

THE VULCANISER 2011 – Lyndal Donnelly

Well, well, well. What can I tell you about this race? It's still a real mixed bag. I have moments when I want to cry & maybe bash something, then times when I pat myself on the back & am so proud of how far I've come. There are a couple of 'laugh out loud' bits & some "man, that bit's still so sore".



This was THE event. I didn't care what place I got I just wanted to ride strongly & not put a foot down in any technical section. Even if I had to hold my breath & employ every technique I knew to get myself over the drops. No matter what, this was IT. You know Richard, that so many of my rides were with this in mind for the past year. All the lung-bursting, all the re-riding rocky bits, all the notes & little motivational quotes. After 2 years of crashes it was time to walk the walk, get the monkey off my back. Blah blah.

We left early so I could get a lot of time to pre-ride the course. The course is Mt Vulcan at Omihi (over looking Motunau), purpose built on private land & only ridden once a year. Just as we arrived a really heavy shower rolled through & we were informed it had rained a lot through the night. As people started arriving we all huddled in the organiser's tent & cursed the weather. Sadly the weekend before had been hot & sunny with the track in mint condition after a lot of hard work. About an hour before start time the rain ended & we all went to check out the track. The course was shortened & it was a decision that even the eventual winner applauded. So with laps just under 4.5km x 3 it was time to see what we were in for.

The exposed areas were pretty cold & windy but the guts of the ride in the forest were quite warm. Within 500m my tyres had filled with mud etc & had zero traction – no, I mean ZERO traction. There was laughter, squeals & R18 language filling the forest as most of us slid & slipped our way around. There was no hiding the fact you had come off. The trouble is that on a good day the track is very technical – add no grip & it's a new player at the table. I got back to the car & sulked. I felt it really was beyond me. After a few minutes I remembered a quote my son had given me "imagine what you would do if you knew you couldn't fail". Damn kids ... always so ... happy.



That fortunately was a turning point & it was time to go to work. The 1st lap was so sketchy but was so happy to ride a section where most of the spectators had gathered to watch the carnage (the Log Drop). Even the chicken line was seat of your pants. Apparently the good guys flew down there & whipped their bikes around like it was a dry track & maybe even sealed. Lots of sliding, even a tree

hug & the decision was made to run hard as soon as I had to dismount. Heading into the 2nd lap I felt more confident & the 3rd lap was even better. I started riding more of it & employing skills Helena had taught me but hadn't had to use over our lovely summer. There were sections that I just don't have the skills to ride in the wet ... yet ... & the consequences for getting it wrong would've been painful.

I knew I had worked hard once I saw the heart rate but because of the breaks in riding ... while I was running ... I wasn't completely smashed by the end. Tired but not destroyed.

The things that are bothering me – not being able to (skills or confidence) ride some of the sections.

Things that I should be proud of – riding! After entering with 4 in my category I was the only rider.

*Riding better as the race progressed. *Attempting sections that really scared me. *Finishing.

Just after I finished it started pouring down – so lucky it didn't happen 30 minutes sooner.