

Virginal victory for the not so Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

Dino "Donatello" Morgante

With some familiar faces, old hands, and a newbie to the Audax scene, The Quint-Essential Speed Turtles (QEST) became a reality, and ready to tackle the daunting prospect of a 24-hour All Day Time Trial. At the same time two other teams were staking their claim and tackling the futile tenure of the Queensland State Government in their own right. Bring it on! Who will win today's challenge?

The Team and goals

The Quint-Essential Speed Turtles: Simon Faber (Leonardo), Nick Burnett (Michelangelo), Michael Deed (Splinter), Dino Morgante (Donatello), Michael Waterson (Raphael)—note, alias names and characterisations of TMNT chosen to closely reflect the persona.

Given the QEST included riders with a varying range of ride distances covered (170 km to 400 km) and Audax experience, a common sense approach was needed to ensure the team kept together during the entire ride. Also, given this was the first Fleche Opperman ADTT for four of the team, it was imperative that no-fuss course with some familiar riding territory be chosen. No one will ever escape the lumps and bumps, but these were kept to a moderate quantity. Also, we adopted the UAF catch-cry as the team motto: "start together-ride together-finish together". But most importantly, it was to remain up-beat about the whole of the journey.

The gathering

The QEST initially gathered at Leonardo's around 6 am to drop off bags for our overnight stop and rack-up bikes for the trip to Ipswich for the start. Michelangelo, Splinter, Raphael and Donatello were in good spirits and somewhat mildly apprehensive given this would be the longest ride ever in a one day period for four of the team members. However, one serious injury had already been sustained before we started with Leonardo sporting some battle scars in fight with one of his kitty cats. Apparently, it doesn't like the presence of males in the house—hah, now there's a problem for you little kitty.

With home base sorted, a quick drive via the Logan and Ipswich motorways saw us arriving at our

start location at around 7.15 am with most of the other teams already there. We unloaded the bikes, completed set-ups, paraded through a few meets-and-greets with other teams' members and grabbed some pre-ride photo opportunities. With all the preliminaries out of the way, our 8 am start time had crept up on us quickly and it was time to head off.

Ipswich to Laidley

It was a nice brisk morning with cool temperatures and a smattering of cloud cover—ideal weather for Audax riding. As the QEST left the start point we took it easy for the first few kilometres just to let the legs get up to operating temperature and set a nice easy rhythm. This first 50 km leg to Laidley was generally flat to undulating, with one climb over the Grandchester Range leading down into Laidley. Passing through Yamanto, and on entering the Cunningham Highway (9 km mark), Donatello pointed out to Michelangelo this was the location where his Petit Oppy team of 2011 year got to in just under one hour, thanks to two punctures.

The QEST made fairly good time through Rosewood and to the foothills of the Grandchester Range, but then with a slowing and easy pace being set for the climb. We arrived in Laidley pretty much on-time with the team feeling good, and decided on a 15 minute rest stop. With food from one of the local bakeries and our water supplies replenished, Leonardo discovered he had bought just a little too much water for our needs. He then set about spruiking to locals for free water—perhaps an opportunity the now recently deposed State Government missed out on—and perhaps a future employment

opportunity for Leonardo. Politics anyone? Hmm, now that is timely.

Laidley to Fernvale

By now, the comfort of the morning cloud cover had somewhat dissipated with the sun streaming through and temperatures on the rise. There was some consolation though, as this next stage was relatively flat through Forest Hill with some undulations from Coominya to Fernvale. Unfortunately, riders will invariably have to deal with long straight boring bits of road, which we encountered on a section between the Wareego Highway and Coominya. As a joke, and after some 20 km in a near-straight line, Donatello called out to take care and watch for the bend coming up, well something just had to be said, it was so bleeding obvious.

Along the way, Michelangelo started to get some knee pain behind the patella and Raphael was hitting a flat patch. We pulled in at Coominya and assessed Michelangelo's knee. As the adoptive father of the group, Splinter offered some timely and calming advice, while Leonardo and Donatello fumbled with scientific and technical reasons why this was occurring. Meanwhile, bad-boy Raphael rummaged through his Lance Pharmstrong styled medical carry-kit to find some weird remedies. Alas, he found something dodgy to cure both Michelangelo's pain and his sudden energy loss. With some uncertainty on Michelangelo's part, the magic pills were consumed only after Raphael assured him the pills were good-to-go. Ah, yeah?

Leaving Coominya, we travelled along the Brisbane Valley Highway for a bit, crossing the impressive looking Wivenhoe Dam storage area, and finally arriving in Fernvale. Although we had a short stop and a slow in

pace along the way, we still arrived at Fernvale on schedule. There, we retired to the air-conditioned comfort of the cafe and consumed our lunch and beverages. This stop took a little longer than our scheduled 15 minutes as there were a few more locals out and about for election day.

Fernvale to Ipswich

With the day's heat slowly starting to take its toll on a few of the QEST, the average pace of the group started to drop off as well. We kept the chatter up between the group just so that the guys suffering a little did not get too disconsolate. Even better, we took the opportunity to see the lighter side to politics by reading and making jokes of some of the political groups picket signage. Some of our favourites were Wayne Wendt (Leonardo thought he should change his first name to Kamen). Then there was Raphael's romantic desires with a corflute sign (well she was a doctor after all, and a bit of a cutie and a hottie)—you really are a bad-boy, aren't you? To allow the group to recover further, we had an unscheduled stop at Marburg to rest up before tackling the short, but nonetheless sharp hill at Tallegalla. Rather interestingly, this hill is encompassed by great vistas on one side, and the local cemetery on the other...should one find the climb just a wee bit too challenging.

Anyway, after comfort stops were all taken care of we remounted our bikes and headed for the challenge of Tallegalla. As we approached the dreaded hill (which is always cursed by many a Midnight Century rider) Donatello took the bolt from 20 m out to get a decent run at the climb. Staying true to his challenge, Donatello conquered the hill in the one gear, taking a much needed pause at the top, with the rest of the guys arriving a few minutes later. After regathering at the top, we headed down the other side of the hill at good speed, passing back through Rosewood to another unscheduled rest stop at Walloon. Leonardo secured a few drinks from the local pub, while Raphael and Donatello went in search of water from the corner store. With the stop completed, we toddled off to complete our first 160 km leg of this journey, arriving back at the leagues club in Ipswich about one hour behind schedule but still two hours ahead of maximum time.

There was, however, one interesting meeting of the minds as we entered the outskirts of Ipswich City. Donatello was riding with Splinter along a dual carriageway section when a car passed unnecessarily close to Donatello nearly making contact. We had caught up to the vehicle as the next set of traffic signals turned green, and Donatello just looked in their direction and shook his head. Apparently, that is enough for the good folk of Ipswich to become rather moronic. The driver, with family in tow, then made a special effort to wind his wife's window down, then proceeded

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to advise Donatello in no uncertain terms that bikes should not be on the road, and further, that he really couldn't do anything else because there was a car beside him. Gee wizz man, not only doesn't your car come equipped with brakes, you obviously don't care what sort of example you set for your young children in the back of the car. It's no wonder the motorised world is getting so stupid.

Ipswich to Belmont

Having changed some gear and donned the lights and vests, but not replenishing any food or water, the team headed off on the next 66 km leg to Belmont. This next leg was probably a little tougher as it had many long undulations that would soon start to test the team. By the time we made our planned stop at Brookwater service station, fatigue was starting to affect some of the guys. Leonardo bought a few large bottles of cold water and then proceeded to lie with his neck on one and hold the other against his body. With the sun starting to set, it would only be a matter of time before the temperatures start to drop and the riders' bodies reaching a better comfort level. Again, this stop took a little longer

than expected, but ensuring the riders' wellbeing was paramount before moving on.

The remainder of this leg took us through Springfield, Forest Lake, Sunnybank and Carindale to Belmont while encountering a range of undulations and taking another rest stop at Willawong. This would be our last stop until arriving at Belmont and "El Casa Grande Faber" at around 9 pm—now two hours behind schedule but still a two hour buffer—which equals sleep time. However, the reducing time gap over the minimum speed was becoming apparent to the team. Perhaps, more so, was becoming resigned to fact that not achieving our planned four hour overnight sleep stop was probably the one psychological bruise that was going to hurt the most. Splinter, we need your sage advice on this matter!

While Leonardo's wife was preparing a hot and very welcoming pasta dish, some of the team took the chance to tend to body damage and change into some warmer gear. We also used our time wisely by listening in to the ongoing television election results—yeah! However, by the time we were due to leave the result was in that the LNP had handed out a walloping defeat to Labor. With this in mind, it was time for the QEST to get back on the bikes and hand out our own punishment. Hmm, hope we haven't bitten off more than we chew with that comment. Ahh, doesn't matter, politicians do it all the time.

Belmont to Cleveland and back

With details now getting a bit fuzzy, we left somewhere between 9:30 pm and 10 pm to tackle the next 90 km leg. This part of the ride would prove to be the toughest for most of the team as it included riding during their normal sleeping hours. We made reasonable time through Hemmant, Wynnum and Wellington Point, but the average riding speed was noticeably slowing by the time we got to our control point at Cleveland. With the rigidity of 15 minutes stops well and truly a distant memory, we attended to more body damage and lounged around the McDonald's cafe taking in a range of food stuffs, as well as observing a very interesting range of attire worn by the late night "Cleveland Set". Hmmm, one wonders whether their parents really

continued on page 11

Oppy 2012

continued from page 9

know what these kids get up to. Then again, what would they be thinking when five lycra-clad (mostly middle-aged) gents turn up at a McDonald's cafe at a half-hour to midnight looking a lot worse for wear? Fair point!

After prizing ourselves from the stools in the cafe we got back on the bikes for the last 56 km section back to Belmont. There had been a bit of miscommunication on the remaining distance of this leg, with some thinking this was the exact halfway point and there was only 45 km to go. This started to play on their minds, and at this stage it is interesting how 11 km can have such a psychological impact. Suffice to say, by now the joviality amongst the QEST was starting to wane. As the sleep-weariness took hold, there were a few periods where talk was at a real premium, and the occasional rider taking out some pent up frustrations by hammering a hill or two (go bad-boy Raphael, go). During this period Donatello kept watch on each of the riders with keen interest to ensure that there were no derailments or wanderers off the pavement. Simple things like rolling up and having a chat about their thinking and focus, and prompting them to have some more food or fluids.

After the run of never-ending rollers along Duncan and Broadwater roads, one could hear the collective release of mental anguish when the riders soon realised the turn onto Mt Gravatt-Capalaba Rd provided a predominantly long downhill slide to Chandler. Still, an eerie quietness engulfed the team during this time. Turning onto Old Cleveland Rd signalled 15 km to go to Belmont, and it probably felt like the longest 15 km ever for some of the team. After a few more lumps and bumps through Carina and Camp Hill, the QEST eventually arrived back at Leonardo's place at 3 am.

With the knowledge there was to be a 5 am departure time, this left very little time for any mentionable sleep. It was agreed everybody would have a brief shower, get dressed and sleep in their riding gear in readiness for the final leg back to Ipswich. By the time all this was completed, some would get less than one hours rest.

Belmont to Ipswich

The 4.15 am alarm was sounded, and Leonardo was up waking the rest of the team. Slowly, the tired bodies dragged themselves from the temporary comfort of the beds to down some breakfast before hitting the road. The task ahead to seal the mission for the team: 53 km in three hours. Now achieving 18 km/h might sound simple, but with some tired bodies trying to complete their first attempt of the Fleche Opperman ADTT, the prospect of having to bounce over a number of hills did not sound too appealing to some.

Leaving Belmont, the cool morning air provided a nice distraction for the tired and sore muscles as they loosened up within the first few minutes of pedalling. However, soon enough the ups and downs of Creek Rd provided the bodies with sufficient warmth to start feeling almost normal again. Even better, was the fact we also had a good run with traffic signals—we figured that stopping and starting on uphill was not going to be a popular pastime at this stage of the ride. At the 22 hour mark we had made it to Sunnybank Hills and covered 19 km, a little better than we expected. With 333 km down, there was only 27 km to get to the minimum distance, but better still only 34 km to the finish.

The QEST was re-invigorated for the final assault to Ipswich. With a few more testing undulations conquered through Inala and Collingwood Park, the team cautiously turned onto Brisbane Rd for the final few kilometres. We could smell victory in the air. As Leonardo led the QEST into the car park at Brothers Leagues Club in Ipswich, our mission was successfully completed and with just a little bit of time to spare: 369 km in 24 hours, the longest ride for all the team riders ever, or at least in the last five years.

Well done to all the Speed Turtles, your heartily deserve this.