

# Muchea Do About Nothing

Perry Raison

Audax rules allow 40 hours to do a 600 km brevet, so I would never have expected my first 600 to take just 24 hours. Team 'Muchea Do About Nothing' — Nick Dale, Colin Law, Gangeshan Divakaran, and Perry Raison—were well matched and mostly well organised as a team, especially given that we hadn't discussed teamwork and strategy much before the ride.

The first 100 km was knocked off in 2 hours 58 minutes into a light south-southeasterly head wind. The first control at Myalup Roadhouse north of Australind was reached in 3 hours 34 minute (120 km) where a 10–15 minute break ensued.

Blasting back up the Old Coast Rd, Nick admitted that his pre-ride sleep deprivation was starting to affect his ability to sustain our speed which was now in the high 30s assisted by a light tail wind. Hence we cruised a bit on the back roads to Pinjarra where, according to Nick we had an overly long break of 25 minutes. I was happy though, as it gave me time to do the essentials, especially the set of three stretches that I had set myself. These ultimately enabled me to survive the distance.

The hoons had been out in force breaking glass along our route south of Perth so it was no surprise that Nick had a flat a short way along our northward bound route up the Freeway Principal Shared Path. This Colin expertly fixed in very quick time which saw us at our resupply point (also our start point) at 250 km in 8 hours 15 minutes.

After a one hour break we headed off north along the PSP with the temperature starting to wane from a pleasant high of about 30 degrees. Joining the heavy traffic on Roe Highway heading north was not one of the highlights of the day, the riding environment was unpleasant and frustratingly we were stopped by at least four sets of traffic lights with some long waits. The traffic also waned as we headed out of the metro area up Great Northern Highway towards Bullsbrook. I noted with satisfaction that we reached the 300 km mark just before Bullsbrook, in 10 hours 30 minutes which gave us I thought, a reasonable chance of completing our nominated course of 650 km within one day.

The Muchea Roadhouse was a strategic control point which we had to reach before the closing time of 8 pm as the next open facility was the Cataby Roadhouse 105 km up the Brand Highway, the most northerly point of our route. It became apparent that Nick wasn't travelling well after Muchea and an emergency stop ensued 31 km short of Cataby at Regan's

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Ford at 10 pm. Whilst waiting; I dutifully checked the payphone outside the closed roadhouse and found the card reader faulty, leading to a one second conversation with my wife. On my return to work at Telstra on Tuesday I logged a fault for this.

A bit of a lead at the front took my mind off hot food for the last leg to Cataby. Here the shift manager kindly turned on the cookers (which he had turned off and was in the process of cleaning) to prepare much needed hot grub for the four haggard riders that had been reported to him by truck drivers passing through. After a one hour stop, we were bade farewell with each rider clasping a large fresh apple, a gift from our hospitable host.

Travelling down the highway at 1.30 am, a friendly toot from a truckie told us that he had been chatting to the Cataby shift manager. Another three unscheduled stops ensued en route to Muchea, one of which was to find Colin's sunglasses which had been placed on the ground at a convenience stop on the way up. During another stop near Gingin at 3.30 am we

observed two utes loaded with hoons of both gender, drag race along the highway in a cloud of rubber.

As forecast, the gusty easterly and east-southeasterly cross head winds picked up on the ride south from Cataby and by Bullsbrook near the Darling Scarp, the winds had predictably reached maximum disruptive force, so we regrouped for a quick water stop at the Upper Swan 24-hour roadhouse. On leaving, we had exactly one hour to ride 33 km to achieve a total of 600 km. This proved to be a difficult task with the fresh cross winds constantly buffeting us, not to mention some frustrating traffic light stops which were thankfully brief.

From my perspective the ride was fairly surreal, as I couldn't quite comprehend what we, a team of relatively 'old farts' were achieving, at each stage of the ride. Not that young perhaps, nonetheless quite fit and with a fair degree of staying power. Oppy rules allow you to ride between 80% and 115% of your proposed route for brevet ratification. So we had to make it to 520 km just to have the distance ratified as a completed brevet. In the end we were very satisfied with our 600 km and may be up for a bigger distance next year if we can cajole certain riders to torture their bodies again. I am very grateful to Nick, Colin and Diva who made this possible and very humble to be part of such a great team. I've put in ten bucks for my Oppy medal, I think I've earned it!

*Perry Raison first encountered Audax almost four years ago when a cafe rider mentioned the 1200 km Perth–Albany–Perth to him. It took 18 months for Perry to make contact with Audax WA and ride his first brevet of 100 km in August 2008. On flat cafe rides he always felt speed challenged and struggled to stay with the peloton, when the hills arrived it was with much glee that he realised the roles were reversed, he had found his forte. As a result, the Perth Hills and the AAC have been his favourite haunts for the past few years. He just has to work on his down hill skills, particularly on hairpin bends of which there are none in the Perth hills.*