he did just that.

"I don't want to break my hip falling off a cart in Walmart trying to reach some Cheetos on the shelf above me," Baker said. "I wanted to get out there and start riding. I did 11 miles that first day, thought I might die and might not get back to the office, but the next day I went a little farther and kept on doing that."

Encouraged by friends and family, he kept on working out. Last August, a year and two days after his first bike ride, Baker completed the Hotter'N Hell Hundred competition, a grueling 100-mile course in Texas in 100-degree heat.

Now, 120 pounds lighter than he started and off the medication he once needed, Baker wants to share his success story and inspire others. Together with his good friend Doug Walker, Baker started the Today I Can Foundation - a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping others realize their weight-loss goals and provide support. Starting this summer, Baker will be undertaking a trip down the Pacific Coast in what he hopes will be an annual event for his foundation.

"I've always been a college football fan, so seeing all the stadiums was always something I wanted to do," Baker said. "I was spending too much time sitting around on my couch on Saturdays watching the games and not being active."

One of Baker's first stops was Washington State University. The Palouse made quite the impression on him, and he hopes to return someday to watch an Apple Cup contest.

"I was absolutely blown away," Baker said. "I love the way WSU keeps its stadium open - I was able to walk right up and get my picture taken."

"I've always heard this is a tough recruit to get guys to come play up here, but after seeing the campus, I have no idea why that is. I'm familiar with the coach - the Pirate (Mike Leach) used to beat up on my (Texas A&M) Aggies - and this is just a beautiful part of the world. You don't get this type of green rolling hills in many other areas of the world."

Those wanting to follow Baker's quest or to get more information on how they can get involved can visit his website at [spinningintightslacks.blogspot.com](http://spinningintightslacks.blogspot.com).

"If someone suggested a weight-loss plan that required me to rework my diet, start exercising, and try to cycle more than 7,000 miles in 2013, I would have never started," Baker said. "The thing is I never tried to do it all at once - you just go day-by-day. When I wake up in the morning, I simply ask God for strength for today, that I might make decisions on what I eat and drink and that I'd be safe on my ride. If that works out today, I can try it again tomorrow."

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**Ben Handel** can be reached at (208) 883-4629, or by email to [bhandel@dnews.com](mailto:bhandel@dnews.com).