

Teva, Big Day at the Office 2005

'The Methven Race'

By Glen Currie

The evening registration sums up the entire atmosphere associated with the Teva, Big day at the office in its second year running. Competitors register at ski time restaurant in Methven which is more well known for its après ski clientele, but don't be confused you soon realise that as a competitor you have entered an event that sums up 'quality old school' or original New Zealand multisport, when you are ushered to a horse float at the side of the restaurant where race organiser Simon Hampton (or captain crampton!) is waiting to dish out competitors packs.

Mid Canterbury has long been a training Mecca for multi-sport, braided rivers, lakes, mountain runs, and long straight quiet tar seal roads make for a perfect training ground. This training ground is now home to one of the most arguably affordable multisport races available in New Zealand.

As my debut multisport race this provided the perfect build up to the longest day coast 2 coast which I was in training for. The laid back atmosphere means minimal nerves for a novice, yet the challenging course quickly outlined which disciplines I had been training well for so far, and even more so clearly outlined those areas that could still do with a bit of work!

Saturday dawned bluebird, a little crisp but thoughts of how warm the run was going to be soon overcame any issues with shivering. Competitors meet at the Methven race course where the briefing is held then a mass cycle start consisting of all competitors sees the race begin.

The first leg is a 40 km cycle leg which sees a large bunch ride fly through the centre of Methven and make its way through to the serene town of Mount Somers. This ride is generally made up of one larger pack and then a number of smaller following packs. For me it was a great introduction to pack riding, with those team riders who were more inclined to competitive riding more frequently barking out constant orders, while those seasoned multi-sporters sit back and do as little work as possible. From Mount Somers township the ride continues up the road towards the Ashburton Lakes. Along this stretch I was thrown a bit of a curve ball or maybe a curve in the road would be a better way of describing things. A large 'bang' in the front pack left a lot of people grimacing, and me saying under my breath 'poor bugger'. That was about when I felt my bike fish tailing and realised that I was that poor bugger. Next new experience punctured tube but if that wasn't enough a blown out side wall, new tube and a leppin wrapper allowed me to continue the ride to the start of the second leg.

The second leg is a 24 km off road run around the base of Mount Somers. Mount Somers is an extinct volcano. The run is definitely a drawcard for this race, based on the popular weekend tramping route. Some of the highlights include the two sub-alpine huts, back-country stream crossings, amazing vistas of the Arrowsmith range, tussock lands, rock pinnacles and eventually the native beech forest. If these views were in my office I'd be a lot more willing to do overtime that's for sure! The run consists of a steady climb for the first third climbing to 1160 metres above sea level and then it is mostly downhill from the highest saddle, followed by a short road run to the Staveley store, where support crews can usually be found waiting patiently due to the supply of ice creams and coffee at the historic shop. The run is notably tough and some arguing that due to the nature of the terrain tougher than Goat's Pass. The existing run record was annihilated, with a fella from Christchurch by the name of Phil Costley coming out for the day to race in the four person teams section and just about executing a sub two hour time on the tough 24 kilometre course. The run also left top honours wide open in both the open men and open women's race following the run. In the women's race Liz Blazey and Ariana Summers were within ten minutes of each other, where the open males was even tighter with Jeremy Pugh just trailing Hamish Robb by less than twenty seconds.

The third leg saw us back on our bikes again riding down Highway 72, aka the 'Scenic Route'. This is a 30 kilometre cycle beneath the Taylor Range which consists of the Mount Hutt skifield. Thoughts of snowboarding soon entered the wondering mind along this ride. But the tiring, cramping legs soon brought me back to the harsh reality that I was soon going to be struggling to run let alone snowboard. However the views again on this ride keep you powering/struggling along until you reach the third transition.

My seat in the kayak had never looked so good by this stage. The Rangitata diversion race is the scene for the third leg of the race, with a 9 kilometre paddle along the canal. The RDR was established in 1947 and carries water utilised for irrigation from the Rangitata River to the Rakaia River. The deep canal makes for perfect paddling conditions. With one assisted portage the paddle along this canal is a perfect way to top off the day. Following the takeout there is a final 3.5 kilometre sprint/crawl to the finish line at the iconic Blue Pub in Methven, where a couple of hundred Farmer Brown boiled eggs and cold beer awaits all competitors.

Crossing the line first was Hamish Robb for Alexander in a time of 5.51.28, followed closely by Jeremy Pugh and in third Jonathan Cleine. Mark Ferguson took out the veteran men and Gary Ferguson the classic men. In the women's open race Christchurch's Liz Blazey managed to overtake Ariana Summers in the final kayak leg after a strong second cycle, Shona McGrath won the Female Veteran section and finished a close third overall in the women's section. For me I managed to make up a few places during the run and was pretty stoked to cross the line in 7th place in the open men's section. Lincoln High School managed to take out the school's team section ahead of local school Mount Hutt College. The fastest team overall on the day being the Going, Going, Gone crew.

The prize giving was held outside the Blue Pub in Methven, for me the prize giving illustrated what multisport is all about in New Zealand lots of smiling tired faces, family, support crews, sunshine, a mountain backdrop and spot prizes. A big thankyou needs to go to all the organisers especially Simon Hampton for all the effort and time that went into making this race run as enjoyable as it was. Next year's event will be held on December 9th, if you are looking for a demanding challenge, a weekend away with a group of mates or a day out of the monotony that is the office, then I suggest the Methven, Teva Big Day at the Office, I know I'll be back!