

2010 - Malcolm Made It

Wellington's Malcolm Jeffery share's his personal Karapoti experience, or was that nightmare?

It was another great Karapoti weekend. For me it was supposed to end in a personal best time, and it started promisingly enough. But alas, it was not to be.

Not long after Deadwood a simple enough gear change went a bit wobbly, as they do with grit and grime. You'd think that would have been something of a hint. But no, and sure enough, worst luck, snappo! Bye-bye chain.

No worries, I'll fix that. Done, back on the bike and haven't lost much time. Then snappo again. Fix it, underway again... Sure enough: Snappo!

Race over was the first reaction. But stuff it. It's only 30k to go, and a lot of it downhill, right? I'm going to finish!

To be truthful, I really didn't want to miss out on the Rock Garden. So imagine my shame when screaming down the Rock Garden - overtaking people left and right, getting heckled, and heckling back - I found myself sailing over the handlebars!

Picking myself up, trying to ignore a huge haematoma on my left forearm, I jumped back on and kept bombing it to the bottom. I'm going to finish!

By the top of the Staircase the arm is throbbing. A first aid guy at the top patched me up with a magic icepack, bandage thingy, and then I was away again, although this time walking. But I am going to finish!

Of course, not long after the Staircase we're into Big Ring Boulevard. So I'm back on the bike enjoying the chance to ride. That's forgotten on the trudge up Dopers, but at the top I can smell home and I'm into the downhill again.

Actually, what I could smell, and hear, was my back brake. It was not quite as it should be. A bit of mud clogging is expected, but this was a raw grinding and burning smell like never before.

But I don't care. After pushing more kilometres than I've ridden, I'm determined to enjoy this and continue

bombing toward the finish, doing jumps, and pumping the berms, and ignoring the ever increasing noise and smell of the overworked rotor. The only thought in my mind was... I'm going to finish!

Off Dopers and back into the Gorge I quickly realised the last 10k isn't quite as downhill as it seems when you have a healthy drive chain. A mountain bike does not a good scooter make, and any sense of humour disappears.

But there's also a sense of triumph building. My 3:30 goal is long gone, but I'm feeling a tad teary because damn it, I'm really am going to finish this thing!

Out of the Gorge and onto Karapoti Road for the final kilometre or so, a marshal lends me a lovely wee tow followed by a cracker Madison-style hand-sling toward the finish.

At the finish line I'm brimming with pride. Despite the adversity I'd finished the bloody thing! Five hours and four minutes. I even won a spot prize... or was it was a pity prize?

As I write this, just 24 hours later, I'm bruised, lumpy, stiff and licking my wounds from the Rock Garden. And it wasn't just my wounds either.

Earlier today I went and bought a new chain and brake pads, but back at home cleaning the bike and changing chains and brake pads imagine by horror to discover a shattered left chain stay!

But I'm still grinning. Looking back now; surviving the Rock Garden, albeit bruised, and managing to finish with my body and bike in that state. Blimey!

To all those who offered track-side assistance, a huge thank you. This is part of what makes Karapoti a truly wonderful and special event. And the thing is: I'm already really looking forward to next year!

