



Sunday, February 7, 2010
Ride Report

Turrumurra
CYCLERY

The serious stuff

Sydney 24 hour

The weather was always going to be doubtful. On arriving at the resort, it was dry and hard packed, but Friday night down it came...ok that could be good, let's get all the rain over now before the race starts, I thought, how wrong I was!

The first 4 hours were pretty non-eventful, putting in some solid laps and the rain mostly drizzled. At point you start to regret what you have started as you realise that you still have 20 hours to go! There was only one deep creek crossing for which I dismounted each time. No point trashing the bike at this point I reasoned and was cursed as a damn roadie for my trouble!

By 5pm, the rain had ceased for a time, and the track was as good as it gets, tacky with just a few puddles. A couple of laps on the reserve bike, while the chain is lubed, brakes checked and Fulcrums fitted to my beloved Trek. Back into pit lane, a quick bike swap and I am rocketing on my full race machine. No sooner had I completed one lap and down came the deluge, and it really didn't stop for the next 18 hours. It gets dark pretty quick and I hope and pray this is just a passing shower, so back onto the reserve bike to see if I can get through this little setback without ruining the race bike. It is now dark and the lights are on. Down the "gully" the water is running downhill faster than I am riding is it so treacherous. Try to imagine riding a bike down a glacier (rocky hard and full of holes, now add 6 inches of slushy snow over the top and imagine it is the colour of bear shit. Oh yeah it is dark, your glasses are covered in mud and your v brake pads are worn out.

By 8pm, the track had become so atrocious; I had fallen off three times on one lap. By this time I was ready to kill someone..."Please please call an end to this insanity, bypass the really bad bits...do something before someone is seriously injured!" You might well ask who is more insane, the organisers or the participants, but when you

have trained so hard and you get one shot to qualify for a world championship, you will do whatever it takes.

Finally at 9pm the organisers, bring the race to a pause. Go to bed get some rest and come back at 5:30am they say. We will make an announcement then. With 15 laps on the board, I am sitting in 4th place, 3 minutes behind 3rd. After consulting radar and weather charts overnight, the organisers happily announce that there is one more front coming in from Penrith, but after that it will be sunshine (somewhere in QLD perhaps). Of course, the sun never looks like showing, and the rain merely oscillates between moderate and torrential.

The worst sections of the gully and the meadows are cut out and replaced with a fireroad descent. Normally something I would jump at, this fireroad is nasty. Two laps on the Trek and it was clear that not only were the conditions getting worse, but the bike would run out of brakes with still 8-10 laps to ride. So into the battle jumps the trusty Raleigh steed, 21 speed, V brakes, hardtail, flat pedals and suntour sprung forks. Can it make the distance? With each lap, the chain suck is worse to the point where I only have once chance to use the small chain ring on each lap and only the upper sprockets are in play on the cassette, because the cable is so jammed with mud. Add to that, the rear brake cable is frozen and as I pull back on the lever, the cable lug, slips out, locking on the back brakes and I have to re-engage the cable to get the brakes to return while negotiating the fire trail from hell.

Swapping bikes took me a minute so with 6 laps to go the gap to 3rd is still 4 minutes, but I am not done yet. Greg from CCOMTB is giving me gap updates each lap and I put a minute into 3rd place next time round. 4 laps to go and the gap is down to 45 seconds! Go Mike go, you can do it! 3 laps to go, 30 seconds, the margin. Coming around for the next lap, the gap is still 30 seconds and I

think I might be done. Grinding through transition at 11:30am, the MC asks if I can get back in time for another lap and I shake my head, but then the red bull kicks in and I give it one last push. On the climb, I think I pass 3rd place, he looks like he's hurting, so I go for broke and make it back to transition with 30 seconds to spare. The MC and the incredulous crowd go wild, and I head out for my last lap. I think I have done it and I have to choke back a few tears (from mud in my eye!), but it ain't over yet. I give every last calorie on the last lap only to find 3rd place waiting for me at the finish, not to worry, I am going to worlds and I have a new mate who lives in Canberra!

There is so much more I could say about this race, but I won't put it down here. Suffice to say I owe a huge thank you to my pit crew Matt Brooker, who lubed, mixed bottles changed wheels, and provided massive encouragement. To

my family who have beared with my incessant training and supported me in so many ways, and finally to YOU if you are still reading. Throughout the MOM, roadies and MTB'ers alike from Peloton Sports and TORC have followed my (and don't forget Matt Hou's!) journey to this event with genuine interest. So without getting to sentimental, thank you one and all for your encouragement and interest.

Now please excuse me while I go and pull apart what is left of my mountain bike

Keep riding

Mike "Isy" Israel