

Brian Woods Memorial Handicap May 12th 2018 Race Report

Race day dawned in Dunedin City cold, wet and a little miserable. Undeterred, almost a full contingent of pre-entries, plus some, descended on Palmerston for the 2018 Brian Woods Memorial. Happily, the weather over the hill was much more promising - cool, but dry and only a mild SW wind. The news about the state of the Coast Rd was not so pleasing. The race manager's commute recon revealed a section of single lane (uncontrolled), a set of operating temporary traffic lights, large chip gravel and voluminous chunks of "mud" – but more likely excrement – in places. No one seemed phased during the briefing. With military precision the race commenced with 4 Limit riders off at 12.00pm...

Riders from the following five groups unanimously spoke of a harsh start to the race on SH1. Ahhh, the red mist descended and even the locals, who knew what was to come, couldn't resist the thrill of the early chase on fresh legs. The first misfortune befell Will Tasker with barely 10km covered. Thinking he was on a really bad day, it was with some relief that Will discovered a slow puncture coming into Waikouiti. With race support on hand, an efficient, if slow change was effected, a spare tube delivered, and Will was back on his way – now last man on the road and without a phone.

Into the Coast Rd all groups were becoming fractured. Second break found themselves pacing with a tractor and boat – they caught 20 blue cod apparently – according to chatty Tom Kaminszky via the fisherman still in the boat hahaha. Andy Toomey and Ella Harris got the jump nearing the Lookout Summit, with the fastest Break riders coming through shortly after. This group would go on to catch and stay ahead of everyone until almost the end...

As the Limit riders made the turn into Evansdale, Becky Kerr was up the road from Celia Crooks in pursuit and then Greg Kerr and Greg Hall riding at a companionable pace 2 minutes back by Waitati. Scratch (down to 4) had caught a conglomerate group of break and second break riders forming a mini peloton to smash from Evansdale to the base of the Mount Cargill Climb. The pure climbers Froomed (or should that be "Bennetted") up the climb, passing everyone until only one rider remained – Becky Kerr. In the end the trio of Corbin Strong, Ioan Fuller, and Kees Duyvestyn came through with a little in hand (1.22) with Kerr in 4th and First female. The spectators and paparazzi at the finish nervously awaited the sprint – exciting stuff with Strong edging out Dunedin locals Fuller and Duyvestyn to take First and Fastest time in 1:17.50. Andy Toomey outsprinted Louie Harris and Josh Burnett to complete the top 5. Ella Harris was Fastest Female in 1:28.58.

Other notable mentions. Alex Gorrie – riding (intentionally) without a front derailleur. Fancy learning to manually change chain ring by hand on the move? Alex is your man -yikes!!! Gorrie was putting the hurt on the group at 8 minutes but succumbed to a puncture and with no spares had a long ride largely on the rim up Cargill. Ronan Shearing was having a blast before a puncture ended his day on the Coast Rd railway lines. And Will Tasker – hard day at the office with a double puncture and dropped chain but he made it to prize giving in time for some chips and bants. Many others gave it their all and suffered the dreaded bonk at some point. Chris Ford was noted as using every one of his gears in a valiant attempt to stay with a fast group on the hill – all the way to the Water Trough – kudos. Ms Sarah Ford spun up the hill in style in the Junior race in a spritely 38 minutes. And I would say that finishing your first handicap in 11th place was pretty awesome for Celia Crooks! Ditto to Morgan Borrie – 16th place at age 15 – nice work. A hard day, but a cracking course. Looking forward to seeing our Southland friends back for next year!

Thanks to the race management team and our volunteers for today – Graham Harris (handicapper), Rachel Harris (photographer), Carl Haddon (STMS), Philip McKague and Brendan Ward (finish line), Julie Ford (Junior race).