

## **HERT Bike Camp 2010**

In the early days of 2010, the HERT crew ventured inland for some (not so) high altitude training in the Australian Alps. Over 40 athletes arrived on the first day and quickly settled into the NSW sport and rec centre, which would be our home for the next few days. The centre is perched at the top of a nice climb, overlooking downtown Jindabyne.

HERT Pain scale

- 1 – its not so bad
- 2 – just like the national park
- 3 – this is a bit offensive
- 4 – doing zig zags
- 5 – I think I'll walk my bike up the hill

### ***DAY ONE: Jindabyne – Dalgety return: 60km***

Day one began innocently enough, with the promise of an easy “flat ride” to begin with. How mislead we were, for those who don't know this ride.....the Garmin kids clocked Dalgety hill with a constant gradient of 10% over 4km with a kick reaching 14%.....some flat ride!!! It scored a 5 on the HERT rating scale. I made fun of the altitude but climbing this hill I was seeing stars, feeling short of breath and generally a bit of a wreck!

After being obliterated on the “easy” ride I was a bit afraid of what was to come in the next few days, but that afternoon a group of very tenacious athletes followed coach Chris out on a 8km run through the trails around the Rec center, this was also supposed to be “recovery”, again Coach Chris had shafted the group under the premise that there were no hills, and there were!

Day one had been eventful

### ***Day TWO: Thredbo dead horse gap: 120km***

The second day began with tension in the air, in the breakfast hall you could feel the apprehension, the anticipation with significant undertones of fear!

For weeks leading into the camp Mal the Irishman had been telling anyone who would listen, that dead horse gap was the biggest test of the mind and body since the potato famine of 1840.

The day started innocently with a smooth descent from the rec centre into Jindabyne, but that was as easy as it got for day 2. Turning onto the alpine way, the hardships of the day began, I stopped to tend some mechanical duties on the road side. However our support vehicle, dubbed the A-Team, Jen and ‘hubbie’ Ben were on top of it.

It was a long chase back into the group but it gave me some time to appreciate the surroundings, wild kangaroos bouncing along the road (still cool even if you are an aussie), the eerie fog that had set in along the mountains as we climbed and the cool quietness of the region made for some happy riders. Catching the group just near Ivo's farm we stopped to take on some Christmas cake and water.

So far, dead horse had not lived up to the hype but I had a feeling that it was still early days. Along the way, the group thinned out as we punched through the cloud cover into a brilliant sunny day, at Thredbo, I began to see why dead horse gap was feared among the group, with a few category 3 sections ending with a category 4 to finish with.

I am told the first group who ventured down the other side of the mountain to Tom Grogin (lunatics!!) faced a 14km descent and climb back up to dead horse which was equivocally voted a category 5+

The ride back was fast and furious with Chloe and Brad duelling up the front to see who could get down the fastest with all their skin still on.

If all that was not bad enough, we arrived back at the rec centre expecting some food and sleep, but were faced with the joy of doing either 25 or 18 400's on the track that rated a 3 on

the HERT scale in my books! Suffice to say after the climb to dead horse, the track felt like I was running on the spot. Luckily the group enjoyed a great swim the Jindabyne Lake, late in the afternoon as a bit of recovery.

### **Day THREE: Eucumbene 110km**

Sported as a softer ride in the program, day three was anything but. With the stern advice from the coaching staff, we were told to take it easy and save our legs for the coming TT. After climbing out of Jindabyne heading east towards cooma the day seemed as though it was going to be uneventful, but upon turning onto hilltop road the wind began, and it never stopped!! With such wide open space the wind was ripping the group apart on the lonely alpine roads. However despite the wind, the farm land and scenery made it a great day out. After our personal photographer Ben "be a lama" Webster turned our group around, the day got significantly better with a howling tail wind made it feel like Le Tour on the way back to Jindabyne, the group was flying which was only compounded when we reached the descent back into Jindabyne the real jockeying began with a the whole group rolling up on Gloria Jeans at light speed.

The worst part of the day was climbing the hill back to the rec centre with a belly full of Café late! That was a 5 on the hert scale!

Again the horrors of the track were upon us with 8 -10 1km repeats but we seemed to be getting stronger and working well in our run groups, money in the bank.

Head Coach Mark Newton delivered the first in an instalment of very informative series of seminars. Mark helped illustrate some great skills on descending and also skills and ideas that can be used by the average age group athlete to improve their overall performance. The day finished with a nice swim, but the camp was abuzz with the looming time trial, Richard Berger entertained the group with his informative bike maintenance workshop but with talk of team tactics for the coming time trial, it was like something out of an episode of survivor!

### **Day FOUR: Charlottes Pass TT 80km**

This was the final test for the group after 3 days of hard riding, who would have the metal to be king of the mountain?

The Coaches had been watching all week and had come up teams and scratch timings.

0700 – Team Damo  
0705 – The Party Girls  
0710 – The Flying Greeks  
0715 – Team B-Rad  
0720 – Team BraveHeart  
0725 – Team 500m  
0728 – Team Hotstuff  
0740 – The 5 Amigos.  
0745 – Team Stone wall  
0750 – The Lone Rangers

Having been placed in one of the larger teams "Team 500m" I was confident I'd have a team that would work for me up to the top (yeah right!!). But with two burglars in my team, Chris Truscott and Ben Webster, our team was together for a total of about 500m. Chris also known as Alberto had broken the team before getting to the toll gates at Thredbo!! All his 4 weeks of owning a bike, must have been spent going uphill!

Ben and I were left to pick up the pieces, but we were broken men. We decided to ride easy and wait for Team HotStuff to come past and we could ride in style to the top of the hill! However Ben was like Lance himself, powering in hills, riding strong with me stuck giving valuable motivation, on his wheel!

The fist 40min was rating a 4 on the HERT scale but with the added bonus of the TT I was beginning to see stars!

We caught signs of other teams about a quarter of the way up the road, this is where the wind picked up and things started getting interesting!! Other teams were looking how I felt, time seemed to be slowing down! The wind was playing havoc swirling all around us, Head wind, tail wind, cross wind every few seconds. Once we had reached up to Perisher Ben had pulled Alberto back to a small lead, however the real games were unfolding behind us with the lone rangers and the boys from Stone Wall mixing it up as they flew up the mountain. I bid Ben farewell as he rode off into the wide blue yonder when we entered perisher village, Pedalling downhill in my biggest gear going 27 km/h.....the last few kms would be a tough test.

The cross winds on the way to Charlottes were causing me to rate the down hills a Cat5+ and the uphills just brutal. However by this time the peak was looming in the distance when I was joined by the man who just recently discovered his six pack, Mr January, Tim Stewart form Team Brave Heart, who sang Enrique Iglesias songs with me all the way till we crossed the line together. Worst 1:55 of my life. No contest.

Well done to Chris "the burglar" Truscott who was first up the hill on scratch and Chris Kemp who claimed the fastest time of the day.

The afternoon was special, with no track set, which funnily enough did not get much of an argument from the athletes. We piled our weary bodies in the conference room, for the second of the seminars. Coach Mark Newton delivered one of the greatest talks on nutrition I have ever been part of. Needless to say after the camp, Everone is drinking Soy, smashing their large plates and bowls, and testing the pH of all their food!

The celebration of making through the TT went well into the night with X-rated games of Taboo and some of the most hilarious charades impersonations I have been part of. I think the god father, boogie nights and (fat)back to the future, will be forever burned into peoples memories.

#### ***Day FIVE: The Kozzy run 18km***

The last day was possibly the best, this time we were smart leaving the bikes at home to drive up to charlottes pass. There were hang overs a plenty but these were forgotten when we began jogging up the 9km course. Mostly up hill the run was breath taking, mainly because of the view but also the thin air! The run was an out and back loop to Mt Kozuisoco running on trails over rocks and alpine streams. The view was worth the pain to see such a spectacular part of Australia, you could feel the serenity. What I enjoyed the most was the silence, nothing to hear but the wind, your breathing and your footsteps. Some may say it was even a bit spiritual and emotional.

We Also have to say thanks to David Newton, Marks dad who was great in the support car and as the BBQ master, Also to Ben Webster who was a great photographer even from the bushes, and also to the boys themselves, Mark and Chris, for putting on a fantastic camp for us.