

Newsletter

25 February 2017



Duty Roster

25 February, Yarra Glen

Richard Dobson (R), Walter Savini (TC), Peter Webb (TC), Geoff Mackay, Geoff O'Loghlen, Perry Peters, David Thompson, Phil Thompson, Richard Vernon, Franc Tomsic

4 March, Casey Fields

David Hyde (R), Dale Maizels, Jenni Collins

If rostered for duty, you must be at there at least 1 hour prior to start time. It's your responsibility to find a replacement if unable to do your duty, then advise Andrew Buchanan, tjptop2@optusnet.com.au

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With the exception of a shoe sale on the back straight, last Saturday at Dunlop Road sounded like a regulation day's racing. Several race reports are inside. This Saturday we venture into the hills for the first time in a while – to Yarra Glen. Registration (opposite the cemetery entrance in Glenview Road) closes at 1.45 sharp and the flag goes down at 2 pm. Tail lights are required.

Once you've digested the week's race reports, make a cup of tea and settle back for a nice long read in John Williams's account of the recently completed Wellington to Auckland Cycle Challenge. John keeps insisting that we have no idea what we are missing – there has to be a catch!

Finally, just think: which Eastern rider would you back to break the UCI hour record? Hint: it's not Liz Randall this time. Read News etc. to find out who is going to give it a shake next month.



The VVCC Victorian Open Crit Championships were held at Northern Boulevard last Sunday. In D Grade, Rob Lackey (giving the thumbs up on the second-last lap) came 2nd by a wheel to the rider sitting in front of him. Photo: Peter Gray

Graded scratch races at Casey Fields, 18 February

Grade	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
A Grade (18)	Iain Clark (N)	Phil Cavaleri	Guy Green	Laurie Gates	
B Grade (20)	Owen Lewis	Ian McGeoch	Phil Thompson	Martin Peeters	Peter Morris
C Grade (25)	Sam Bruzzone	Adam Dymond	Ken Saxton	Andreas Weber	Rob Lewis
D Grade (21)	David Brown	Geoff Mackay	Rob Lackey	Craig Stannard	John Cochrane
E Grade (7)	J.C. Wilson	Jim Swainston	Shane Dwyer		
F Grade (6)	Tony Lateo	Rod Goodes	Barry Beachley		

A Grade

With the echoes of the bell fading behind it was time to make position, just a couple of places, nothing to upset or forewarn the line of cyclists that makes up the A Grade peloton, dropping back into the slipstream still two-thirds the way down the line, no one the wiser. Along McDonalds Lane the priority now to keep to the right of the wheel in front – don't allow myself to get boxed in. Second-last corner and the adrenalin is palpable, I can taste it in my mouth. The head of the peloton closes on Pickering and it's time, a quick glance under the right arm to be sure there's no wheel there and it's out of the saddle and onto the pedals. The timing's perfect – four seconds later J-P makes his trademark early move from the front and as I get there he's at full gas and I'm sitting pretty. Most importantly, there's a gap. Hitting the last corner at speed meant a momentary dip in power output as we coasted round the bend, right foot down. Returning to vertical meant returning to effort, the speed increasing with the cadence. It's a long way to the line but there's still a gap and J-P is still burning biscuits. Sixty from home and those biscuits are all but done, time to drop a tooth at the back and power past my lead-out, another tooth and at 10 to go there's time to confirm the win and contemplate the salute – hell, this is all in

my imagination so why not, sitting up with both arms raised and outstretched in a Robbie McEwen 'look at me' salute, I cross the line.

Back on planet Earth, it was a strong field of 17 that started the hour's proceedings at a comfortable neutral pace. The better part of one lap later it was still neutral but the pace was on the ascendancy, then around the next corner, on to Dunlop Road, hostilities assumed. A faux-leopard kit leapt from the front and it was on, too early against a big bunch but Iain Clark couldn't be allowed too much leash, and in typical vets manner it was a bulk response that saw Iain sit up and return quietly to the fold. Another surge by Iain two laps later was interrupted by a red flag – a last-minute membership renewal had officials on the sideline unaware that all in the bunch were paid up – sorted, the racing was back on.

There were aggressors – Iain, those in red and white, and (of course) Rob Amos the prominent ones; there were opportunists – Ray Russo making several forays into the break, J-P always looking for the move that would aid his attempt at three aggregate championships; and there were responders – most of the remainder with a few exceptions. There were fluctuations in the pace but it rarely dipped below 40 km/h, the back straight with bargain hunters and redemption seekers providing the bulk of respite from the





frantic pace being dictated by those with more energy than sense. An early photo-op went begging as the cactus bridged to the cat up Dunlop Road and on to the back section only to have the faux-cat fail to snag the succulent wheel and promenade the finish, the missed opportunity prickled a little as it was effort not rewarded.

And so it flowed: attack, little response, big response, regroup, attack, response ... As the race drew onwards the constitution of the attacks and breakaways became more important; Iain couldn't be allowed off on his own, nor could Phil Smith be given too great a gap (he's been known to ride away from and hold the chase at bay for over half the race), Rob is determined and in combination with any other warrants attention especially if the other is of the calibre of J-P or Roy Clark. With under 10 minutes to run, Phil Cavaleri ventured off the front with a friend. Phil's been showing good form this season but remains more of a sprinter than a breakaway threat, but still ... and with pursuit out of skope for the leader of the chase the gap started to grow and action was required. Not for the first time and with no intent but to stir the peloton to action I've pushed to the front to stem the gap. Intent and actuality are, apparently, like two different things and I'm in no-man's-land. Should've, could've, maybe, but the indecision meant a lap alone, and that late in the race it meant my race was done. Conceding, it was back to the bunch and through it like a dose of salts to the sidelines and the Daewoo.

Four laps later with the sound of the bell ringing in the A Grade race it was time to make position, just a couple of places, nothing to upset or forewarn ... ah, to dream – next week.

My race: 39.1 km in 0:59:03 at 39.7 km/h

Oh, and the finish of the other race: a bunch sprint won by the leopard ahead of Phil Cavaleri and Guy Green.

Nigel Kimber

B Grade

Twenty B Grade riders turned up to racing on Saturday, the biggest bunch we have had for several weeks. Unfortunately, there was plenty of

road traffic due to a shoe sale being conducted at a factory on the back straight. Poor Rob Suter, being the traffic marshal who scored the job near the factory, had plenty of work to do. Some seriously good riders turned up so the racing was always going to be hard, with many attacks. Ian McGeoch stirred the pack up and, as usual, Peter Morris led the chase back to him. Some of the most notable attacks came from Gary Wishart, Doug Page and Ian Smith. All of these attacks were negated by some seriously good work from Franc Tomsic, Peter Morris and Geoff O'Loghlen.

At about the midway mark of the race I was thinking that this was too bloody hard at my age, but I looked back and who was just behind me? Martin Peeters and Bruce Will. So I refocused and got back to riding hard. The racing was pretty intense and with a strengthening headwind on the finishing straight the tactics were changing. With the shoe sale causing a lot of caution through that area, the accelerations that normally occur on that part of the course had to be curbed. When the bell rang we stayed at a pretty easy pace until we got through that area and I was tacked onto Gary Wishart's wheel. He shot through on the inside and I lost him as the rider he went under closed the gap. I worked hard to get back on his wheel as we entered the finishing straight but I was too far behind the leaders to have any chance of placing. In the end it was a pretty classy group that crossed the finish line: first Owen Lewis, then Ian McGeoch, followed by Phil Thompson, Martin Peeters and Peter Morris

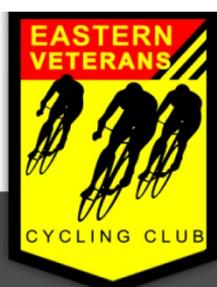
Race stats: average speed 37.9 km/h, my max heart rate 177 bpm and max power 788 kW

A special mention to all marshals and traffic controllers on what was a very trying day for them. Well done!

Peter Webb

D Grade

With the threat of rain looming sometime in the afternoon, I'm wondering if we will cop a soaking. Perhaps if we ride faster, we might miss it! Our rather large bunch is forewarned at the starting line that there is a shoe sale taking place in McDonalds Lane. Maybe I should pack the credit





card in my jersey, so if I get dropped during the race, I can at least call in and buy some new cycling shoes!

With such a big group, it can only mean one thing; there's gonna be lots of attacks. I'm still trying to figure out who's who in the zoo, so I decide to enact plan B (i.e. watch everybody). When the blunderbuss is fired to send us on our way; it isn't long before a few riders start making their moves. The rest of us switch into over drive and scramble to neutralise the attacks. At one stage, we copped a brief shower, but it was over before we even had a chance to swear at the rain.

While I cursed the shoe sale early in the race when we almost came to a complete stop, they were my saviour later on when the bunch had to sit up outside the factory. This gave me a chance to recover and get the heart rate down to a respectable level. The average speed seemed to be going vertical with each lap. I don't know who was causing the carnage, but there several riders at different stages trying to break up the race.

Just after we got the bell, there were four of us with a small lead on the bunch. Could we hold them off, or was I getting my capabilities mixed up with my ambitions? By the time we turned the final corner for home, that lead had been reduced to nothing and it was going to be a bunch sprint for the chocolates. David Brown was the winning sprinter, just holding off Geoff Mackay and the consistent Rob Lackey.

Thanks to the officials, traffic controllers, marshals and other volunteers for making the race happen and thanks to the D Grade riders for a hard, but safe and enjoyable race.

The Professor, aka John Cochrane

E Grade

Over the period of a month we see quite a few faces come and go. Graham Haines put in an excellent ride a few weeks ago and not seen since, while Alan Hicks looked good last week but didn't return. The interesting starter on Saturday was Shane Dwyer, a Northern member and a former marathon runner turned cyclist, who seems to be a regular at the Loop.

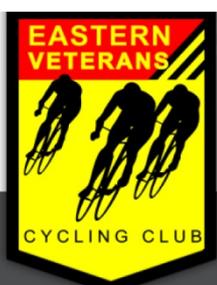
Dunlop Road seems very popular with our riders as we are consistently pulling good numbers. Conditions on Saturday were ideal, not hot, no rain with a little wind. Our little group set off for the neutral lap but came to to a red flag and a stationary A Grade. It appeared they had a financial problem but were soon circulating. The pace was consistent but Laurie Bohn left us with five about halfway through. I had been told that Shane was good at riding a solid, even tempo and this was right on the money as he powered around for lap after lap. JC had a couple of little jumps but nothing too threatening.

About six to go I think it was Shane who upped the tempo and I was off the back by about 20 metres and in trouble; however, the pace dropped a bit and I snuck back on.

Finally we got our bell and it was Shane who wound up the sprint. JC made a strong move about 300 out while I concentrated on holding JC's back wheel. That was how we finished, with Shane putting in a mighty ride to finish 3rd. Barry Ellem got plenty of ks in by completing F earlier. Not sure who got 4th but my money would have been on John Eddy.

Thanks to all for another good day at Dunlop Road.

Jim Swainston



Tuesday racing at METEC, 21 February

Grade	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
A Grade (10)	Richard Abel	Peter Howard	Daniel Hulbert	Chris Hughson
B Grade (9)	Dayle Goodall	Grant Greenhalgh	Owen Lewis	David Pyne
C Grade (15)	Darren Woolhouse	Darren Smith	Adam Dymond	Rob Lewis
D Grade (10)	Ron Chapman	Rob Lackey	Geoff Mackay	Colin Mortley
E Grade (3)	Mark Granland	Barry Beachley		

Wednesday criterium at the Loop, Kew, 22 February

Division	1st	2nd	3rd
Division 1 (13)	Fraser Short (N)	Agostino Giramondo (N)	David Holt
Division 2 (15)	Peter Bertelsen	Nick Tapp	Peter Morris
Division 3 (10)	Peter Gray	Russell Wheelhouse	Davina Calhaem
Division 4 (6)	Barry Ellem	Frank Lees	John Eddy

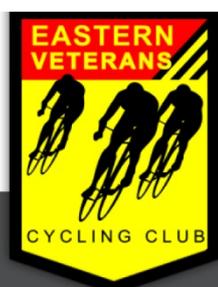
Forty-five riders entered today for the Wednesday morning 45-minute workout. The weather was perfect – a nice warm temperature and a slight wind. Keith Bowen also has a good 45-minute workout keeping tabs on everybody. The Boathouse coffee shop must love us. Peter Gray scored another win today, which gives him five wins and three 2nds so far this year. If he keeps this up, he might as well take the aggregate medal now. Good riding, Peter.

The Loop aggregate to 22 February

P. Gray (Div. 3)	42
F. Lees (Div. 4)	22

T. Coulter (N; Div. 1)	22
J. Eddy (Div. 4)	20
B. Ellem (Div. 4)	18
J. Williams (Div. 2)	16
I. Clark (N; Div. 1)	16
B. Rodgers (Div. 4)	14
A. Giramondo (N; Div. 1)	12
P. Cavaleri (Div. 1)	10

Laurie Bohn



News etc.

VVCC Victorian Open Crit Championships, Northern Boulevard, Sunday 19 February



In C Grade (above), Adam Dymond in a comfortable position with several laps to go before the bell. Adam finished 4th in a bunch sprint. In F Grade (right), Susan Williams and Ed Holmes fight it out between themselves. Barry Rodgers and Shane Dwyer also raced (in E Grade). Photos: Peter Gray



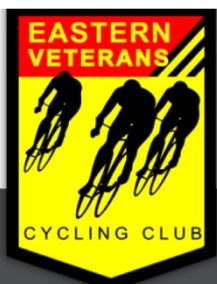
Anna Davis attempts hour record

Many readers will know Eastern member Anna Davis. Some will know her as a blur heading back down the road during a club time trial. Others may remember that Anna is the 2016 Masters World and National Champion in the individual time trial and also won gold at the National Championships in the road race.

Anna will attempt cycling's 'hour of truth', the UCI Best Hour Performance, at the Joe Ciavola Velodrome, Thornbury (DISC), on 26 March. Money raised will be donated to the Les Twentymen Foundation. Friends and guests are welcomed during the record attempt to encourage and lend support.

The current mark for women aged 50–54 (Anna's age category) is 39.402 km, set in Italy in March 2011 by Patrizia Spadaccini. Coincidentally, Eastern rider Liz Randall holds the UCI hour record for women aged 60–64, with a distance of 37.214 kilometres.

More information is at <http://annashour.com/>.



Wellington to Auckland Cycle Challenge

Day 0

Arrived safely in Wellington, bike went together well and just been out for a hour spin, all feels good.

Met up with a few old faces from previous years, including young Stefan from Germany. Last year we teased him that he looked like Jens Voigt and he tried to convince us that he lives just down the road from him. In fact at one point he suggested the he (Stefan) had said 'Shut up legs' first and then Jens started saying it, so its fair to say he's full of shit.

This afternoon Stefan gave me a drinks bottle signed personally for me by Jens (or Stefan?). Anyway, I won't be drinking from it – it's going straight to the pool room.

Tomorrow racing starts in earnest, a 20 km neutral ride to get out of town and then a short 15 km stag up the side of a mountain with the finish at the summit. In the afternoon a lazy 70 km mostly flat, hopefully with tail win that will get us to Masterton for end of first day.

Day 1

Wind was blowin' through the night, so we awoke to expect a pretty tough day. That turned out to be an understatement.

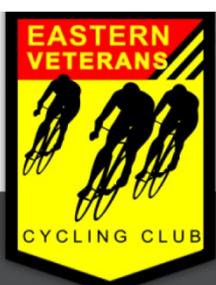
The planned 20 mk neutral ride from town centre to the race start was terminated about half way. The police closed the ride up the Rimutaka (mountain) to cyclists for safety reasons. After a couple of hours they had ferried 250 bikes and riders over the summit (finish line) and down the other side to lunch at Featherston. Our cynicism of the police 'nanny state' was somewhat reduced when we saw two motorcyclists blown off their bikes less than 1 km from the finish line in separate incidents. What could that wind have done to a big peloton?

Disappointed at missing out on the opportunity to conquer the climb (it's got the better of me twice), the cancelled climb was to compound my chances in the afternoon.

A reasonably flat 67 km, with tailwind for the first 20 km, then a head/side wind for the remainder. My challenge was to stay with the Group 1 pack of 35 riders on a very fast downwind leg when the sprinters and time trialists had no climb in their legs from the morning.

It was on from the first moment – flat out! Luckily I was only about three or four bike lengths off the front, but I was losing wheels regularly and frantically grabbing the next one to come past until that one pulled away (repeat procedure, moving me ever backwards). At 5 km I looked down and I was doing 60.2 km/h on a flat road, and still struggling to hold wheels. I also noticed I hadn't started my Garmin so I pressed start.

Three kilometres later, I lost the final wheel in the pack (at 52 km/h), backed off a little to await the Group 2 peloton of 70 riders that started 2 min after us. (I've just checked my Garmin: the first 5 km split took





6 min 36 s, an average of 45.8 km/h. I think that's a PB, even though it included around 2 km on my own. How can you be dropped at that pace?)

Group 2 didn't take long to catch me, and unfortunately the leaders soon dropped me as well. I settled into the second pack of about 15 riders from Group 2 and through some pretty ragged pacelines we managed to get through the next 45 km of battering head/side winds.

The results don't look great. 75th overall (last two years I have finished top 25), 15th in my age group compared with 3rd and 4th last two years, and 3rd over 70, behind the leader by 7 minutes and 8 years!

Tomorrow is 75 km into the face of a strengthening wind, followed by a hilly 36 km in the afternoon in the same direction.

You've no idea how much fun you are missing.

Day 2

Things aren't getting any better. Overnight the wind picked up and added a measure of rain for good luck. A little respite from the rain (but not the wind) as we rode the 5 km to the start line, but then just before we started rolling it started pissing down. My Group 1 riders are clearly aware of my blistering sprint so ensured I was dropped within the first kilometre. No kidding, I just could not ride fast enough to hang on to a wheel. I took it easy for the lead riders from Group 2 to catch – didn't take long, they were starting 3 minutes back, but again I couldn't hold on for long so soon dropped back to the next Group 2 pack. We had a good pace going and were working well when a woman trying to protect her age group yellow jersey by chasing every wheel that came past slammed straight into the guy following the wheel she had decided to grab. No one badly hurt, and most the pack rode on, but I felt that since I was already minutes down on the others I would stop and help straighten out bikes and fix the resultant puncture etc. With that 10 minutes lost I slotted into a slower group that was just passing and we shared turns for the remaining 50 km, through wind, hail and rain.

At lunch we were informed that the afternoon ride was cancelled, again on police instructions. A camper van had blown over on the main pass we were supposed to climb.

We were also informed that the Rimutaka Pass that was closed to cyclists yesterday, causing the cancellation of a stage, was today closed to all vehicles due to dangerous winds. Highway 2, the road through to Rimutaka Pass, is the main road out of Wellington.

The positive news is that weather is due to improve by Wednesday. Bike is performing well, despite rider.

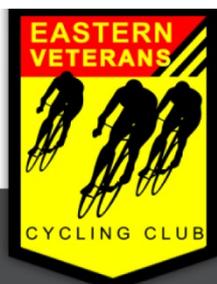
Day 3

Whether it was the money or the beer on offer, benevolent ride dictator Stephen Cox allowed me to drop back to a Group 2 start. That and the dropping of wind and stopping of rain made the 105 km leg to Wanganui far more pleasant than it could have been.

Starting near the back of the 75 rider bunch I worked forward on an early rise – this bunch must split and I'd rather be in front of the split. Mostly rolling countryside, so fast and undulating for the first 70 km, then a couple of short sharp climbs, a fast windy descent and 10 km flat fast finish.

I moved into the front 10 that were rolling turns, about 20 hangers-on and the rest had dropped away. Full praise to my ENVE wheels and Vittoria Corsa tyres, I hit one pot hole so hard I nearly fell (two others punctured in the same rut), but not a mark on either wheels or tyres.

The two hills didn't thin out the pack much, and the descent was a little hairy with multiple levels of bike-handling skills on show, and more testosterone than a racing stud could deal with in a season. And that was just the women!





On the final right-hander, I lost my line a little due to bumpy surface and was drifting towards the left edge, but under control. I heard a shout from behind and then a clatter of carbon, but couldn't look back. Apparently, someone thought it might be OK to overtake on the left-hand side, and ran out of room. 'Someone' turned out to be the leader of the over 70s, who was well enough to get back on his bike and ride in, and is now only 4 minutes and 8 years ahead of me.

I kept out of trouble in the bunch sprint and finished safely around 12th in the bunch, and have picked up good places and time, although still well out of contention.

Stefan (Jen's Voigt's buddy) had a good ride in Group 1 and closed to 18 seconds in his 30–39 age category, behind my room mate Craig Putt who is killing us all in Group 2. They both gained a spot when the overall race leader (also in their age category) crashed out on day 2.

Last year's winner Phil Kesby is leading 50–59 but 5th in general cat, but only seconds away from his younger rivals. He has been robbed of the two biggest hills so far by weather cancellations, and his speciality is climbing. Last year he took 2 seconds lead on the first climb and protected it for the other 12 stages to win the GC by 2 seconds.

Day 5 has an interesting afternoon stage – 6.5 km straight up a mountain. We're all looking forward to that (NOT).

Day 4

Two 50 km stages today, both with two hills ranging from 4 km to 7 km. I started again with Group 2, a cool but sunny day, what could be better?

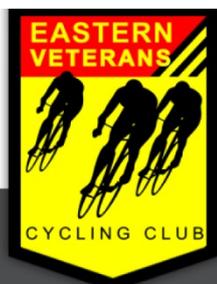
The first 20 km along the Wanganui Valley was fast and mostly flat (or false flat). Dragged along by a tandem for much of it, I reckon 50 of the 75-strong peloton reached the first hill together, but that didn't last. By the summit five strong lads (30–50 years) had established a break led by flat mate Craig, clearly keen to protect his 18 seconds. At one point on the hill I was caught in the gap between them and the rest of the pack, about 40 metres from each, but I really didn't have any more in the legs to catch them, so soon slipped back to the chasers. I was in the top four of that next group over the crest. The very fast descent with long sweeping bends over the other side was not to my liking and at the bottom I was 50 m or so off the back of a group of 20 or so, but managed to bridge back to them quite quickly. That group stayed together for the last 20 km, and thankfully on the uphill finish there was a little less enthusiasm to finish 32nd overall, rather than 35th. That also meant no carbon got broke.

Lunch was at the cute little Kakatahi School, which boasts eight pupils, has survived multiple attempts by the bureaucracy to close it down and has for nine years welcomed the ride with lunch prepared by the parents and teacher, for a gold coin donation. I think they collected a lot more than that for the fighting fund and good luck to them. The next nearest primary school is 50 km away.

The afternoon race had a 7 km climb 5 ks in, and after a fast descent, another 4 km climb to the plateau. The last 30 km is rolling countryside. Last year Geoff, Stefan (Jens Voigt), and another Aussie we nick-named Stuey due to his striking resemblance to Mr O'Grady, fought 40 km into ferocious headwinds after climbing the first hill strongly, but not as strongly as the leaders.

Today was a similar story, except I had no Geoff, Jens or Stuey. Cresting the first hill around 40 metres off the lead group of 12 (again led by Craig), I lost more time on the descent – two guys came past me and hooked onto the leaders, but I stubbornly remained 50–100 m behind them for the next 8 km despite turning myself inside out multiple times.

I then had to stop for a herd of cattle crossing the road, and 5 minutes later for four random sheep that were blocking the road. By now all hope of catching the leaders receded, but I hoped the sheep might





distract some of the Kiwi guys chasing me.

I soloed the last 30 km in much kinder conditions than last year, and arrived at the finish without being caught, and only 4 minutes behind the lead group.

Ended both races around 45th of 170 starters, and lifted my GC position to top 53rd, over 60s to 11th.

Stefan lost 20 seconds on Craig and is now around 40 seconds back, but because they start at different times and ride in different groups it is really unpredictable.

Tomorrow is 50 km in the morning, followed by a 6.5 km 8% climb in the afternoon, although weather forecasts are suggesting cold, windy and wet for the next three days.

You have no idea what you are missing!

Day 5

An easy, mostly flat morning stage of 52 km to 'The Chateau' where we were having lunch. Having said that, we had a total of 800 m of vertical rise, most of it over the last 10 km, which looked like a false flat but in fact averaged 5 per cent. It seemed never-ending, and by the top I was pedalling squares, but I was in the first 10 of Group 2 to finish, and put some serious time on some other riders.

Stephen Cox, Tour Director, had a great idea. Before we get lunch, we have a 6.5 km climb for another 500 m of vertical climb from the Chateau to the snowfields.

I was dreading it but made full use of the 30-tooth granny gear and survived far beyond expectation to finish again in the leading 10 from Group 2, and again there was serious time lost by some of the bigger guys who have been giving us shit all week on the fast stretches. Karma!

Results show I am consolidating around 45–50th position on most stages, and have now risen to 50th overall, but still 11th over 60.

Stefan/Jens had a great morning and took 10 minutes on his rival for the 30–39 yellow jersey, and consolidated with another couple in the afternoon and so wears the yellow tomorrow for his first time on tour.

Tomorrow is just a single 120 km stage from Tapau to Hamilton. Started raining just after we descended from the ski fields to the Chateau, and it looks set in for the rest of the ride. At this stage there is little breeze.

Day 6

The forecast was rain, and it pissed down all night, and in the morning there was no sign things might be likely to change. My room-share Craig, who had been wearing the 30–39 yellow jersey until Jens grabbed it yesterday, had a second consecutive bad night with gastro and decided to quit. Coming from Rotorua, he was just an hour from home and didn't think he could manage a second day without nutrition. I was full of admiration for how he got through yesterday, and felt so sorry that he could not battle on. At least 20 folk have gone down with a lurgy, and there is some talk that through the farmlands, when the cattle dung gets thrown up with the spray off the roads, if you swallow just a little bit it can be enough to take you down.

Nobody seemed particularly enthusiastic about 120 km in the rain after five consecutive days of riding, and I think anyone that bailed has lost no respect from me. After all, it is supposed to be a holiday, and if you're going to hate it, why do it? I spread this message liberally amongst the other riders – everyone that bails lifts me another place on GC!

Today was all about safety for me. Last year I crashed on this stage on a fast, windy descent at about halfway. The wet roads this year would make it even more slippery.





The group rolled out of Taupo, and headed north-east towards Te Awamutu, and despite pouring rain it was warm and there was little breeze. I started near the back of a big bunch, and occasionally jumped gaps I saw ahead of me as riders dropped off and I clung on to the back. By halfway we were down to around 25 riders, and most were pretty circumspect on the descents. The final bend of the descent where I crashed last year was neutralised by marshals after a crash from one of the earlier groups, so I was glad to get that monkey off my back.

In the rain on Monday, my Garmin drowned so I had no distance check points all week. That was particularly disconcerting on yesterday's 6.5 km climb, and also on today's long stage, so I was really glad to hear one of the riders celebrate the 100 km mark. At the 5 km to go mark the rain stopped and with 3 km remaining the roads became dry and I saw some blue stuff in the sky. About 15 survived in our pack and I didn't contest the finish, but we had made good time on most of the other Group 2s.

Stefan was not so fortunate, as he was dropped early. Since Group 1 started last, he had no groups behind him to mop him up, so he spent a long time on his own, and finished a very tired boy. He retained his yellow jersey, but he lost over 10 minutes to a guy twice his age! The results show I am now up to 45th on GC, and 9th over 60.

Back at the hotel now having had lunch and shower, it's pouring rain and the locals tell us it's the same for tomorrow.

Just two stages to go – a 62 km and 37 km – then it's all over.

Day 7

The final day, with just two stages, a 73 km morning (including 11 km of neutral in order to get out of central Hamilton), and a 37 km afternoon stage.

The morning stage is my favourite of the ride, having twice finished 6th overall on this stage. Putting that in context, in over 30 stages I have ridden in the Wellington–Auckland epic in the last three years, my next highest placing is 15th. That was the final stage last year.

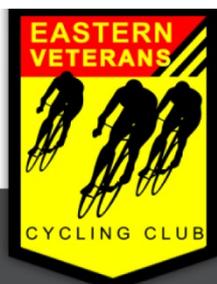
With two tandems on the front, over flattish/rolling countryside, we sat in at a high pace, and most riders in the group held on so we had a big fast group. I was near the back and couldn't be bothered with trying to move forward – there was no point.

While it was a great way of putting the ks behind us, the tandems spoiled the stage, because everyone could hang on, but nobody could do anything else. You couldn't attack from that speed, no rolling turns, just hang on to the train. The last 20 km was a series of short sharp climbs and descents, where we finally lost the tandem and the real fun began.

At each hill I moved up six to 10 places while tired riders dropped off the back. It was clear that the safest place in a bunch sprint was going to be near the pointy end as that was thinning out fast, and I was feeling strong on the hills so I kept moving forward.

We all slowed to the sad sight of Ritchie Howes lying on the road with a blanket over him. Ritchie was leading the Over 60s after his mate Gary Overend had missed the fast early start a few days ago. Otherwise there had been only a few seconds between them and they were nearly an hour up on the other riders. A touch of wheels in Group 1 had brought down four riders, and poor Ritchie came off worst, eventually airlifted to hospital with a suspected broken femur. Gary waited with his mate for over 15 minutes, before finishing in time to take over as age group leader.

Into the last km and there was six of us with a small break on the rest and we were moving really fast. I had a nice sit on the right-hand side of the bunch, and with 300 to go was winding up nicely, when all of a sudden around 30 riders flew past, yelling, passing on the right four deep, passing on the left – it was





chaotic. Apparently the Corporates Team Race started 5 minutes behind us and their strongest bunches all reached the finish with us.

I thought I had got the win for Group 2 starters, but up the road among the corporates I saw Alistair Dodds, who had pipped Geoff O'Loughlen and me on this stage last year. Bummer. I was also informed that on the last day I would be timed from Group 1 start (2 minutes earlier) as they didn't have time to do manual adjustments on the last day. My actual 31st overall for the stage therefore became 53rd. Double bummer, but I was really happy with the ride, and as ever am getting to my best when everyone else is tiring (and when it's too late to make a difference).

I started the last stage at the pointy end of Group 2 and once we had seen off the tandems, four of us took turns on the front. We soon caught some of the group 1 stragglers and they helped with the pace. We were breaking group 2 apart, but it worked best for three strong riders who attacked as a group and rode away – we couldn't do anything. The finish was reached with the six of us still keeping the pace up, and a dozen bludgers hanging on, but we had put some time into the rest of the group.

I have finished the race 45th overall (from 170 starters), 8th over 60, and 10 seconds behind the first over 70. I completed the 641 km of actual racing (plus another 100 or so of neutral) in 19 h 50 min, giving an average speed of 32 km/h-ish.

Last year's winner Phil Kesby got 2nd this year, beaten by Gold Coast-based James Barry, who won by 21 seconds at an average speed of 36 km/h Not a bad aussie result – 1st, 2nd and 45th!

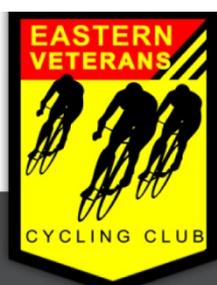
John Williams

Wheels for sale

Fulcrum Racing Speed 35 mm carbon tubulars including new Schwalbe One tyres – near new

\$1100 neg.

Beautifully light, versatile full carbon wheel set. Used a few times racing – pristine condition. Rear tyre never ridden, front used a couple of times. Glued by Josh at Cecil Walker Cycles. Includes brake shoes with near new SwissStop BR-BO500 pads for carbon rims, Fulcrum skewers, wheel bags. Campagnolo 11-speed freehub body. Pick up Clifton Hill or can bring to a race. Alison 0427542100.





Future events

Eastern Vets

For other events, please refer to page 1 of this newsletter, or go to <http://easternvets.com/roster/>.

Note: Graded Scratch Race entries are accepted on the day up to 15 minutes before the advertised race start time. Handicap entries close the Tuesday before the race. Riders entering a handicap MUST pay the entry fee regardless of participation. Fees are due on race day; entrants will NOT be allowed to start in any EVCC race until fees have been paid.

No late entries will be accepted for either scratch races or handicaps. Entries to handicaps can be submitted via e-mail to the handicapper or on any race day prior to the event.

Northern Vets

For more details go to www.northerncycling.com.

Training rides

Day/Time/Place	Route	Style
Sunday mornings Beach Road Ride. Leave 8.00 am sharp. Meet at Peanut Farm Reserve, cnr Blessington & Chaucer Sts, St Kilda	Ride along Beach Rd to Frankston. 10 min stop. Then ride back to St Kilda (approx. 65 km)	Social ride, coffee back at St Kilda
Saturday mornings (7.30 am) and Sundays/public holidays (8.00 am) Meet at Ringwood Clock towers, Maroondah Hwy, Ringwood	Maroondah Hwy to Carlton for coffee, then return	Fast social

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