

Miles Watson – Coast to Coast 2010

The focus of my last 10 months has been and gone. I've completed my first individual 2 day Coast to Coast.... Well, sort of...

We were the lucky ones. On Friday we had a mild morning and a gentle tailwind through to Aickmans, useful because I quickly learned that most people in the bunches were conserving themselves for the mountain run. The mountain run was going to be easy as there were going to be plenty of people to follow through the tricky bits. A cunning plan except for the cramp and with people taking different routes, which was the one I wanted again? And what else did I have to remember, that's right, smile for the camera's. But that's not enough, the photographers want you to be running as well, and up Dudley's Knob to boot. Low point of day one was a twisted knee and brief panic until I realised it still worked that I should take a hard pill and keep moving. Highlight was arriving at Klondyke corner to a cold wet sponge squeezed over my head and a magic massage later in the day. Good on ya, Mate!!!

Plan B was enacted on Friday night so we all new what we were in for. A 150km ish ride into Christchurch and a paddle on the Avon. We were told day two was going to be wet and it was, but 30 minutes into the ride and it was dry and warming up. What a rush going down Porters Pass for the first time on a road bike. However the adrenalin had worn off by Springfield and the solitude and suffering of the Old West Coast Road beckoned. Small groups along the way helped lift the spirits but Christchurch couldn't arrive soon enough.

Thankfully my support crew were organised and the transition into the kayak at Hagley park went well. I had been told Coast to Coast was tough but nothing had prepared me for the mental anguish of paddling the Avon river on a warm summer Saturday afternoon. The terror of negotiating the "weir gardens" (thankfully with the channel marked as per the race briefing) all the time smiling in case the camera wielding tourists in their punts should question whether I was enjoying myself. It dawned on me that not all men are created equal as Gordon Walker slipped past me 500 metres from the "get out" on his way to winning the longest day competition.

The final 10km bike ride went by in a flash and included many hazards not normally associated with a wilderness event of this type. These included frustrated drivers diving left into a carpark then thinking "what cycle lane", recreational cyclists following cracks in the roadway then turning to look when the "on your right" call is made, even event marshall's wanting you to stop so they can take your bike off you at the finish (sorry mate, a minor miscalculation). What made me smile? I completed the 2010 Coast to Coast and met a lot of new friends doing it. Because the course was changed I have just the reason I need to go back and do it again. My thanks to everyone who has helped me prepare for this race.

Miles Watson