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Day 38 and it's official - It is OVER , "la fin, le mois de folie est fini!"

...and so, all good things must come to an end. But then that presumes that the MOM is indeed a good thing!

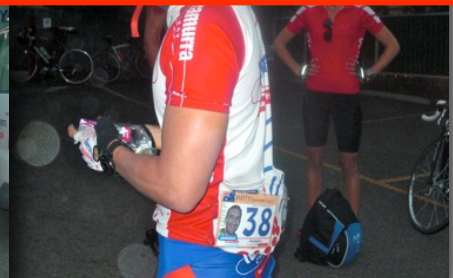
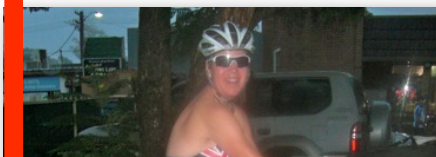
Well it was almost over. Daybreak on Australia Day and Tiger Woman show her patriotic side when she showed up for the final MOM ride in an "aussie" bikini. She and OHA had Australia Flag shoe covers on while many others sported Aussie "tatts" of the removable kind. Everyone was eagerly awaiting the ride to Bumble Hill and the end of the Month of Madness.

For five riders it was their 38th day in a row. Riding a minimum of 55kms each day, Matt A, Fester, Green P, Tiger Woman and OHA would all by day's end have covered more than 2700 kms for the month and in doing so, have helped to raise funds for Nepcam which provides bicycles to kids in Cambodia. All up the club's efforts resulted in 106 bikes being donated to this cause. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

The morning of the last day of MOM was overcast, drizzly and not looking at all like good cycling weather. It wasn't expected to stay cool and so TBG had the B group marshaled for an early start at 615 in order to beat most of the forecast heat. As long as people had planned for the ride and were organized with food and hydration (and some km's in the legs) it wasn't too bad at all.

TBG had anticipated that the A's would catch the B group somewhere near Bumble Hill approx 105 kms from TC. As it turned out with the B's unexpected delays and slightly slower than anticipated speed, the A's passed us earlier than planned.

All up the B's had about 16 riders with a number from other clubs joining in for the days outing. The day hadn't even quite got going when Kenny fell at Hornsby bringing Rolf down in the process. Riding in a group is obviously different to riding solo. It helps to keep at least one hand on the bars and to try and hold the wheel in front ! A few solo efforts from a couple of guys who must have thought they were in 'le tour' soon ended when they realized that there was still over 100 kms to go. Those making the breaks got little (read no) sympathy when later they were complaining the ride was too long and the day too hot. The peloton rode well and the pace out was a comfortable 28/29 with Fester often at the helm - remarkable just how much work he did after 38 days straight.



Sarah was missing by Mt White which was odd as she's been riding ever stronger during the MOM. She eventually rolled in with a jammed rear wheel – seems she hadn't fitted it in straight and the friction was making the climb really hard going. Matty H sorted it out and she had no issues for the rest of the day. The day was certainly warming up by Peat's Ridge, our first stop to replenish biddens and grab a quick bite – I think it was generally acknowledged after the ride that the B's need to be a little more disciplined and make our stops shorter, as all up we lost 1 hour and 20 minutes, **not only** losing riding time **but** dragging the day out a little longer than is perhaps necessary.

Meanwhile the A's had only just left TC at 7am. Terminator suffered an unusual “mechanical” at Cowan and this brief interruption enabled several riders positioned towards the front of the A peloton to make the first attack of the day. TBG, Caitlin, Tiger Woman and Matt A all lit off up the road. Sensing something might be up, Green P left Terminator to his own devices and gave chase, bridging the gap to get back on to the break away. Clearly TBG had Calga in his sights and gave the orders to the small group to just roll but roll hard.

Gough Whitlam would have been proud of the efforts and with the A's now in two groups, Chardonnay and Terminator dictated the pace until “It was Time”, but for what? . A quick burst of (planned?!!) speed saw the Terminator on his new ‘Pinarello Wolverine’ (that's the bike that miraculously repairs itself) , Chardonnay, Simon and Luke blow the remaining A bunch away and head after the breakaway. A huge effort by the four saw them gather them in and regroup after the descent from PITS. An effort of which team Columbia would have been proud.

Just prior to Calga, JDS Dan, Cam and Mike also made it across the gap having ridden like the three musketeers but it possibly meant they would pay a price later on. JDS was rewarded for his efforts with being given a turn straight away.

By all accounts it was a monster of one – acknowledged by everyone in the group **but** while good effort doesn't go unrewarded, he was however overhead as saying” Taking 12 salt tablets may not have been such a good idea. I felt like I was having contractions and thought I was going to give birth out on the road. I swear I saw some vultures out there circling”.maybe JDS but everyone appreciated the effort you put in.

The B's by this stage had **experienced** some navigational challenges **when** finding the road closed at Peat's Ridge. It seemed that everyone with a GPS could find out exactly where they were, but few had any idea as to how to get to where they needed to be!! Time for an executive decision – “Follow the detour signs”, which we duly did and soon got back on to the right path.

The first of the A groups passed us on the Old Highway just before the very fast run down to the F3. Slimey Simon is to be congratulated as he was the only one to jump on the back off the train. Well done –Simon was heard saying that if not for the Dogma he'd have had no chance. He has a few for sale so look him up if you want to ride like an A grader” .

It was **then** that Tom and Stu decided to take the front of the B's. Tom may well be considering a Civil career with the diligence he showed in trying to pick up every piece of glass there was on the freeway verge. His efforts paid off when he punctured just passed the Wyong turn off. The second A group came passed and wished us well. By now it was certainly getting hot. Patsy was wishing she was still in Adelaide, The exuberance of youth came to the fore with Cathy raring to get going while Brendan and several other older chaps sought the relative cool of the shade.

Yarramolong Valley is deceptively long, 25 kms from the Freeway off ramp to the start of the hill. TBG has never known the ride to be cool and today was no exception. The A's made Bumble Hill early, and that's when Simon Mc and Cam attacked, with JDS and Tiger Woman reveling in the conditions and not far behind. TBG and Luke showed the benefit that comes with years of road racing experience and took advantage of a ‘draft’ up the hill **then to have** TBG hit the top and keep going. Chardonnay, hearing the sweet sirens calling his name amidst the waves crashing at DY considered that “eating was cheating” and didn't want to stop for long. **He** gave the order for a short and sweet respite only.

(Special thanks to the support crew - The V – Van with Stubbsy at the helm was a welcome sight even for the A's and even more so for the B's later on)

T the top of Bumble Hill, Caitlin was suffering, having pushed perhaps too hard too early and **sensibly** took advantage of a lift from the support crew. This meant Steve Brit, Mike Israel, Drastic , Cam, Luke and Geoff W had to chase all the way back home. It was great to see TORC riders amongst the group and these “mountain men” rode every bit as hard as the rest and maybe even harder. Together they caught some but not others before the end but by all accounts they all had a very strong ride home.

Matt A's MOM came to an all too abrupt stop when the power he's developed during Mom snapped the chain just over the rise from Bumble Hill. His dejection was obvious with the bike on one side of the road and he on the other when the B's

came past. Clearly the MOM had taken it's toll – a huge effort to make 38 in a row and be in the lead bunch over Bumble Hill.

By the Brooklyn climb, the A group was down to eight. Again, Simon and Cam made light work of the long and hot road up to PITS. A quick beverage stop (and no tolerance for any Yanky excuses) and the pace line was set. HOME !

The A's finished in just over 5 hours 45 mins – a fantastic effort, averaging a little over 33 km/h on a course with more rises and falls than the Dow Jones.

Meanwhile the B group was somewhere back on the road. All but two (who took a little walk) rode up the hill. The stories of how difficult it is were probably justified especially when one considers it took 105 kms to get there, but it did seem shorter than most expected. Oooowen made a longer course of it zig zagging but got there along with OHA and Cathy who both celebrated their Mom efforts with congrats. Cathy wished Loz was had been there too but she was stuck in Wagga Wagga and will have to do it next year.

Another puncture stopped the B group and the heat started to affect several with one rider cramping badly and needing to be picked up at near Calga. Fester, Matty H, OHA, Brendan, Stu and Tom all pulled big turns with several others taking shorter stints in between. "It's not nearly over until we're passed PITS "said Fester, and he was right. The climb from Brooklyn was difficult – we met Daniel and his lady there. Oooowen was feeling the heat as well along with Dennis who had swapped places with Slimey Simon somewhere along the way.

The ride in to TC was somewhat emotional. For many it was the furthest they'd ever ridden, for some it was a challenge to make it up Bumble Hill, for everyone it was an achievement to finish the ride in good condition. Only a few who started didn't finish on their bike. Apres velo back at Pierre's and Stan was performing the paparazzi role snapping everyone as they rolled in. (great effort Stan – you'll be there next time) Chardonnay was handing out baguettes, none of which made it home I bet. Not a lot of coffee was being consumed but shares in Gatorade probably took a jump.

The earlier start for the B's had us back about an hour after the A's. IF we can lift the pace just a bit and better manage the stops it might prove to be the right formula for future day rides so we all finish more or less at the same time.

Thanks to all the team from TC who supported the event (TBG, V , Stubbsy) and of course TBG, Simon, Stu, Tom from TC who rode with us) . As always the organization and support for the club was first rate.

Now the only important thing to remember from this ride report is –

It is only 331 sleeps to go to the next MOM - get your training wheels on and start now - Fester already has !