

## Longbeach Coastal Challenge 35km Mountain bike race.

I decided to do the Longbeach race about a month before the event... my rationale was that 35km was an achievable distance without much training on my bike. I roughly knew the area and had never seen any hills around there, so thought I'd get through it ok. My goal was to finish, ride as much of the technical sections as possible, go hard on the flat sections and enjoy the 'time-out'.

The weather forecast looked great for race day- 25 degrees and sunny. After the usual circus of getting 2 young kids, 1 dog, 1 husband and my race gear sorted we headed to Longbeach in time for registration and a briefing at 10:15am. Time flew by, and then we were underway.

I made the mistake of wearing my heart rate monitor and could see in the first 10mins my heart rate hadn't dropped below 190bpm! I thought it was bound to settle any minute, so kept up the pace while I could- on the flat, grassy section and farm tracks. Heading out the tracks towards the coast, the Pacific Ocean looked amazing- in all my years living in Mid-Canterbury I'd never seen the water look so good! It could have been the distraction from my pounding heart rate, or the fact that it was nearing 30degrees, but it really was a spectacular scene.



And there it was, glinting in the sun and golden grasses...the first of many, many switchbacks. Some of these were straight-forward switch-backs- others involved a drop down into a gully, with sand, shingle and gorse-roots and a short steep uphill to finish off. Or if we were lucky -all of the above! I learned my lesson quickly and opted to avoid following the 12year old boy in front of me down the steeper drops, and equally steep up-hills. None of the drops were too steep to get off- achievable to ride for most people. My technical riding in the last four years had been non-existent and I still managed to stay on for most of the ride. Down on the beach it was faster

for me to get off and run with my bike...ok in 30degree heat with a heart rate still sitting at maximum, I was walking my bike ☺.

In the heat I knew it was important to keep my fluids up. Not only had I forgotten my small pump, but also my peak fuel sachet to add to my water. Fortunately I had remembered my Peak Fuel energy gel and chopped up Em's power cookie and they kept me going nicely with a camelback of water. At the 20km mark, my heart rate was still sitting at 187bpm...my HR Max. I'd now given up hope of it dropping and had gotten used to the workload.





There were lots of small river crossings, and in the heat I'd never been so happy to get wet feet and water all up my back. The organisation on course was fantastic- Marshalls near any slightly tricky section, km markers with how far we'd been, well signposted turn off for the shorter course, water stations and even kids with a hose at Longbeach station.

The switchbacks just kept coming...and coming. I kept thinking I was catching a couple of people, then I'd see just how far the switchback went and was yet again put in my place. My mind wandered off the race a bit at the 25km mark... is this what I have to do as a Mum to get a couple of hours peace?! Heck, I'll take it. The views and the sense of achievement were well worth it.

The last few km's of the race were on shingle road before heading down into the river bed for the last time and through a paddock to the finish. Woohoo! 2hrs 10mins of riding, finishing middle of the field. I must make mention of the best post-race meal I've had – steak sandwiches! Not just any steak sandwiches, these were fresh like they'd culled the cow that morning. Well done ladies in the food tent!

The atmosphere was superb; a perfect day out for families. There were family sections in the race, and plenty of kids running around at the finish tents. Thanks to Team Knight for being my support crew and allowing me a few hours on a sunny Sunday to do my thing. Next time I'm going to apply for a few more leave passes to do some training!



I really recommend doing this event. For people relatively new to mountain biking, or not 'extreme' riders, it's the perfect event. Some small challenges thrown in there, but majority of it is ride-able. For the more experienced riders out there, it's a fun blat around the coast over varying terrain, and those switchbacks are bound to keep your heart rate up! Runners- there were also options for you: 12km and 21km off-road run and a 12km walk. Put this on your event calendar for 2012!

