

# Mark Nevin – Le Race

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**Race entry fees:**

**A couple of hundy**

**Flash set of race wheels:**

**More than I should've spent**

**Having a great coach & sticking with the program:**

**Priceless**

## **Re: Le Race, March 2010**

Yeah I know sounds a little sucky...but believe me, its true. Hopefully this 'race report' shares with you the benefits of having a very specific program, being committed to it and measuring improvements along the way. Before you read too much further, full disclosure states this is not a quick read...especially if you're supposed to be working.

I sat down with Rich a week or so before Christmas last year, after knocking over a reasonable time (for me) in the Harbour Bays race earlier in the month. I told him I wanted to get better on the hills. We talked about my goals, what races I was targeting, times I would like to achieve, etc.

In his normal efficiency Rich had a program back to me in few days. Just reading it I could feel my legs burn. I've had several of Richard's programs over the last couple of years for different campaigns but this one looked mean...even angry!

As per my brief, "get better in the hills", there wasn't much in Complete Performance parlance of FL, it was nearly all HL, LHL, BGH...hills, long hills & more bloody hills in a big gear...I asked for it, got it...and loved it. This first block of training focused on building strength, which was swiftly followed by another high intensity block focusing on building speed endurance...many of you know that Richard can be a sadistic bugger when he wants to be.

Amongst others, the most important event for me was Le Race. I'd ridden it in the two previous years finishing very close to each other 3:31 & 3:32 and finishing in the 60th & 64th percentiles respectively for both males & age group. When I sat down & mapped out my plan with Rich I said that I'd like to achieve a 3:20.

Having this goal well imbedded I got stuck into my work as per the plan. I won't bore you with the details but the guts of my time was spent doing lots of big gear intervals & having jelly legs walking upstairs to bed each night. I should point out that I been riding consistently since September so had built a decent base.

The week leading up to Le Race I was feeling a bit average, I felt my legs had lost their punch and was concerned I might have over done it...the Sunday before, Craig Richardson had smashed me going up the Bastard, which he REALLY enjoyed. I usually don't get too nervous before a race but this time I guess I'd inadvertently put a bit of pressure on myself through the training I was doing & how I felt I was improving; by Friday night I actually had butterflies.

I had my race reasonably well planned out, knowing target times I'd need to hitting for various sections, which by this stage I was feeling I might be able to improve on my early goal of 3:20 and maybe be able to sneak in a lazy 3:10. I had splits for both 3:10 & 3:20 taped to my handlebars. My first split was at the top of the first climb at the cattle stop by Worsley's Hill...I was 2 mins behind my 3:20 split already! Although I didn't have a great climb up Dyers I was confident of getting back on track. By the time I got to the top of the Bastard I was back under my 3:20 split. I really enjoyed the Summit Road and felt I was getting stronger on each of the 4 short climbs over this section and was forcing the pace of the bunch of about 20; by the top of the Bastard there was only about 6 left. Although I'd descended reasonably well by my standards by the time I got to Millers Road there was enough of a gap between myself the others that I missed this small bunch. I chased for a little bit but decided to sit up & wait,

which wasn't long. This ended up being a great bunch that worked really well together and we ended up catching the bunch I missed out on earlier at Birdling's Flat.

Hitting the bottom of the Hilltop climb I was only a minute outside my 3:10 so was feeling pretty amped for the climb. There was a bit of sorting out with the whippets taking off. But not for the first time on in the day I felt I was getting stronger as the climb went on and really felt the benefit of the speed work I'd been doing in the few weeks prior to the race. I ended up leaving the small group behind about 2/3rds up, which in other years I would have fallen off the back of. Near the top, part two of my master plan was engaged. I had made a big effort to make sure I was drinking & eating every 15-20 mins with the goal of having 2 bottles nailed by the top of the Hilltop...my man was there with two freshies. Last year I bonked seriously with 15kms out & by the time I finished I'd only 1 & 3/4 bottles of carbs & electrolytes...I was toast & so I didn't want a repeat.

For those of you who have raced Le Race you'll know the race really only starts at the Hilltop. At the top I was still only 1 minute outside my 3:10 split so was feeling on top of my game but was mindful how the race can change over the last 30 kms. I'm not sure of the name of it, but once again, if you've ridden Le Race you'll know the very steep climb before Okains Bay...it's a bitch. It's only short, approx 400 metres but its bloody steep, 15-20% gradient, especially at that stage of the race. I mentioned at the top I had some new flash wheels. When I bought them, I put on a 12-27 cassette rather than my usual 12-25 knowing it would come in handy at some stage. While it doesn't seem much having 2 extra teeth, but having them meant I wasn't grinding tired legs up there, I was able to keep a reasonable cadence and managed to catch two riders by the top.

Okains Bay is where I bonked last year so I was happy to get there still feeling good & still only 2 mins outside my 3:10...I'd slipped a bit but still going well. The last section around the Summit Rd to Long Bay Road turn out that I overcooked my expectations and lost another 3 minutes. At the top of the decent I was exactly 3:10, so reset my goal to nailing the hill to finish in 3:15. Fanging it down and rattling my nerves only a couple of times getting onto the finishing straight with another dude, who must have gone ballistic down LBR; I had plenty of gas and managed to 'win' the sprint...awesome...3:16:05.

I was stoked having felt I'd ridden a good race & feeling good at the finish...but despite dealing to my 3:20, I was slightly disappointed I hadn't been able to get closer to 3:10.

On reflection I'm satisfied and importantly for me as much as the time, was that I'd jumped up finishing in the 72nd & 83rd percentiles for all males and my age group...I must say some of those old buggers are bloody machines knocking it over in low 2:50's.

Rich, thanks mate, taking more than 15 minutes out my previous PB on that course I felt was something worth writing about & I couldn't have done it without you...brilliant. So I think I'll keep chipping away & who knows but I might start getting excited about a 2:59:59.

Mark Nevin