

Bessies Creek 2015 race report

Neither thunder nor lightning nor sheets of darkening rain could slow down the intrepid riders at Bessies Creek over the weekend of April 9/11, 2015, for these were no ordinary Sunday afternoon riders, these were the elite of ultra-distance cycling.

The rain came in waves, black scudding and forbidding in intensity, day turned to night, wind howling from the south quickly headed from the north as the storms rolled in.

The daytime skies flew into night, the thunder shook the heavens, the shards of lightening gave glimpses of Dante's world; yet the courageous racers donned their rain jackets, set their lights, lowered their heads, shrugged off the streaming rivers running down their faces and pushed on into the abyss. These were no ordinary men and women, these were Ultra Cyclists - the crème de la crème of the amateur racing cycling world.



The legendary cyclist Chris 'Hoppo' Hopkinson – UMCA's Ultra Cyclist of Distinction, three times RAAM solo racer and holder of so many records you'd have to go to his web site to read them all - came, saw and conquered the 24 hour record. Unlike that Roman barbarian day tripping across the channel into England with his hubristic claim of Veni Vidi Vici, Hoppo came this way across the pond in peace from the UK and smashed the 21 mile course and left it lying prostrate in the rain-soaked roadway with 453 miles on the clock. Hoppo is a renaissance man having toured the world as principal clarinetist with the 13/18th Royal Hussars of the British army and now teaching music in the Doncaster schools in Britain. His flamboyant hair style is a true mark of the man.



Norm Hageman – racing RAAM solo this year - licked the Gulf Coast 511 mile race in 33.40 hours, followed less than an hour later by Martin Hukle who is racing RAW solo this year. Alan Johnson riding a recumbent won his division of the Gulf Coast 511 in 44.16 hours setting a new Bessies Creek record. Alan is also racing RAW this year as a solo rider on his recumbent.

In the Gulf Coast 511 team race, the four member Team MBBC whipped the 511 mile course in a record 23 hours and 33 minutes. As a mark of the speed of this team, one racer mended a flat – there were plenty of flats on this rain soaked course – and still completed the 21 mile loop in less than an hour.

As well as Hoppo, two other racers qualified for the RAAM by riding over 400 miles in the 24 Hour race. Richard Nicholson raced 404.7 miles and Kerry Pike raced 402.5 miles.

The Canadian two man team – The Cranky Canucks – established a new two man 24 Hour record of 431 miles

In the women's 24 Hour Race, Gigi Carter from Mississippi won the standard bike category with 349 miles, followed by Amy Russell – current holder of both the 24 Hour and 12 Hour standard bike records – coming in second with 341 miles.

Clara (Beth) Rawls steamed in on her recumbent to win the 12 Hour race with 171 miles and Tracy Sorensen won the standard bike 12 Hour race with 107 miles.

Ultra women are truly making their mark these days with new records set and old ones waiting to be broken by the new wave of women racers.

In the 6 hour standard bike races, Carol Ambuhl won the women's race with a new standard bike record of 112 miles and the men's standard bike race was won by Dan Plutto with 116 miles.

In all, 4 new solo records were established this year: Alan Johnson on his recumbent for the Gulf Coast 511, Chris Hopkinson for the 24 Male standard race, Travis Stuckey for the 12 Hour Male standard race and Carol Ambuhl for the 6 Hour Female standard race. Congratulations go to all of them.