

## 2013 - A Day In The Sun

What a difference a year makes. In 2012 unseasonal storms and flooding forced us to postpone Karapoti for the first time ever. After three wet years in a row, everyone from riders and spectators to our organisational crew deserved a day in the sun. And In 2013 they got it with the driest Karapoti ever.



Kim Hurst

We were a bit nervous coming into the 2013 Merida Karapoti Classic. Last year's "Karapoti Take-2" eventually worked out ok, with more than half the original field returning to great weather. But a lot couldn't come back at short notice, so coming into 2013 we were concerned about any fall-out.

Concerned, because after three wet years in a row entries had started to drop. On top of that the recession and Christchurch earthquakes have also had an impact. These negatives would ruin many events, so when almost 800 riders from 10 countries lined up under a cloudless sky we were happier than any rider.

Not that we didn't have our challenges in 2013. Three wet winters in a row and a couple of exceedingly heavy summer rainfalls has resulted in rampant growth, increased incidence of tree-falls and slips and flooding. Greater Wellington Regional Council did quite a bit of work for us during December and January and we came in behind them cutting back ride lines and draining bogs. But then a month out Wellington had one of the heaviest rains ever seen in a single day and we had to come back and do it all again.

The Rock Garden and Devil's Staircase were a real mess; we had to establish a new river crossing at the bottom of the Rock Garden. Then on the 20k Challenge course ongoing logging saw the track seemingly disappear, but actually it was under dozens of fallen trees that the loggers cleaned up for us the day before the race.

And then there were the earthquakes. Every year we set up Karapoti Park and the course on Friday and then stay overnight. Don't ask why, but several times during the night I was woken by what I swore were earthquakes. Of course, the quake-thing is ever-present these days and Wellington has had several minor shakes in the last year or so. In 2011 we had a solid one centred just 1k from Karapoti Park.

So anyway, this year I awoke early on race day thinking we needed to check the course for slips and what-not following this overnight quakes. The guys just looked at me like I was

on drugs and laughed. The shakes were probably them rocking the caravan when they turned over in their sleep or went outside for a midnight leak. But I'm still not convinced.

Ironically, after the previous year's postponed race, 2013 tossed up the driest course ever. This also resulted in one of the lowest accident rates, which was yet another irony given Karapoti's charity being the Lifeflight Trust air ambulance.

Indeed, even the worst crash this year had an up-side. Nicki Troll hit the deck on a rocky downhill section of the 20k and broke her shoulder. She took it pretty well and was even happier when her name was drawn as the winner of a new Merida 29'er in the spot prize draw.

There were smiles all round this year. The 5k Kids' Klassic proved to be the best ever and despite entries being a wee bit down Karapoti rookie made up more than one third of the field. I still laugh to myself when I remember the guy who completely submerged after taking what he thought was the fastest line across the river at the start. The dad who took a fall while riding with his daughter in the Kids' Klassic was happy to laugh at himself too.

We were delighted too, when an Upper Hutt rider finally took line honours in their own race. The honour finally went to British-born Kim Hurst, a GP now living and practising in Upper Hutt. Hurst had finished second on the previous two years, so her win in the women's race was well-received.

Also well received was 13 year old Wellingtonian Eden Cruise, who defied age to claim sixth among men, just four years after he became Karapoti's youngest ever finisher.

Regardless of weather or entry numbers, however, without fail the biggest kick I get out of Karapoti is the people who make it tick. That's you the participant, sponsors, councils and the 70 or so family, friends and fans that make this race happen. To everyone involved, a big thank you. Especially to my family, who have been up to their necks in Karapoti for more than 10 years and still haven't told me to get a real job.