
Doing it in the rain

John Gowty

300 km, Brisbane - June 10, 2000.

Having 10,000 training km in the 50-year-old legs over the last 6 months, along with 3 rides over 200 km I felt well prepared physically to tackle my first 300 km ride. A new set of Rolf wheels on the freshly serviced TCR2 gave me a little extra confidence but nothing could have prepared me for weather. The forecasters did predict rain and this was probably the reason for the starters being reduced to 3 with the sane people staying in bed. The 3 brave souls set off 7.30 am from the Banyo Library to challenge the elements over a 300km course.

Over the first 50 km I attempted to conserve energy riding at a steady pace, however I found myself riding alone after 10 km.

The first checkpoint was at Dayboro, (53 km), and after a quick cup of coffee and a bun it was time to climb the slopes of Mount Mee, the climb goes for 15 km, levels out for a bit of ridge riding and then there was a cautious wet road down hill decent to Woodford. I could see the low level rain clouds as I descended into Woodford, which was to be an indication of what was to come. I was forced to don the dreaded rain jacket and was immediately annoyed by the inconvenience of the loose fit and the clamminess it created on the upper body. I had worn an aircell under shirt and neoprene booties from the start and the feet upper body had remained relatively warm to this stage despite the low temperatures. I had decided not to wear arm warmers and leggings on the initial stages saving, these for the anticipated chill after dusk.

We reached Kilcoy checkpoint, (120 km), at 11.45 am, the rain was light but steady and the hot pea and ham soup tasted unbelievably good. The organisers advised me that one rider had pulled out and the other had left the Dayboro checkpoint an hour after I had. This meant that they would not be able to meet me at the next checkpoint and I would have to ride unsupported for 110km to the Toorbul checkpoint.

The unmanned checkpoint was 50 km away at Beerwah over a steep incline at Peachester. A car accident had cars banked up on the Peachester incline and in away this caused a distraction which seemed to make the climb a little easier with lots of encouragement from the stationary motorists, police and fire brigade. Once over Peachester it was an easy ride through the valleys at the base of the Glass House Mountains. The Fruit shop owner at Beerwah signed the brevet card and I got under way on the undulating road to Toorbul. I was relying on sachets of Gu and Powerbars for sustenance over this 120km leg, which were maintaining the energy level however the body was screaming for some hot food by the time I reached the Toorbul checkpoint (230 km) at 5pm.

I was advised that I was the only rider left in the event as the other remaining rider at pulled out after Mount Mee with leg problems. The rain, wind, cold weather and approaching darkness was starting to take its toll on my enthusiasm and I was seriously contemplating taking the easy option of a backseat ride in the support vehicle.

With a change into dry riding gear and encouragement from ride organisers Lindsay and Connie Green I donned the required reflective clothing turned on lights front and back and headed

off into the darkness with 70 km to go to the finish line. The road from Toorbul to Caboolture was relatively traffic free and had the luxury of a white line on the edge to follow. However with the rain continually wetting my glasses, lessening my night vision, and the light from the bike lights being soaked up by the wet roads it was a relief to reach the street lights of Caboolture.

Unfortunately this relief was short lived as the route then went for 25 km on unlit roads, no white line at the edge, endless traffic front and rear, and to make it worse the rain was now really bucketing down. I was feeling very vulnerable, lonely and looking for a way to end it all. I knew I only had about 30 klm to go so I slowed to a walking pace until I reached the relative safety of the street lights of Strathpine. Over the last 20 km I was feeling strong and my spirits lifted knowing that finishing was inevitable. The suffering stopped and euphoria set in as the Banyo Library finish line came in sight, (8.30 pm) and race organisers Lindsay and Connie Green warmed the body and soul with warm food and congratulations.

I am now looking forward to the challenges of longer drier rides in the company of others.