He trained son to set record cycling around Singapore

Ryan Soon was just six years and seven months old when he became the youngest Singaporean to cycle around Singapore on June 1, 2024. He completed 220km within 23 hours and 36 minutes, a feat awarded and officiated by the Singapore Book of Records.

For as his proud father, Dr Benjamin Soon, 47, tells it, the record-breaking attempt started out as a joke.

The family live in Sengkang, but Ryan wanted to visit East Coast Park in early April, so his mum, physiotherapist Valerie Goh, 43, suggested that they cycle there and back. They had gone up their car in August 2023 because they did not want to renew the certificates of entitlement.

Ryan, who started on a balancing bike at age two and could cycle at age four, breezed through the 52km route without training wheels at age four, even months old when he became the youngest Singaporean to cycle around Singapore on June 1, 2024, from Mr Ong Eng Huat, founder and president of Singapore Book of Records.

But his parents quickly pulled him out, checked that he was physically all right and continued onward.

They usually cycle as a family on weekends from Jawi to Gardens by the Bay and Singapore Sports Hub, Ryan, who now rides regularly and is put through a hard training schedule by his only child's stamina during that long ride in April.

"I jokingly asked Ryan if he wanted to do a round-island cycle with papa and mama. He thought for a moment and said a resounding, "yes,"" Dr Soon says.

He planned the route using only park connectors and promenades, saw for a small section in Sengkak, to mimics cycling on the road for safety reasons.

While rain chased them for much of the journey, Ryan loved riding in wet weather and through puddles, his father says.

"The break of Singapore became his cycling metaphor," he adds.

Ryan had the record-breaking attempt started out as a joke.

"Some parents may think that we are putting Ryan through a hard suffering journey, but if they could see all the fun and happiness he had during the trip, they would think otherwise," Dr Soon says.

"I hope this story will inspire more parents," Ryan yelled, "Yes, we did it!" at the finish line, his father recalls.

"I hope it will make him feel more confident about himself and to be resilient when faced with future challenges at life," he adds.

"We have only a small window when they need our time and enjoy our company. When they grow up, they will likely choose to spend time with their friends -- or, in some cases, the mobile phone -- over the parents." He adds.

"Some parents will improve more by understanding a little bit more about the challenges and the difficulties of bringing up children. They are young, but they can be amazing too."