

HardTales in the Wild

Hugh's Long Day Ride - October 2005

Time ran out to prepare for the Mont 24 hour race. Fortunately I had been able to get some reasonable miles in on the bike over the previous six weeks. I was quite nervous about the race – my first solo 24 hour MTB race – as in the Nzo 12 hour a month before I had overheated and had to spend some time sitting in the shade recovering. How was I going to cope with a race twice as long?

Setting up on the Friday reminded me how big this event is. I thought I was there early and there were still what seemed like hundreds of people setting up their camps in the forest. With 2400 odd riders and 600 teams engulfing Kowan forest it is amazing that it all works so well. Registration was painless and I even had time for a quick ride of some of the parts of the course that had changed from last year. It had not rained for a week but there were still quite a few soft patches on the track so with rain forecast a muddy, slippery race could be expected. I was glad I made the effort to prepare two bikes.

And rain it did all Friday night. Fortunately it stopped reasonably early and the track had a little time to dry.

As usual the start was one of the most painful parts of the race, an 800m run with very little warm up – if you run too slowly you end up caught in the pack and a very slow first lap. I pushed the run a bit but it seemed like it took the whole first lap to get the heart rate back under control. The race plan was fairly simple. Ride the first 6 hours reasonably hard to get as many laps as possible in before dark and to be in touch with the leaders. From then on survive and hopefully stay fresh enough to push on in the morning if there were places to be gained.

I managed to get 5 laps in before lights became mandatory and so swapped to the Trek already set up with lights and pretty much finished the 6th lap in the light. Then with the temperature dropping and the rain starting to fall again the race started to get tough with a very soft and slippery track. Plenty of tree roots to catch any concentration lapses.

Around 10.30 I decided one more lap before a 10 minute stop for hot food and more clothing - The plan was to tell the support crew to have it all ready in one more lap but they must be telepathic because they already had the hot soup there so I grabbed that and asked them to be ready for a longer stop next lap (and for a new pair of nicks as I needed some extra pad-

ding). With 10 laps under my belt sitting down just after midnight was nice, but perhaps too nice as it took me a while to get up. The Trek was a mess so it was back on the Specialized and off into the goo. Unfortunately the small chainring did not like the mud and I was getting severe chain suck as soon as I tried to use it – after a couple of laps trying to push the bigger gears on the steeper parts of the course it was back to the Trek (clean once again thanks to Matt's midnight washing) and pushed some very slow laps through to dawn. I did have some scary moments with numbness in my left hand – a few times I could have sworn I had the brake lever in hand but pulling had no effect. After thoughts of broken brake lines went through my head I realised I was pulling air and my numb hand could not tell the difference! Another thing to concentrate on.



As always dawn brought a big lift in spirits. Still seven hours to go A results update suggested there were a couple of riders not too far ahead so with the help of a little Red Bull I was feeling OK and pushed out a "fast" lap. That got me closer but also left me spent and I spun the last two laps just trying to keep it moving. Riding into the finish I passed a rider coasting into the transition area – only to find out it was another solo rider on the same number of laps and I pipped him by 2 seconds to get 5th overall.



I achieved what I had hoped for (finishing, a top 5 place and 18 laps). A special thanks to Matt, Sarah and Sharon for their support – not only did they anticipate my needs but they stayed awake most of the night and kept me encouraged and moving. Also thanks to Milly & Jamie. Although

I missed them as they stayed at home due to the poor weather forecast, their flexibility and support in allowing me to prepare and race was fantastic. I am now looking forward to some quality time with them (Jamie is getting his first bike for his first birthday).

Also thanks to Hammer Gel, Min Min lights, Mountain Designs and hardtale.com.

Some Facts & Figures

- * **KM ridden** – 345 – average speed 14.4km/hr
- * **Metres ascended/descended** - 5400m
- * **Stops** (apart from getting food each lap) – 2 x 10 mins
- * **Food consumed** – Approx 15L of fluids (1/3 Hammer Nutrition Perpetuum, 1/4 Hammer Nutrition Heed (Electrolytes), the rest water, Coke & red bull), 1 loaf of bread, 6 bananas, half a dozen baked potatoes, 6 energy bars, 6 Hammer gels, 2 cups hot soup, chips
- * **Number of bike changes** – 4 (= 4 cleaning efforts from the support crew)
- * **Number of crashes** – NONE (yeah!)
- * **Max heart rate** - 165bpm
- * **Average heart rate** – 126bpm

