

AUDAX ROYAL RAMBLE DAY 3: 200KM The Ferry Long Way Round

Following the 300km brevet two weeks ago that was supposed to be my last Audax ride, I couldn't help myself but do just one last brevet before my move to NZ. I took the risk of another possible DNF, as I'd never done two so close to each other, especially the last being one big monster up the Blue Mountains.

The legs weren't looking great on the taper ride, nor was my rear wheel actually spinning properly. I planned to tortoise my way to Wisemans Ferry and back. My spare wheels had been shipped to NZ already but my best randonneuring buddy Stuart lent me his and saved my whole ride.

As it turns out, we rode the whole thing as the Bike North contingent of Audax. It was Jackson's first brevet and it was Tobias' first 200kms. We can even claim Bhanu for Bike North too! But we left him to do a slower pace early on. The four of us worked as the best team ever (mostly, since I was useless at the front).



The dawn heralded a glorious day. It was perfection. Autumn has never been as good as this year for me. Increased fitness and mileages definitely reaps rewards. Royal Ramble Day 3 saw one brave trooper turn up for his third brevet and we heard a couple had tried but unfortunately didn't make it out of bed.



We climbed the familiar road to Peats Ridge at 58kms, then the turnoff down Mangrove Mountain and River Rd was new territory for me. It was so scenic as the road wound through the valley!

The boys were motoring the pace into the headwind. We averaged 26kph by 113kms at Wisemans Ferry and my legs and every part of my body was complaining. Nothing felt quite right and I only had one and a half good legs.





Despite discomforts, the lunch at the chaotic town over-run by holiday goers, restored some normalcy into my legs. Our ride on River Rd's south bank was paradise! I enjoyed the rear so much that I continued to be the lazy teammate without shame. The road was closed early on from Wisemans Ferry; not that it could prevent us from continuing but it ensured there were no cars behind us for quite a while! The route was gorgeous. The road meandered and the undulations gentle enough to keep the rhythm interesting. Some parts travelled through rainforest patches until we passed Cliftonville, where Stu and I stopped at 230kms on our first 300km ride before climbing that dreaded hill! This time we went on past the hill towards Portland Ferry. The area is sparsely populated and extremely peaceful.

The long hill out of Portland was a memorable moment as we climbed while listening to the bellbirds' chimes like crystal droplets falling in a serene soundscape. The afternoon rays were beginning to fall on our backs as we coasted and climbed through bushland and open fields a little more, towards Sackville Ferry.



I thought the rest and a snack on the ferry would save me from repeated memories of bonking on Sackville Rd. I'd never had a satisfying ride on this cursed road. Yet, it happened again. Jackson was riding like an Energizer bunny and I was saving my legs from the burning fires of fatigue. There was one hope of a refreshment at the end of the road that had completely slipped my mind. The shop keeper lady of the shackhouse stall in the middle of nowhere may be a little strange, but her fruits, cold drinks and a running tap came to our rescue. At least two of us needed help there!



Some may hate the hills on Halcrows Rd, Cattai Ridge Rd and Wyls Rd at the last 25kms of a 200km ride, but what is 25kms to a long distance cyclist? The scary thing at this stage in my experience in randonneuring is the fact that I'm not fazed by the fact that at 100kms, there's still another 100 to go, nor is 25kms of hills to the end a daunting thought. It may mean pain and fatigue but there's always patience, food and buddies to get you through.

I wasn't quite destroyed enough to start cursing Galston Gorge but at one point I did wonder if my legs will stop rotating. At 198kms, the boys waited for me at the top despite knowing that we were cutting it fine near the 10hr mark. What a team. Made it in 9hrs 50mins before sunset.

There couldn't have been a better ride for my last Audax brevet. By my 5th 200km within my first year of randonneuring, we'd finally managed to still function ourselves enough to go out to the pub for a celebration dinner and drinks before going home with some happy memories.

Thankyou to all the organisers for putting on rides. I never cease to be amazed by every person I ride with in Audax. Audax Cycling Club is where dreams are lived.

