Beginner's Perspective

'Beach Life' 100km Ride Report

by Greg Davey

On Sunday, March 8 2009, I was one 14 riders who left Deep Water Point in Mt Pleasant at 8 am for the 'Beach Life' 100km ride. We headed north up the freeway PSP as a group until after Lake Monger. I was relieved to be dropped on a small hill as I was struggling to keep up. The route was fairly easy to follow, with only one wrong turn but was back on track pretty quickly. The bike path is lined by trees on both sides in a lot of places so was pretty shady and there was a nice cool breeze most of the way. I rode solo to Mindarie and arrived just before the 'slow' group after a very pleasant ride.

After a rest stop at Dome for mandatory coffee I set off with the 'slow' group and quickly found they were not 'slow' at all! I was struggling to keep up due to the small but frequent hills. I did enjoy the company though, and found the group I was with inspirational because they are so fit! I pushed myself pretty hard to keep up and ended up very tired and out of energy. As a result, I had a minor 'off' onto someone's front lawn, much to their amusement and my embarrassment. I knew after that I really needed a rest stop, so I let my kind shepherds know that I would be taking a break at Lake Monger. They were really nice about it and made sure I was ok before they took off. I was ok, at that point I had water, Powerade, food, Sustagen, money, a credit card and a mobile phone, so I felt pretty confident in being left behind.

I found a shady spot and took a 10 to 15 minute break to have something to eat and drink my Powerade. After my break I felt like I had new legs and even powered up George St, which I have always struggled up before. I made it back to the finish point in 4 1/2 hours of riding, an average of over 20 km per hour. I was pretty happy with that result as I had only been riding for about 4 weeks. I did learn a valuable lesson though, which is to take a break if you need it.

I really enjoyed my first Audax ride, which was my first 100km ride, and found the guys to be friendly and accommodating, and good company too.

'Dirty Dell' 35km off road Ride Report

by Greg Davey

On Saturday, April 4 2009, I was one 7 riders who left the Pickering Brook general store at 8 am for the 'Dirty Dell' 35km mountain bike ride. It was slightly chilly but we soon warmed up as we got riding. After a short section of road (all downhill), my reintroduction to mountain bike riding was a moderately steep, long uphill section with some soft gravel and obligatory rocks. I was pretty winded by the top and wondered what I had gotten myself into. At that point I started to wonder if I would be able to make the distance.

The track settled down a bit after that with a mix of uphill, downhill and flat sections some hard packed, some soft sand and some deep dry gravel. I actually managed the soft gravel ok and the downhills earlier in the day, but struggled up the hills.

By morning tea at 'the Dell' I was pretty tired and thought about bailing (I knew the short way home) but felt better after a break and some food. I was particularly boosted when some of the other guys started talking about walking some of the steeper hills on the way back.

I started out the return journey pretty fresh and managed well at first. I started to struggle up the hills again though and had to walk short sections of a couple with another rider. I also got caught out by the deep gravel a couple of times. The tireder I got, the slower I had to go downhill too, because I ran out of energy to control the bike.

On the upside the weather was fantastic! It was sunny but cool. There were long sections of awesome track - flat hard packed or slightly downhill. The single track sections were fun, fast and challenging for me. The other guys chatted while they waited for me to catch up, so didn't seem too annoyed. In some sections I nearly kept up with some of the other slower riders too.

Unfortunately one of the riders had to pull out at the 5km mark as he was not feeling well. The good news is that he made a speedy recovery and by the time the ride was over had let us know he was ok.

The ride was a really great workout for me as I did struggle up those hills, but I am so glad I didn't quit. It was great to push on and finish the ride. I had set myself a challenge to complete the ride and guess it would not be much of a challenge if it was easy and would not have been very satisfying to complete. As it was, it was awesome! Sign me up for next year...

'Dog Leg Loop' 100km Ride Report

by Greg Davey

On Sunday, May 3 2009, I was one 6 riders who left Deep Water Point in Mt Pleasant at 8 am for the 'Dog Leg Loop' 100km ride. We cruised down the freeway south PSP as a group, and then headed into the back roads of Baldivis. The route meandered through farmland, with a loop around Dog Hill and then back to the freeway PSP.

I rode the first 50km with a group, then at my own pace for the 50km back to DWP. I enjoy riding in a group and enjoy riding solo, so I got the best of both worlds. For the first time I had to use the route sheet, which I found very easy to follow and it added some interest to the ride.

It pretty easy going for the first 60km as there was a tail wind most of the way. However, heading north on the way back there was a headwind that slowed us down. I was feeling good until Thomas Road where I stopped to eat some more and drink more water. The last 25km back to DWP were more challenging into the headwind, but I got in not long after the last group.

The weather was fantastic for riding. It was cool but sunny and there was no wind until half way. I certainly felt a lot stronger for this ride than for my first 100km and cut 30 minutes off my previous ride (Beach Life), with an average speed of 25.3km/h. I was very happy with my performance and I really enjoyed the ride.

'UAF Perth' 100km Ride Report

by Greg Davey

On Saturday, May 9 2009, I was one 15 riders who left Deep Water Point in Mt Pleasant at 8:15 am for the 'UAF Perth' 100km ride. The route took us around the rivers as a group utilising mainly bike paths.

Congratulations to the ride organiser for selecting a truly spectacular route. It was scenic for almost the entire ride with spectacular views of the Canning and Swan rivers from Rossmoyne, Mt Pleasant, Belmont, Maylands and Dalkeith to name a few. I was expecting a good ride but I was really blown away by the views of the rivers.

I was able to spend some time talking to some members of the Bicycles Network Australia Forums on the ride. I found that chatting to fellow riders and checking out the views made the kilometres just slip by. I was really impressed with the bike paths which were consistently high quality and a pleasure to ride on with only a couple of sections a bit rough.

At first the pace seemed a bit slow for me but when we stopped in East Perth for a compulsory coffee break we were ahead of time. I was riding well until we hit the hills leading up to and heading out of Freo. For the run back to Canning Bridge along the foreshore I had run out of legs but a fellow rider kindly offered me his wheel and sucked me along for a number of kms, sheltering me from the headwind. It really helped and I sat just behind the group for the rest of the way. I really had to work hard to keep up but it was really motivating to have the group just in front of me.

Personally, I would have liked to pick up the pace a bit when the going was easy and slow it down a bit in the harder sections, but that is probably because I was still not very fit. To give you some idea there was a 69 year old rider who finished closer to the front of the group then me and I am 30 years younger! One of the awesome things about Audax, is meeting amazing people.

This was first time in Western Australia that a 100km ride has been ridden as a group along Union des Audax Francais guidelines and I think it was a great success. I would definitely recommend it and encourage Audax to run UAF rides again next year (three have been planned for this year).

'UAF Yanchep-Chittering' 200km Ride Report

by Greg Davey

On Saturday, May 16 2009, I was one of 11 intrepid cyclists who left the East Perth train station at 7 am for the 'UAF Yanchep-Chittering' 200km ride. The route took us to the coast, through Yanchep, across to Bullsbrook, through the Chittering Valley, Ellenbrook, Whiteman Park and back to East Perth.

The weather was amazing as we headed up the coast and were treated with truly spectacular views. The group rode at a steady pace sometimes on the shared path, where there were a lot of pedestrians and sometimes on the road, which was narrow and cars were having problems overtaking us. By the time we got to Burns Beach to vote in the daylight saving referendum* we had not really made good time. The run to Yanchep was a lot better. We stopped for coffee, cake or muffins with some electing the eggs on toast option. I found the coffee and chocolate muffin delicious and the service excellent. While we refuelled we were treated to more great ocean views, which I really appreciated.

The next leg took us down Old Yanchep Road to Neaves Road and across to the Maze. I was pretty eager to stop by then as I had been sitting in the saddle for far too long and needed a break. It was at that point I downed my first ever GU Gel, which I must say was quite disgusting and had me wishing for toast. After a short break we headed off through Bullsbrook and up a gradual incline to stop for lunch on Chittering Road.

I ordered a toasted tomato and cheese sandwich which was served with a salad garnish, warm fruit scone with jam and cream and homemade lemonade for drink. All of the food was delicious and I was sure glad to eat real food after all of the trail bars, iso drinks and gel I had consumed up until then. The lunch stop was at roughly the 140km mark, so we left with only about 60km to go.

There was another hill out of the valley where we had lunch, but again I found it manageable as it was not too steep. We were rewarded with a steep long downhill into Bullsbrook to make up for it though. That was fun!

The rest of the ride from Bullsbrook through Ellenbrook, Whiteman Park and back to East Perth was uneventful with the exception of my rear wheel, which dislodged and started rubbing on my frame. We stopped as a group to fix it and were soon on our way. The last 60km seemed to go pretty quickly, although by the end I was ready for a break. It was great that everyone was able to finish.

This was the second ride in Western Australia ridden as a group along Union des Audax Francais guidelines. As it was my first 200km ride, I found it very helpful to be riding with a group. My energy levels were lagging a bit some time before the Neaves Road turn off, but I got chatting to another rider which helped me keep pace and passed the time much more quickly. Had I been on solo ride, at that point my speed would have dropped off and I would have struggled to make it to the next stop.

Although I was a bit saddle sore, I really enjoyed the day and am looking forward to more Audax rides.

* apparently a referendum which does not affect the constitution is a plebiscite.