

Audax season reflection – John McMullan

Here we are delving into the new Audax riding season so I thought I would reflect on Last Year's season. I am having a break now that I have finished frankenmower and given it the first test mow and soon to finish the rest of the mowing. The lawns grow very quickly when you spend a day out riding most weekends and leave it for a couple of weeks after the rain.

A bit of history about me – Several years ago I was diagnosed with type II diabetes. I may have had a pre-disposition but was definitely enhanced by lifestyle choices. About 4 years ago my doctor gave me a choice – move to the next stage of treatment (insulin injections) or lose weight. This was a big wakeup call for me so I took the second option. Because I had a treadmill at home I put a lot of effort into walking but after a year and a replacement walking belt I lost interest then bought my first mid-life bike – just a cheap 7 speed steel version and started riding it around [playing the game Ingress](#) and doing social rides with friends. Several months later at a party I was discussing my upcoming B2GC ride with the host who promptly offered and sold me the bike you all see me riding these days. I started doing some weekend riverloops and I was already commuting to work a few days a week.

The idea of Audaxes popped up in the first Ride-On magazine I got after joining BQ about three years ago. It contained an article written by a lady who had ridden the GSR with a friend of hers which sparked my interest as a serious riding challenge that they overcame. Speed wasn't the feature of the story but the steady pace and determination to finish before timing out. Not long after, one of my riding colleagues at work mentioned Audaxes as well. Curious timing. I don't ride fast, but I do get to where I am going when I need to be there.

Two years later and a new rider turned up at work – he was also a long distance walker having just completed a 200 mile course in England with some of his ex military friends and he was looking for a bit of a riding challenge (as was I) so I looked on the Web, found a site with a contact called Brian and made a phone call that resulted in an invitation to a social breakfast ride on a Tuesday morning. I had many questions to which Brian answered most of them and after I headed off to work the decision was made. I needed more of a challenge as I have been using cycling to get healthier and Audaxes looked like the way to go. A few more years and I may be medication free – now there is a challenge.

I joined Audax Australia a week or so before the commencement of last season after a brief phone call with Brian and a bit of discussion with some workmates.

My first Audax was the Riverloop 100 which Brian and Peter Jenkins accompanied me and this was the inaugural ride for the RL100. Most riders undertaking the Riverloop Audax finished at the 50km distance due to pre Melbourne Cup work commitments. There was a bit of rain coming and the discussion revolved around clockwise or anticlockwise to which Peter convinced us to ride anticlockwise as the descent is easier to manage in the wet. Decision made and we headed off. At the botanical gardens I watched PJ bolt off and disappear up the climb and I lost sight of Brian going up the windy bit. I was chuffed when we got back to the carpark to finish the ride – the climb up the western freeway was a bit taxing as the temperature was climbing. Ride over – off to work for me.

After that, I got a bigger challenge with the Midnight Century – the Ipswich version. This was the largest ride I had ever undertaken – being at night gave me reason to over prepare as it turns out.

The lighting I run is capable of 12 hours on low power setting but I still had my two main lights and a third battery, a backup light with 4 spare batteries, four rear lights and the list goes on. What I really needed was good coffee and the sense to eat correctly. PJ accompanied me until dawn where at a distance of about 15km he smelt the coffee and bolted to Fernvale. On the return to Ipswich I found the initial part a bit challenging as it was uphill after a rest. Anne and I rode to the finish – Anne could read the cue sheet (I didn't take reading glasses), I had an idea of where the turns were. Turned out that Anne worked with my brother – the world is so small these days.

Summer started with some really hot days that were teaching me a lesson – don't ride in undisciplined crowds, electrolytes are essential in the heat **and just plan to get there**. By the end of December I had completed my Nouveau trio of rides and committed to the PYRR. In January the 11 out of 11 – this was the first time I had seen a flock of riders cooling off under trees between controls – it was a stinking hot day and Simon's inclusion of zooper doopers was an excellent idea. A few days later saw PJ and I try out the inaugural Horizontal Hundred on a remarkably cool 24 degree overcast day. It was an excellent ride and the course was modified slightly as a result of our experience. Bedrock was where I really experienced a hot ride (as did everyone else) and I suffered a lot on Winn Rd – yes the heat was bad, but what I should have had in my kit was electrolytes. I found Peter x 2 under a tree at North Pine dam soaking up a nice breeze coming off the water. A bit of a chat later, noticing that PJ's sole had fallen off his shoe and time being way too short to finish our trio rode to Warner for a cold drink, icy pole and some tape to stick PJ back together then returned to Brian's.

I had an evening ride with Dave Foster (Horizontal Hundred) and we also did the Sandgate Scarborough a month later. Keith joined me for another permanent which was an enjoyable ride as well. I was quite busy Audax wise and by the end of March had clocked up 1160km. Not up to Brian's distance, but really good for me.

March saw me complete my first 200 – the Yeronga Medley. Brian rode with me on the route to make sure I didn't go astray. Time was good and whilst weary, I did enjoy the ride. A few hardy riders set off on 25th at 2am to ride the Mt Mee Dawn Service – this was my first ride up Mt Mee and PJ waited for me at the top of the first climb. I know I slowed PJ down but we did get to the service just as it started. The end of April saw my second 200 – onwards and upwards as they say.

I rode the Fassifern Folly in May – I took about 12 hours to get round and this was the first long ride that I rode by myself – the remaining riders were much quicker than me. I did see them all just as I was coming into the lake area for lunch and they were all heading out. I impressed Mark by riding it solo (makes it tougher by yourself). Next was the Beach and Bush – this was memorable for two reasons – firstly because I arrived at the all the controls whilst the other riders were still there and I rode off with them and secondly it was the first time I had encountered really strong headwinds down the coast from Noosa (and almost caused a pile-up..... I was at the front and sweat got in my eyes and I couldn't see at all – sorry Mark). We all finished well and I was amused by Mark's Arthur Dent impersonation at the end.

Next up was Franks ride at which I helped a very ill Brian by starting the ride off and Vaughan and I collected the Brevets at the end. The 110 route was very scenic – not sure if I like Tomewin hill...). Vaughan's 6 bumps followed and this was the first ride that I seriously wanted to call it quits less than half way through. I found the roads really rough which caused a lot of feet and seat pain. I had

a chat to Vaughan before Mooball at an ad-hoc food stop as he was going to collect someone but rode on regardless. At Mooball I stopped and relaxed before continuing on. The section of road beside the coast was very windy and I stopped at the new servo just north of Pottsville for a rest, coke, icypole and water top-up. The ride on the Pacific Motorway was a bit un-nerving only because of the sound of the trucks coming and passing – the shoulders are really wide and provide excellent space. I stopped for another rest at the turnoff – had a couple of muesli bars, topped the water up then sent Vaughan a text message with an ETA before heading to Condong. I wanted to continue on and Vaughan and I had a chat about my how I was feeling and what sort of ETA I would have getting back to the finish. Tomewin conquered me again as I still walked up the really steep bit – I did see the storm heading coastwards but not near me. At the top of Tomewin the rain started and it got heavier the further I went towards the coast. At least I surprised Vaughan because I found them at the takeaway near the last set of lights so they needed to dodge the rain. Apparently I finished this one five minutes quicker than Vaughan finished Franks 200.

At this point, I was ready to tackle my first 300km ride. I had been training, got my frame bag, had looked at the course and planned everything – then got my worst flu for over a decade. It took me four days to get to the doctor because I didn't feel safe driving there. After a week I headed back to work for the last day of the week – then rode the Yeronga Medley 110 on the Saturday. Laura rode back from Yamanto with me to make sure I got back. My recovery took me a while and I did some permanents to get the legs going, rode the Gatton Gambol where magpie karma kicked in and strong headwinds had me struggling.

To round out the year, I did a bit more training and I tackled the Marburg Ridgeback – I named it that because whilst flattish, the climbs are lumpy. Headwinds, rain and 12 degrees made the last third a challenge. Ian and I got in about 20 minutes before the time limit. I followed that with the Every Which Way – the three of us rode together or most of the way (PW, PJ and I) – although this is a bit of a treasure hunt like the 11 out of 11, PW guided us through the ride with finesse playing tour guide in some areas to boot. I finished the season with Mangroves to Mountains – I found the Mt Mee climb exhausting – the temperature climbed 12 degrees from the bottom to the top. I recovered by the time I left Wamuran. Perseverance paid out in the end and I finished the ride with time to spare.

What Have I achieved this year? A Nouveau, a PYRR, a 2500km (with just over 4000km) for the AGM presentations.

What have I learned throughout the year? Audaxes are a personal challenge – they are hard work sometimes and the difficult ones can be a real test of character. We need to keep an eye out for each other – (Thanks Brian, PJ, Laura and Mark). With perseverance you can get there but be smart about when it isn't possible. Electrolytes water and sustenance are essential parts of the planning (including a camelback if you are happy to wear them). Don't over think it (thanks Brian). Evaluate the essential toolkit and take what you really need not what you think you need. Learn from other riders – ask questions. Finally – take the time to give something back. I have helped out on controls, and filled in for absent ROs – we need to give to keep the club working.

I would like to thank the ROs and supporters for their tireless work. Without these people, we would not be achieving the results we do. I also want to thank those that have encouraged me to ride the different rides and to push myself a lot more.

This year brings me some new goals: I want to ride my first 300km ride (or two) and an attempt on the Year Round Randonneur (but no new bike - maybe next season for that).

My challenge to you – what can you do this year? Make it good, make it achievable.