

One Rider's Perspective - 19 October 2003 - Gordon Moore

This novice rider made it Around the Bay in about 9 hours riding time, I say about 9 hours because it was so wet my bicycle computer stopped working for around 40 kilometres. Other "degrees of difficulty" included getting as wet as one could possibly get including completely saturating the chamois in my nix and thinking at one stage I may get hypothermia because on the ferry when I cooled down I was very cold. Some riders were shaking uncontrollably from cold and looked like they were convulsing. I put my rain jacket on then, over my saturated jersey in order to trap body heat. It worked.

That was not the only challenge to confront. Only 12.85 kms into the journey, when selecting granny gear on a hill the chain had a close and personal encounter with the spokes resulting in 2 broken spokes, 8 burred nipples and a wheel that would not rotate. And the time was not yet 5.30am. After telling Graham, my riding companion to keep going I picked up the bike and proceeded to carry it back down the road to the start and contemplated a quiet day in St Kilda taking in some city culture.. A chappie turned up in a black car who said he owned a bike shop and said he could fix the bike. He sent a panel van to pick up Bike & I. It turned out the bike shop was Pegasus' Headquarters on Beach Road. They did not have enough parts but offered to loan me a wheel for the day. However they did have in stock the correct wheel brand new.. I could do with a spare because I have had wheel trouble before. So I bought the wheel, and at 7.30 I was ready to roll.

So the day I had resigned myself to of dining and sightseeing at coffee shops in downtown St Kilda was not going to happen. I now had no reason now not to go back to work. I had lost 2 hours, still had 8 km (20 minutes) to go to the point I had previously reached so I was really 2 hours 20 minutes behind schedule, and everybody else was well and truly way down the road.

I went to work. Every time I caught a cyclist I would enquire if they were doing "the bay" to which I consistently received a negative response. I was down near Rosebud before I caught the first of the slower riders. And the rain was pissing down. There were riders in bus shelters and under trees, and under awnings everywhere using their mobiles to phone friends to come and pick them up.

I pressed on, arriving at Sorrento at 11.15am, refilling my water receptacles, grabbing the supplied lunch and pedalling one-handed, clutching my lunch which was only just hanging in, due to the wet conditions, in a rapidly deteriorating paper bag in a desperate last minute sprint to the ferry which was 200 metres away and the tailgate was going up.

Then a stroke of luck. The ferry lowered the tailgate for four cyclists who had just rolled up on the jetty. I still had a hundred metres to ride one handed clutching my escaping lunch to make the ferry and rode straight up the ramp before it was again raised and we sailed. Then the shivering set in.

But "failure was not an option". I ate my lunch and shivered and urinated and shivered and kept stretching and shivered the whole ferry journey to Queenscliff.

From Queenscliff there was a headwind to Geelong and mostly a tailwind to Melbourne. On this stretch I was following 3 riders in single file and I intended to overtake them but the bloke in front of me started to overtake so something told me to just wait until he had gone. Then the bloke in front of him veered and they touched. The overtaker went up into the air, and he and his bike tumbled along the bitumen. I detoured to the right, narrowly missing him. Had I not been able to avoid him, then I too would have been brought down.

I seem to have an affinity with bridges in Capital Cities after my Gateway Bridge experience in Brisbane in August. But the Westgate Bridge was a much happier experience. I actually exceeded the 60 kilometre speed limit coming down off the bridge before braking to avoid speeding. Obeying the speed limit was prudent because I did not want to have a police siren halt me on a pushbike for the second time in as many months on a Capital City Bridge

I rolled back into St Kilda at 5.30pm, loaded the bikes on the car and proceeded to North Balwyn to Graham and Nola's place where we were staying to celebrate with my favourite red (Brand's Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon if you want to put one in your wine cellar for when I visit) the days events.

What caused the wheel failure? I think the derailleur got bent when my bike fell over after I unloaded it off the car at the start. St Kilda is a very interesting place at 4.45am and I think one of the tipsy but pleasant lasses we conversed with on the footpath may have bumped the bike when it was leaning against the wall and sent it crashing to the pavement on the derailleur side. And it took 13 kms before I needed to engage the gear closest to the spokes and cause the damage that presented yet another challenge on an already challenging day. But I made it, celebrated it, and now can look forward to the Opperman in 18 days time.

Graham rode the course in a creditable 8 hours 15 minutes riding time and actually beat Ray home. Ray, Peter and brother George rode together and had six punctures between them to slow them down. Other BWW riders known to have finished included Andrew and Cheryl. There may be other BWW riders that completed but when you ride a course in the big smoke with 8,500 other riders you do not necessarily see everybody you know.

You should try "Around the Bay" one day. It may be even more satisfying on a sunny day.