

Braden Currie: Coast to Coast Longest Day, Feb 2012.

At 3:45am I heard my support crews alarm go off and simultaneously realised that any chance I had at sleep was now over but that the time I had been waiting for had finally arrived. After breakfast and a hot shower I was off to the start line. It was cold, dark and eerily quiet as I walked the 3km walk to Kumara beach. After a quick jog and stop in the portaloos, I was good to go. The heart rate began to build as I lined up on the start line with 150 of NZ's top athletes.

The hooter went off and we were finally into it. This was the moment I have been training for for the last 12 months and it was time to get in the box. I quickly made my way to the front as I heard the thundering of feet behind me. I held a consistent pace knowing this would already be making the big guys hurt. As we neared closer to the bike transition, my body was feeling good and ready to go. So I stretched it out to make sure I was on my bike and comfortable and not having to chase down the lead bunch. Two minutes later a lead bunch of 6 cyclists has formed and no one was looking back. The pace was strong and consistent with Dougal doing his time in lead position. As we travelled down the hill and through some of the forests of the Westcoast, the bunch began to disintegrate until there was 4 and the next bunch was 4 minutes back.

It was an explosive transition and I would like to apologise to anyone who may of got hurt amongst the chaos as I know my support crew was paying minimal respect as they dragged me through the crowds, slipped on my shoes and sent me running. This was my time to set the pace. I spent the first 3kms to the start of the deception valley preparing myself mentally for what lay ahead. It was perfect conditions on the run as the two-dayers had formed a great path the day before.

As I got further up the river, I could no longer see anyone following but I knew in my own mind that they would not be far behind. Feeling good I knew I had to stay focused through the boulders and work on choosing the best lines possible. Before I knew it I was over the pass and heading down the other side with no one in site. From this point on I knew I just had to keep pushing and try to stretch out my lead as much as humanly possible, as I knew once we were off the run that Ussher would be chasing hard. It was good to be out of the river bed and have that part of the day done and to still to feel physically and mentally strong.

It was lunchtime on the bike: scoffed down some sushi, bacon and egg pie and as much fluid as I could in order to prepare myself for the next seven hours. On the small run down to the Whites Bridge, I finally got the word on how far back my fellow competitors were. I knew what I had to do from here. The focus was on choosing good lines and paddling strong. I slowly watched the kms tick by as I attempted to hold on to my rapidly depreciating lead.

Ussher soon passed me around 2hrs into the paddle. He appeared strong and comfortable and I knew my chances of staying with him were pretty slim.

After he moved into the distance I started to conserve my energy to keep myself in 2nd place. As the paddle drew on and on, I could see that it was going to be an incredibly long day. I took a lot to mentally keep it all together as the paddle started to move towards the 5hr mark and I moved back into 3rd place with a failed drink system and a leaky boat. I was well in the box at this point. Finally I rounded the corner to the Waimakariri Bridge to see a mass of people standing on the rocks and cheering me in. My support crew dragged me out of the boat and ran with me up the bank to my bike. An old friend Sez fired up her stock whip to get me going for the short hill climb up the flats. At this stage I knew I was 1 minute down of Coubrough and about 6 minutes down on Ussher.

My support crew was determined that I could make it up, but my legs tended to disagree with them. I managed to pass Coubrough about 20kms into the ride. This is where I mistakenly started to relax as I thought 4th place Dougal Allan was well behind and in a dark, dark place. But as it turned out he had caught up an incredible amount on the paddle and had started to see the light as he mounted his bike. At around the 50km mark he shot passed me like a bullet and there wasn't much I could do. So I just told my legs that they had to keep going round and round until I got to that finish line.

The relief was intense as I finally put my foot over the line and realised that it was over and I had come in 3rd. It was incredible to see all my support crew plus almost every member of my family waiting for me. It was by far the highlight of my multisport career so far and made me realise how far my training has come and how far there is still to go. Thanks so much to Rich from Complete Performance who made it all possible and a big shout out to all those who completed the coast this year. Hope to see you all back next year.