

Esk At Night Report

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15 riders met Kym Raffelt at the park in Esk to line up for "Esk At Night". 100 km riders: David Booth, Keith Heinrich, Laura Diaz, Justin Bennett, David Foster, Peter Jenkins and Pat Lehane. 200 km riders: Raoul Dover, Lisa Stanhope, Emery Bridge and Grant Williams. 300 km riders: Rod Staines, Nick Booth, Liz Nelson and Brian Hornby. There was a mixture of experienced and novice Audax riders. With a 2 pm start it was always going to be hot for the first couple of hours.

Being one of the 300 km riders I was keen to get going as I had a long night in front of me. I started out with 2 of the 300 km riders, Rod Staines and Nick Booth, who set a fast pace that they continued for the rest of the night. I soon let them go as we approached the first set of rolling hills heading to Toogoolawah. Liz Nelson joined me briefly, the other 300 km rider, and when asked what her ride strategy was explained she was going to ride to the conditions and how she felt at her own pace. She soon left me.

Emery Bridge and Grant Williams caught me and we rode together and chatted for a few kilometres before they put some distance on me. Raoul Dover was the next to join me and we rode together chatting for 20-30 km until Mt Beppo when he put some distance on me on the way to the Somerset Dam control. Justin Bennet paused slightly as he passed Raoul and I on the road to Toogoolawah. Justin had a story of a tyre exploding, he didn't know who but I later found out it was Keith. Pat and Peter stayed and helped Keith with a replacement tyre but it wouldn't bead so he decided to withdraw and headed the 5 km back to the start.

Once on the Mt Beppo road we caught Grant who was starting to struggle. We rode together for a short period but didn't see him again until the control at Somerset Dam. At that point Grant decided to withdraw riding back to Esk with Emery. Emery also withdrew as he travelled in Grant's car to Esk. Five kilometres from Somerset control I spotted Rod and Nick who were heading back towards Esk, so were already 10 km in front of me plus the time I would lose off the bike at the control. One kilometre from the control I spotted Liz heading back to Esk also making good time.

Laura had to be picked up suffering in the heat after running out of water, Kym picked her up. Again, Pat and Peter were the good Samaritans looking after her on the road. Laura later recovered and rode back to Esk. On my way back to Esk I spotted David Foster riding slowly back towards Esk withdrawing due to a pulled muscle.

Coming in to Esk I spotted Nick and Rod about to have some food. I had to do a 25 km loop before getting back to the control at Esk so they were now 25 km in front of me. Going up the range to the turnaround point I was joined by Justin heading for his turnaround point 6 km closer than mine. I spotted Liz coming back towards Esk and a quick calculation had her about 10 km in front of me. Heading back to Esk I spotted, David Booth, Pat, Peter and Lisa

heading out. With 110 km done, this only left Rod, Nick, Raoul and Liz in front of me with Lisa following.

The ride down the Highway at night was great. A nice piece of road with little traffic and what there was give me a wide berth. The good time on the highway was soon corrected with the 300 km route going over Talegalla Hill. Not my favourite. The next 2 controls were at Lowood as there is a 32 km loop to Coominya included. Rod and Nick had been and gone so were now >40 km in front of me. Liz was out on the loop. On my return trip from Coominya in came the first storm. Lots of lightning in the distance, heavy rain but fortunately no wind. I was now wet with 100 km to go. Coming into Lowood Kym was coming the other way. He had picked up Liz and was heading back to Esk, Lisa had been picked up by her husband at Lowood. Liz was spooked by the next line of storms that were coming in and decided to withdraw after 210 km. She was travelling well but was uncertain what to do in a storm situation. My advice, take shelter then continue in the rain that follows.

The rain continued giving me lots of trouble with sunscreen from the afternoon washing into my eyes. The more I tried to fix the problem it only got worse. I arrived at the control at Gatton at about 3 am I was starting to tire but the control was too cold to rest there. I continued very slowly from this point – 50 km to go I texted Kym I had an ETA of 6 am back at Esk. I rolled into Esk just before 6 am after witnessing a magnificent sunrise over Lake Wivenhoe while riding up the highway. Kym had had a couple of hours sleep after meeting Rod and Nick at 2 am and come out again to meet me.

Great event in trying conditions made pleasurable with Kym's organisation and the support from him and John McMullan.