

Cycling into Spring

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With the first flush of new growth and the wattle in bloom it was the perfect time to cycle into Spring... except for the damn magpies!

A good turnout of 14 greeted Peter and Dino at the Banyo library ready to venture into the hills for the Cycling into Spring 200. This had had a name change to coincide with our friends in France and was now called the BPB or Banyo-Peachester-Banyo aka 'Not the PBP'. Whatever it was called it was a beautiful day with clear skies, no wind and was a chilly 9 degrees, chilly for Queensland anyway.

On Vaughan Kippers' advice (who looked quite pasty after the Winter until I realised he has slathered himself with sunscreen) I led out the peloton, for the first 500 m anyway (Vaughan obviously knows of my inability to stay anywhere near the front and wanted me to start on the right foot). Negotiating the traffic out of the city is always a pain but necessary so it was fairly uneventful for the first 30 km or so. Just tooling along and then **whack!** My first magpie strike of the day! I love magpies, their warbling is very attractive and we have a big family of them living near our place so I don't have an issue with them. It's just that on the bike you can react and throw yourself off balance, fortunately this didn't happen. I just kept my head down and ploughed on. (Some people go around with enough zip ties hanging off their head, they look like a broken fibre optic lamp but I am yet to be convinced that this works.)

Into the first checkpoint at Wamuran (after magpie two more strikes), Peter made me a very nice cheese and ham sandwich and thought that if this was the quality of the support for the day I'll be a happy rider. As I devoured this sandwich I discussed with Dino the difficulties in doing cue sheets to ride through the City. A necessary evil at times it would seem.

The next 45 km or so were to be the testing part of the course as there are two 10% climbs in this stretch. The first is only about a kilometre long so isn't too bad. After negotiating this one I came to the small town of Woodford. A 40-strong peloton was encamped at the bakery

as I cruised down the main street. They were to catch me not long afterwards (fortunately). As I left town I saw two riders in the distance. Thinking we could work together into the next stretch of headwind I set about trying to catch them. As I came onto their wheel either they were having a food flat big time or had less ability than me. I went past the first and came onto the second one he had all the gear and was also underperforming—maybe that sandwich had something in it. I passed him as well (neither were riders in our event).

About 10 km further (and magpie

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strike number four) I thought the front wheel seemed a big deflated and looked for a good spot to stop and change the tube. After getting the wheel off and finding the sliver of glass that had passed through the tyre the peloton swept past and the support vehicle saw me, pulled over and got out the track pump! Small useless pump practice averted! Inflated to 105 psi and I'm back on the bike. I didn't catch his name but I promised to give him and the Lifecycle bike shop on Petrie Terrace a plug.

In about another kilometre the 1.8 km 10% Peachester range starts. It's a bit of a grind but halfway up there is a small flat spot so I pulled over, had a stretch and a drink and kept on. The downhill on the other side of this is fantastic and in no time I've made it to Peachester. On the other side of town is another big downhill so with a beautiful view over the Glasshouse Mountains on the right and 50 km on the speedo it was not long before I arrived at Beerwah for the second checkpoint.

Peter and Dino had set up near the railway station and I opted for another sandwich. Being out of ham it was only a cheese one and I think it didn't help me later on. Dino found a new way to impress the locals at Beerwah: just sit around in the park with food! A couple of young girls (maybe 15 years old) came up to us and asked "Are you locals?", "What are you doing?" and then of course, "Why would you do that?" General incredulity while sucking on a cigarette! Ah the folly of youth!

This was also a watershed moment for me as, after the cyclones up north, bananas were hitting \$14 a kilo and there were two or three of them sitting on the table. I had not had a banana for six months so I hastily threw one in the jersey for later. Considering most bananas are grown in Coffs Harbour and there was no cyclone there you have to question why they cost so much (insert price gouging reference here).

On leaving town after about 15 km I started feeling really flat, like I was riding in treacle. I think it may have been the cheese sandwich as I always find that digestion and me on the bike doesn't work too well. I battled on for a bit before pulling over in a nice shady spot and eating the coveted banana. That bit of natural sugar seemed to help me then and as the road started to level out I made my way to checkpoint three.

The 12 other ravenous riders in front of me had now cleaned out the support vehicle. This probably wasn't so bad though. I sat down on a provided chair and Peter and I had a chat about all things Audax. It's nice to know as you are out on the road that there is a friendly face some way down the road, it provides some incentive to keep plugging on. We discussed that maybe there are riders who will never do more than a 200 or 300 and that that may be enough for them, and perhaps I was in that category. A lukewarm coffee and one of the last two chocolate frogs and I'm back on the bike. I was back in familiar territory

now and this always seems to lift the spirits as well.

Ten kilometres later and it's lights on with about 30 km to go. Along the water's edge and across the Hornibrook bridge it was only an easy cruise from here, although the last 8 km of this ride through this part of town seem to take forever. With 202 km on the speedo I arrived safely at the Banyo Library; 11.5 hours wasn't too bad for me. Although I did ride them to the start, I'd called my wife to come and get me as I didn't feel like doing the 20 km back home as well, so she was lurking in the shadows of the railway station and pulled into the car park behind me.

This is truly a great ride though some fantastic country and great scenery and was well worth the effort. Thanks to Peter and Dino for the great support and, although I didn't spend much time with any of the others, well done on finishing. I'm afraid you missed out though. For those who finished before 6.30 pm (which was 12 of you) you missed out on the best support of the day: Peter had just been to the fish and chip shop and I was able to indulge one of my greatest pleasures, hot salty chips washed down with the satisfaction of completing the event. Now that is what I call 'Champagne Support'. Pure bliss!