



## *The Aussies vs. the Kiwis cycle challenge*

*By Jenny Macpherson, Around the Bay Ride Coordinator*

In an effort to learn more about mass participation bike rides, Around the Bay Development Director, Michael Rose and myself, recently visited The Wattyl Lake Taupo Cycle Challenge in New Zealand (middle of North Island). For the last 32 years, Taupo has hosted the 160km bike ride around Lake Taupo, now attracting over 10,000 local and international riders.

A record 248 Aussies headed over this year to participate, including Keith Lawrence, Richard Harding and Rod Killick. All of who have completed the Around the Bay ride previously and were relieved to have “ticked this ride off the bucket list!” comments Keith (see photo below proudly wearing our event jersey).

On Friday 28 November the cycling festival began with the opening of the Taupo Sports and Lifestyle Expo. Riders and visitors wandered through 20 various exhibits ranging from sports fuel, clothing, equipment, and cycling events. This was also the day 18 Maxi Enduro riders started their four lap circuit of the Lake, totalling 640km(!)

Riders woke up to perfect riding conditions the next day. It was sunny, 25 degrees and very little wind. However, 46 Enduro riders saw the sun rise out on the road, having set out to complete two laps of the lake starting at 1.30am (!) Including Andrew Rubins and Hans Dusink from Melbourne, also previous participants of Around the Bay, who are now two thirds of the way through completing the Tri Nations series<sup>1</sup>.

Michael was given official starting duties at 7am for the 192 riders completing the combo ride of mountain biking 20km off-road and 156km on the road, either as a solo rider or in teams of 2 - 5. New for this year for the pure off-road adventure riders, was the 75km mountain bike challenge in which 226 riders completed.

To help get a rider’s perspective of the event, I entered the 160km solo ride along with 4738 others. For those not up to completing the picturesque and undulating course solo, 1502 teams of 2, 3 or 4 riders completed the distance as a relay. Can you imagine the logistics involved with transporting 4186 riders and bikes to the relay change over locations at 40km intervals around the lake? Quite an impressive feat, with purpose built bike racks holding hundred’s of bikes being loaded by cranes onto trucks courtesy of Linfox.

Riders completed the distance between 4 and 10hrs<sup>2</sup> and were entertained along the way by cheering spectators, lush green hills, grazing livestock, more hills, quiet country roads, spectacular valley views and of Lake Taupo, snow capped mountains (Mt Ruapehu), humorous signage, more hills, hundreds of helpful, smiling volunteers, riders in costumes, and did I mention only 40km of the route is flat..? No really, it’s not too bad, except for Hatepe Hill, which is 20km from the finish. This 2km hill caused a lot of suffering for fatigued cyclists!

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<sup>1</sup> Comprising of three events; Aviva Investors Around the Bay in a Day, Wattyl Lake Taupo Cycle Challenge and the Cape Argus Pick n Pay Cycle Challenge (South Africa).

<sup>2</sup> Timing chips are positioned on the bike frame providing individual results for each category, but it’s not a race.

Coming into the finish was a huge buzz; the township of Taupo had been completely taken over by cyclists. Riders sprawled out in exhaustion, whilst trying to recover and celebrate their efforts in the Tongariro Domain. After a quick dip in the Lake and a chance to get cleaned up, riders headed back for the main presentation in the hope of winning one of the many major spot prizes. One lucky 15yr old headed home with a brand new Skoda Car worth \$48,340, whilst Michael and I left Taupo with plenty of ideas to help Around the Bay in a Day become an even better event.

If this event appeals to you, make sure you register early – accommodation gets booked up in places a year in advance!

*New Zealand, Saturday 29 November 2008 [www.cyclechallenge.com](http://www.cyclechallenge.com)*



Around the Bay Expo stand



Entry to Registration and the Expo



The Ride started in beautiful conditions



Fancy a ski afterwards at Mt Ruapehu?



Nice view for a rest stop.



Aussie Keith Lawrence in the Around the Bay jersey



The start/finish site is swarmed by riders afterwards



Enjoying a well earned beverage and the view's not bad either.