

## Nove Colli 2008

### *A day to remember!*

Short course 135km – 4 climbs – Lindy Brand, Tanya Johnstone and Gary Bell  
Long course 205 – 9 climbs – Jayson and Clive De Summerville, Paul Jackson, Bill and Matt Gordin

Our day commences at 4.30am for breakfast and the 30km drive to the event for a 6.15am start. The weather is cool and overcast which should relate to reasonably comfortable conditions throughout. How wrong was that last statement going to prove.

The firsts 45kms is flat heading towards the first climb of the day with most of this time spent trying to keep out of trouble amongst the 11,000 starters. We arrive at the first climb with Lindy, Paul and Gary missing from our group somewhere along the road they managed to lose us in the crowd. We start to climb the first hill when we are suddenly faced with a wall of riders and nowhere to ride so the only option is to get off and walk. What a sight thousands of cyclists for as far as you can see walking their bikes up the first climb. Finally we remount and head off for climb number two. At the crest of this climb our little group is reduced by one with Tanya realising she had not done the training of past years and knowing that if she was to complete the event it had to be done at her own pace.

Climb number 3 comes and goes without any problems but everyone fearing the next climb, the infamous Barbotto with parts of it reaching 18% gradient. As tough as Barbotto is all four of us crest the top within a 100mts of each other where we have our first stop of the day to refuel at the Hotel Dory marquee. Ninety kms down only 115 to go!

We depart the Dory marquee together and head for off for the 10k trek to the point of no return, the turn off for the long course. No turning back now it's ride the 205kms or walk home. All four of us at this stage are full of gusto and decide it's the long course or nothing. I'm sure we may regret that decision at some stage later in the day.

Now we have completed 100km with 105kms to go and of course the 5 climbs. Climb 5 presented few problems but it all started to go pear shaped on the 9km climb 6. At this stage Jayson and Clive had ridden into the distance with Matt and I following in their wake. What really made things difficult was the weather. We were presented with one a thunder storm and lightning show like no other, not only did it pour with rain but the temperature dropped dramatically so as to make sure we were totally miserable. There was literally a river of water flowing down the road. Laying by the pool in sunny Perth was definitely a better picture in my mind at this stage.

Climb 7 was the same scenario 9kms of uphill into a river of water. Do you ever have days were you say to yourself "What the hell am I doing here?" well this was one of these days. About two thirds of the way up this climb I've stopped for a toilet break and out of

the mist rides Paul. After 145kms he could finally ride with someone he knew. From my perspective it was great to have someone new around to whinge to. The top of climb 7 provided us with the opportunity to stop for a supply of food and drinks from one of the many marques provide by the event organizers. Only two more climbs to go!

The rain made the descents very tricky and after crashing in last years event I was taking every precaution required to stay upright. The 8<sup>th</sup> climb whilst being tired presented few problems to the three of us so it was onto the last climb with that big shiny thing in the sky finally making an appearance. Climb number 9 whilst only being 4kms long was one of the toughest as it was very steep and we had 170kms in our legs. At the base of the climb Paul rode off by himself leaving Matt and I to try and keep him in sight so we could try and catch him on the descent into town. Well Paul had other ideas and he went as hard as he could to the top of the climb. Cresting the top I could see Paul up ahead in a bunch of riders some 500mtrs in front. Catching him was going to be a tough ask but one that we were looking forward to because the sun was out and we were on our way home, no more bloody climbs! It took about 6kms of furious chasing before we reeled Paul in. From this point it was all about us getting to the finish in one piece. The bunch grew in size and the testosterone came to the fore as the finish line loomed.

I don't think there is a better feeling in sport than when you complete something that you have doubts about to start with little own the conditions that were thrown at us. The huge grins on the faces of our crew at the finish is testament to this.

*Can't wait for next year!*  
*Bill Gordin*