

2012 - The Race that Got Away

Palmerston North has long been something of a hideaway for talented endurance athletes who emerge occasionally to trounce the competition. Paul Deuritz, a German-born Palmy runner-turned-multisporter-turned-cyclist and mountain biker, has been training quietly waiting to turn 50 in a year or so. But here he shares his tale of the Karapoti that got away.

I just wanted to pass on a big thanks for putting on the Karapoti-Take 2 event. While it wasn't my lucky day I really appreciate the effort that went into the event to make it happen for us riders.

My story was short but not sweet. I was sitting in the top five overall after one hour of riding. On a great day and with great legs, I had gone through all my previous time checks well ahead of sub-2:40 pace and was just starting to get excited when the devil struck.

What happened? On a fast downhill I hit a rock with my rear wheel and punctured. Even worse, the rock had bent the rim and i'd lost proper chain tracking.

Insult was added to injury when I couldn't get my tubeless tyre off, so I rode and walked to the top of the Rock Garden where I found some help. A big thanks to the two Upper Hutt Community Rescue guys who helped to wrestle my tyre off and get it back on.

So my race, as such, was over. But I decided I might as well enjoy the ride. And it was interesting to ride with the 3.5 to 4hrs competitors and see what's going on there.

At one stage I saw this guy sitting halfway in the bush with one foot still in the pedal. When I asked if I could help he said that he couldn't get his foot out of the pedal and proceeded to take his shoe off and pull the shoe out by hand. When he checked his pedal he found his cleat still sitting in the pedal.

We eventually got his cleat back onto his shoe, but this all happened at a slightly technical area on a small natural

step in the track. While many riders stepped off the bike to walk up the step, some gamely tried to ride it only to lose forward momentum. On more than one occasion I would stop from fixing the cleat to give faltering riders a push past the step, which was always thanked with "you're a champ," or similar.

It was a nice change, too, to be stop for a drink and a few lollies at the top of Devils Staircase. I had walked up the Staircase with a bunch of fellow competitors and while most of them were struggling they were still enjoying the race with a big smile on their faces.

Just after Devils Staircase I asked one rider how he was doing. He commented on how tired he was, to which I replied that this was probably a good thing because we were past halfway now. After a short hesitation, he replied, "Yeah, you're right. I'm glad I am tired or I wouldn't have gone fast enough".

As disappointed as I was at my own race, it was great to get this sort of response from riders as you encourage each other along. What made my day in the end was a young woman rider i'd just passed yelling as I rode up a steep section of Dopers Hill, "You go boy, you go boy, yeah!"

So, anyway, I just wanted to share my experience of my not so perfect day that turned out to be a most enjoyable day. Please pass a big thank you to everyone involved, and to quote my old Austrian neighbour... "I'll be back."

*Paul Deuritz
Palmerston North*

Karapoti doesn't always go as planned!

