

Santa Claus – Harbour Bays, Christchurch

The challenge was to ride my Grandad's bike round the bays as part of the Festival of cycling. The tricky part being that the bike is 54 years old, single speed and hasn't had a lot of love in the last ten years.

Some history of the bike;

The bike was originally bought by my Uncle to speed up his delivering of telegrams. However like most delivery boys, money was hard to come by. Therefore to get around this minor technicality my Uncle Hughie figured out that if he saved enough and traded in my Grandmother's bike that he currently delivered his telegrams on he just might be able to make it work. Knowing that if he asked for permission to trade the (old fashioned) bike in he would get a flat no followed by a severe telling off, he decided to proceed anyway on a Monday after school. Wait until your father gets home was the response when my Grandma found out what he had done!! Hughie went to bed with the knowledge that he would not see his Dad until the weekend. My Grandfather worked for trucking company and was away all day and didn't get home until late, therefore by the time the weekend rolled around the "whipping" had turned into "don't do that again please son".



In the later years Grandad rode this bike to work and after retirement to the club everyday. I came across "Grandad's bike" a couple of years ago when helping clean out his shed, I oiled the chain pumped up the tires and away I went.

The Race

If you ever want to be encouraged when racing your bike wear a Santa suit, the amount of cheers that I received for wearing the Santa Claus outfit was fantastic, then people noticed the bike. Starting from the back of the field I took it pretty casually for the first couple of hundred metres until I got bored and my competitive streak kicked in. The ride on the flat out to the base of the hills wasn't too bad as luckily there was a slight headwind which slowed the bunches down and I was able to tuck in and stay out of the wind. My goal was to ride the entire race without stopping, Gebbies pass was my first hurdle and due to the single speed I found myself passing a lot of riders as I simply couldn't go any slower. Riding around the bays was fun as I traded places with a few riders until I got the feeling that I wasn't welcome...

Some comments

- "I hope that my wife doesn't see me riding with you as I won't be able to spend another cent on my bike!"
- Paul Jesson rode past me and with one leg and he was inspirational, but when you passed me it was like a kick in the guts!"
- Damn it you are back again I thought that I had dropped you!"

I wasn't quite able to ride up to the two short climbs coming into Governors bay – I think the heat and the woolly Santa suit may have had a little to do with it. But made it up, and more importantly down Evans pass in one piece. An old friend who was competing in a team caught up to me on the final flat section back to the finish line. We talked for a while until I mentioned that I shouldn't hold him up, he subsequently went to the front of the group and wound up the pace to the finish. With my head down trying to mimic the most aerodynamic position possible I just managed to stay with him. On the final sharp bend one kilometre before the finish line he swung wide and slowed down not wanting to let him have it all his own way I went straight to the front and contested the sprint to the line. Final time 2.46 hours and the goal of riding the whole way was not achieved therefore we will have to be back next year...

