

11 out of 11 - 1/1/17 - David Foster

This is my first Audax ride. It's titled "11 out of 11" and aims to cross all 11 bicycle enabled bridges in the Brisbane area.

Whilst I have been over one or more of the Brisbane River bridges during my usually solo rides within the confines of the city regions, this will be the first attempt at doing them all in one go.

After intro's all round and a briefing by Simon, we're off. Fifteen of us set out from the start point and headed towards our first bridge.

As I'm used to riding alone, I'm not perturbed to see the majority of the bunch start to extend their lead and cruise off into the distance. I'm following someone in a bright fluoro vest who is maintaining a pace that I'm comfortable with. David (as it turns out to be) climbs at a reasonable rate and leaves me behind each time we come to a slope but my extra weight gives me a gravitational advantage and I catch him up on the downhill. Over the course of the ride I will spend a lot of time on the brakes trying not to overtake someone on the downhills.

Being New Years Day traffic is light and Southbank is surprising clean and people free. The only activity is workers dismantling fences set up from the NYE celebrations the night before. I see a couple of other riders from our troupe seemingly heading off on the wrong tangent but I concentrate on navigating my way around the course and continue on. In any case I don't think they would have heard my yell. I seem to have left David behind somewhere in Southbank, as well.

The ride to the first checkpoint is straightforward and I arrive just as the faster riders are leaving the pavilion. The Gatorade, watermelon and bananas are very welcome, it seems that my precaution of carrying some gels and energy bars is misplaced and I begin to begrudge the extra weight that I'm lugging around even if it is only a 100 grams or so. Even the phone is starting to feel heavy; I'll have to invest in one of those top tube packs.

It's also starting to really heat up and hydration is going to be a factor.

The second section of the ride, which loops back to the same checkpoint after a forty kilometre section through the Centenary suburbs is very familiar to me and I catch up to 4 others who left a few minutes ahead of me. I do notice that riding in a bunch does give me a few "free" kph that helps conserve energy and I'll confess that I have no desire to lead from the front. I needn't worry as the peloton is very flexible with people dropping back to chat, moving to the front from two abreast if a car comes past etc.

The suburban route we are taking is all on quiet roads which are pretty clean of broken glass and other rubbish which means I can take time to look at the scenery. Part of the route traverses downhill on an 18% incline and Vaughan informs us that prior to the construction of the Centenary Bikeway, Spinkbrae St was part of his normal commute both ways and still possibly holds the record as the steepest designated bikeway route in the world.

My comparatively slow pace means that I catch up to the rest of the group as they rest in the shade periodically only to have them take off as I arrive, having regrouped. I really do need to work on improving my average speed. The view from the Dewar Terrace lookout is very nice, sweeping views of the city and the mountains to the West. The water fountain at the lookout dribbles less fluid than I do, so I need to find somewhere to top up.

Back at the checkpoint it is obvious that over half of the group have come and gone, they must have kept up a good pace throughout. Simon and his helper Dino? excel themselves. Freshly made bread rolls, cold drinks, fruit and frozen ice treats. It really is Cordon Bleu cycling for someone whose usual resupply is a drink of water and a look around.

Sixty-five kilometres down, thirty-five to go and it is getting really, really warm now. Once again I and my current buddy (whose name escapes me) are taking it easy and for me, staying hydrated is a priority. We pass David taking a break at the coffee van in New Farm Park.

The climb up Cooksley St and Crosby Road is too much for me and I dismount to walk up. Another 6 or so riders who must have taken a wrong turn come up and go past without pause, the fifteen year old shows the old blokes how it's done and just powers past everyone.

I'm now tail end Charlie again. From the top of the hill I see David in the distance but despite my best efforts (into a headwind now as well) I never close the gap. According to the Garmin my little micro climate is reaching 38 degrees but apart from the Gateway Bridge climb, it's pretty flat from here on. Time is slipping away and I am beginning to get concerned that I will time out or whatever it is that Audax riders call it! (Ed?)

Onto the Gateway, no one else in sight and the temp now showing over 40 degrees what with all of the heat coming off the concrete. My Garmin profile showed 49 degrees in one section, it certainly felt like it.

Brutal for me. Just spin away at as best a cadence as I can, each pedal stroke is bringing me closer to my goal.

Over the top, the run down the other side brings cooling relief and I try to increase the pace as best I can as time is slipping away. Can't wait for the last set of traffic lights to change for me, off the bike, run across the road just clear of the intersection and remount.

A couple of cars toot encouragingly as they pass having already finished and packed up for home. I arrive at the finish point a minute under the cut-off time and appreciate the glasses of ice-filled ciders and the shade at the Belmont Pub. A perfect way to finish.

Many thanks to Simon and Dino for the support on the ride and thanks to the other riders for the encouragement and support along the way.