

# Cabin's 29'er Experience

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First hand Karapoti experience from new 29-inch convert Cabin Leishman.

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Well, Saturday proved that the 29'er might indeed be a great Karapoti bike. Riding 2hrs 27min for fifth place would indicate a pretty good race, no? Well truth is it was a rather frustrating day; one of those that left me with a big "what if?" While Stu Houltham took the race, it could so easily have been a Palmerston North one-two... The legs were there, the lungs were there... But luck... no!

For the first time in a while, when race day dawned I was feeling the nerves. For the first time at Karapoti I was rating my chances and when I skipped clear of the pack through the Gorge most of the competition didn't realise it was me.

Deadwood, Karapoti's first big climb, is the one part of the course where the 29-inch wheels could be a hindrance. Speeds are slow and the lack of momentum can make turning the big wheels difficult. So my plan was to limit damage and then hammer the long ridgeline section at the top.

All was going to plan and about two thirds up the climb I was second when... Psst! Rear tyre deflates. Karapoti is a tough course, so you take a puncture in your stride and after a quick repair I was moving again... briefly.

After a few minutes the gash had opened up more and the tube was now bulging out. Not wanting the gash to end my race I resorted to stuffing a gel packet between tire and tube. Seemed ok, but moments later I discovered that a 16g CO2 cartridge doesn't put much pressure into a 29'er tyre.

So here I was, 35km to go, 4min off the pace, maybe 25th place, no tubes, no CO2 cartridges, and only 20psi in the tyre. If I punctured again I'd be walking. I felt a little screwed!

But I decided to try and salvage something by riding hard on the up's, cruising the descents, and avoiding as many of Karapoti's infamous rocks as possible. But I surprised even myself to salvage a PB by 2min, a top five placing only 3min minutes off second! Frustrated? Very much so!

I don't know that I could have gone with Stu on this day. But I definitely had a low 2:20's in the legs. The 29-inch bike was awesome. Luck just wasn't with me.

One day I'll get Karapoti right; have that day where the legs are good - AND - luck is on my side. Maybe next year.

**ED: Next year was indeed Cabin's year!**

