

The 2008 Goulburn to Citi Charity Ride

Official jibber jabber

A big congratulations to the organisers of the Goulburn to Citi Charity Ride for again being the driving force behind one of the best rides on the NSW Non-elite cycling calendar. It all started 4 years ago when a couple of punters known as the *Struggle Street 7* hit the tarmac between Goulburn and Camden under the watchful guidance of Simon Poidevin, Goulburn's favourite son and race ambassador. The event was originally designed as a bit of a sideshow to the main professional race but has become a main event in its own right. The 2008 event saw a contingent of circa 100 riders representing 6 teams - Citi, Macquarie, Albion Cycles, The Campbelltown Catholic Club, the Turramurra Cycling Club and the Ben Mikic Foundation.

While Poido is never one to draw attention to himself according to his publicist and website, it is worth noting that since its inception, Poido's charity ride has raised in excess of \$420k. The 2008 event raised \$170k alone. An incredible effort. To put that into context, the Around the Bay has around 14,000 riders. Between them they raise approximately \$500,000 for the Smith Family. The charities to benefit include Odyssey House, MS Research, Goulburn Palliative Care and Oncology Support Unit, Kids of Macarthur Health Foundation, Starlight Foundation and the Ben Mikic Foundation. It is important to note that for some of these charities the monies raised via this event provide a real lifeline.

For those that kindly supported the riders please do not underestimate the value of your contribution.

A special thanks to those that supported the team:

Juzzie "Nice Muffins" Brant for her repeated efforts above and beyond the call of duty throughout the event.

Frank "*Time on my side*" Conceicao and the First Lady of cycling Jo who provided not only the best equipped trailer in Australia but also provided their own carbon footprint to offset the carbon credits generated by the cyclists.

The father and son Girvan's back again - Ron and Mike. Hard to tell which one is the son and which one is the father and I think they've forgotten themselves. The duo again did a great job towing the cycling hardware through the state and documenting the event.

Sag wagon drivers **Sam** (who I decided to spend more quality time with this year) and **Peter** who reminded us that there is no reason why a bus can't be as aggressive on the road as a sports car.

The fundraising efforts of the Citi, Macquarie, Turramurra, Albion, Campbelltown Catholic Club & Ben Mikic Foundation teams who combined to raise \$170,000 for 6 worthy charities in tough economic times.

Finally, congratulations **Poido**. Another memorable event for all the right reasons.

The way the wheels spun

3pm Friday 12 September. Things got off to a rocky start even before race day. Most shocking was the Mike Girvan's split pants debacle. The incident proved a sombre reminder that it was indeed a very cold, comfortable winter and that 'one size fits all' is sometimes a very generous description. While this scribe achieved a new first by recording 3 flat tyres even before we boarded the bus to Goulburn, Michael Neal's tapering program was working a fraction too well.

That was until Poido came knocking on his front door only to find Mike still in his pokadot King of the Mountain pyjamas sitting on the couch with a packet of Tim Tams watching Dr Phil. After watches and days were synchronised the team was complete.

Mike need not have hurried. In the fourth hour of the two hour drive to Goulburn we finally pulled into town. I have never worn a seatbelt in a bus before I met Peter. Perhaps riding shotgun in his bus was a mistake but I can't help but feel that my screams alerted him to the dangers that lay ahead as he swerved across multiple lanes, raced up emergency lanes and double clutched his way up the M5 through heavy Friday traffic.

A moving pep talk over dinner by Poido and James Pitts from Odyssey House reminded us why we were all there in the first place. To win! As David "Usain Bolt" Cobcroft put it, *"It's not a race....but someone has to come first!"*.

It was good to be back at Goulburn's Posthouse Motel and it was even better to see that they had retained their 3.5 star status. Just like giving your wife a dustbuster for her birthday, bunk beds always seem like a better idea in theory than they are in practice. I had missed the concept of a window above the bathroom door. Especially at 4am when one of my fellow inmates did his absolute best to navigate through the darkened room as quietly as possible to go to the bathroom. He was so wary not to disturb anyone's slumber that he even went as far as to ensure that he didn't turn on the bathroom light until the door was firmly closed behind him. This brings me back to the aforementioned window above the door. The feng shui in the room was fantastic. So much so that when the bathroom light went on, it not only lit the room up like a Christmas tree, a cleverly placed mirror opposite the bathroom door made sure the room was bathed in what felt like daylight.

With the weather forecast suggesting hot weather, hydration was obviously on the minds of the Macquarie team. Judging by the number of stubbies they sank en route to Goulburn the chance of dehydration was minimal or at worst wouldn't be remembered. Given what global investment bank share prices had done since the last ride, it felt like James Pitts was along more for a recruitment drive rather than for informational purposes.

6am Saturday 13 September.

Saturday September 13th 2008 saw a record 92 riders from six teams depart Goulburn's Greengrocer at 6.00am on a eerily warm morning in the "Metropolis of the South".

The 2007 team roster of Citi, Macquarie Bank & The Campbelltown Catholic club were joined by a big team from Turrumurra, the Ben Mikic Foundation team and a motley crew put together from the Albion Cycles squad trained by the "Portuguese King of Pain" Francesca Conceicao.

The North West Zephyrs hitting the town created a few stomach knots for those Citi riders who had experienced the "ride from hell" in 2007 but Paul "The Brick" Hillbrick and Noel "Media Tycoon" Lowy reassured us at the start that the weather forecast was pleasant despite the unwanted headwinds.

Despite firm instructions from the ride's Chief Commissar - Bruce Mills & the crack squad from the Goulburn Highway Patrol, the elevated testosterone levels of the Albion crew saw the "Fonz" of Reed Constructions fame & a German bank's Resource analyst "Cheapo O'Connor" steam North up Governors Hill setting a less than relaxing pace for the warm-up 27 Km's to Marulan.

As the Peloton started to fray, ride founder Poidevin took control with the ever modest "Cobby" to give some relief to those in our midst who thought they were out for a leisurely Saturday Ride. The "Sag" bus was a busy venue in the first 10km's out of Goulburn.

A 5 minute stop at the Marulan Roadside diner saw plenty of excess shedding of riding Kit and another pep talk to prepare the assembled riders for the journey ahead. Whether it was the ego monster or naivety, a surprisingly small number of riders decided to heed Poido's advice and stick with the slower Peloton for the next leg to the Southern Highlands Town of Mittagong.

And so it was game on as the Citi, Turramurra & Albion teams did the work up front to produce an appreciable pick up in the pace of the leading Peloton.

The real fun and games began as the Charity ride moved off the fantastic tarmac which is lane 1 of the Hume highway and onto the Old Hume Highway. The Catherine and Bendooley Hills cracked the Peloton and a masterful chase by the dropped riders nailed the glamour boys before the much needed compulsory pit stop in Mittagong.

Rested and refuelled the riders hit the road for the next leg to the top of Razorback via Picton.

The Australian Drug Testing Authority are still trying to work out what "juice" the Turramurra boys put into their water bottles at Winifred Park at Mittagong but in the words of one of the seasoned Citi riders, the pace picked up to "Insane" proportions from that point onwards.

The fortunes of the riders in the back half of the now rapidly moving Peloton were dealt a further blow as they were forced to wait a couple of minutes for the oncoming traffic to clear on the turn into Aylmerton Road and the Turramurra train was not waiting at that particular station.

There was now only one choice for ride organiser "Le Poido" to make and that was to pull out the big "Highway Patrol" card from the pocket of his stylish Citi top and send one of the nearby Police motorcycle escorts to the front of the Peloton to assist the Ride Commissar in clubbing the bolters into submission.

Order was restored, the Peloton regrouped and the Charity ride probably avoided a debatable future with the NSW Police Force as the now "morphed train" hummed at a spectacular pace in a beautiful descent to Picton driven by the Turramurra team.

Razorback was upon us before too long and after a worthy Turramurra victory in the KOM, order was again restored at the top of that famous hill.

Another short break for some rehydration and sustenance gave our Olympic Gold Medalist Steve Wooldridge the chance to set the Citi strategy for the final 12km's into the centre of Picton - "get big numbers in a Citi train at the front of the Peloton and strongly defend the position".

And so the 2008 Goulburn to Citi Charity ride motored into Camden to cap an exhilarating ride from Goulburn with the Citi Train driving the Peloton as instructed by the world's nicest team pursuit champion.

Incidents on the ride were minimal with only one rider from Macquarie reportedly to have suffered a 'slightly broken arm'. I am not quite sure what that means. Perhaps Dr Cooper could provide a more insightful diagnosis that would encourage the injured to perhaps embellish the injury to .

Who ended up coming first is largely irrelevant. Partly because the real winner were the charities but primarily because it wasn't a Citi Rider. Besides, I couldn't really tell from the Sag Wagon while I was talking to Sam the driver about the depth and breadth of the credit crisis and what shape a bailout, if any, would take. In hindsight, his views were spot on.

Just for the record, honours actually go to the very solid team from Turramarra. The Turramarra Train put on a very strong show all day and certainly set the benchmark that should make for an even better ride in 2009.

The ride itself - achieved the fastest time ever into a testy North West wind with 148km's in 4hr 11min @ 36.5km/hr plus 1155 ascent and 1725 descent (c/- Tommy Reid's trusty computer). Fyi, William Clarke won the 170Km professional classic race in 4.06.26 at an average pace of 41.38kmh (nb twice up Razorback!).

It is great to see that this event gets bigger and bigger every year. To use broking vernacular that I have had little reason to use of late due to obvious reasons, this event is very much a 'win-win'. For the riders, it's an unique opportunity to ride through amazing countryside under police escort. For the charities, it provides a significant monetary boost, particularly in the current climate. For the region it provides an economic boost as seen by the Camden Street festival. My only suggestion however is to perhaps do away with the medieval re-enactments. It's always a bit unnerving to see knights and whences outside of the theatre restaurant circuit.

Thank you again to all those that participated, organised and supported this ride.

Happy & safe riding to all until next year

Regards
Patrick

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