

2009 Irate Intern

by Lachlan Smith

Well, what can I say – 10 degrees cooler, 10 kg lighter or 10 years younger and it might have been more fun, but the 2009 edition was a real slog fest.

Our usual pre-race dinner was precluded by the fact that “The River” at Moruya was booked out for a wedding, so we dined in at Broulee after a trip to Moruya markets and Woolies to pick up a few provisions. Eased back on the wine with dinner and sucked on water bottles instead, in deference to the anticipated heat.

Arrived at the start area with the temperature already well into the twenties. I’d done the 50 last year in a tad over 4 hrs and my “training buddy” Neil (we go on rides together when we can get organised) had come in about the 4 ½ hour mark after staying back with a not-so-fit friend, so we decided to line up optimistically at the back of the 3 ½ to 4 hrs group. Last year, after starting at the back, we’d got stuck behind slow riders in the first bit on single track, so our plan was to drift to the back of group 3 and get a good run at the single track.

Neil edged ahead on the first long fire road climb, but I caught up to him in a good paced freight train in the first single track and had a ball. Neil got further ahead on the second big climb as I started to struggle in the heat and the only time I saw him again before the feed station was a quick glimpse on the first bit of “single track of pointlessness”.

Those winding, doubling-back bits of single track provide an opportunity to get some breath back after an uphill slog, but take away a bit from the sense of journey on a 50 km endurance race. Lucky the wind was strong on the hilltops, or else the dust would have been oppressive with so many riders in a tight area. It was very dry.

After the many hundred riders had been through before me, some of the downhill single track had more “bulldust” than I’d encountered on a recent driving trip to Lake Eyre. But they were still great fun, as long as you didn’t breathe too hard behind another rider. But the slogs to get to the top of the hills got harder much quicker this year. I had a first timer behind me as we emerged from under the bridge under the Princes Highway and when he saw the climb up to the power line his expletive was loud. It was a tough grind, then walk, in the blazing sun.

I caught up to Neil at the feed station. He’d run out of water and was busy re-hydrating and eating. I had some electrolyte, a banana and some lollies and topped up the backpack bladder and we headed off together. Neil started to cramp near the top of the first climb out along the power lines, but got going again and we both had a blast down the single track to the much improved tidal creek crossing.

From there it just got harder as the heat and dust took the edge off the otherwise great scenery and tracks. Cramps and almost-cramp twinges made any climbing tricky. We stopped at the top of the last climb, before the run down Cabbage Tree Ridge Trail (I think) and had a few minutes rest. Got some air off some of the water bars down that run and then tried to get the legs going for the few km’s of dusty single track back to the finish. We struggled with the few small uphill pinches in that section, but the flatter bits were still fun, even with toasted legs. I ran out of water with about 3 kms to go – should have put more in at the feed station.

Rolled into town and turned into that last climb up the tar. Neil’s legs cramped again and he walked up while I spun slowly in granny. We crossed the finish line at a bit

under 4 ½ hrs (tbc) and collapsed on the oval. Our long-suffering partners were there to provide a bit of umbrella shade and soft drinks and sausage sangers until we had enough energy to stagger to the car.

Same track as last year, but much tougher due to the heat. Still lots of great single track, but a bit harder to enjoy when toasted. It'd be great if there was a way around some of those hills instead of going over the top of them!! Overall though, a great event in a great part of NSW.

As I'm not getting any younger and with all this talk about global warming, I suppose I'll need to lose a few kilo's (and maybe "train" a bit more) before next year.