



Some goon destroying the course

When you've had a busy year of racing with all of the events very close together, the idea of a "No Pressure fun ride", is really a welcomed break. Gideon had called me earlier in the year and asked if we would like to come along. Even then, it sounded like a lot of fun. The ride was part of the very well organised Bonnievale Bonanza, which included loads of entertainment for the family, celebrity appearances in the main tent, rides and activity all around the show grounds.

The day started with an icy rain and it looked like this was going to be another nasty day in mud and rain. Surprisingly, the weather cleared and the sun actually made an appearance. This made it a perfect day to ride.

Starting off in the sports ground, we hit a few technical obstacles made out of logs, tyres and concrete pipes, nothing hectic, just a bit of something different for the spectators. These obstacles were also optional and you could easily go around them if they looked too daunting for you. This ride catered for all riders from the complete novice to the more hard core type of nut. After the field we hit some tar and weaved into the vineyards. From here on it was just fun and games, with fast tracks and tight turns, some little climbs and drop-offs that just made the whole ride very enjoyable. We dipped into a few dry river beds and headed back up a gentle climb. The trail was very well thought out and covered a lot of distance. There was a nice mix of fast stuff and tight little tracks along the river bank. The overall speed of the ride was high, but not dangerous as the earlier rains kept the dust down.

Later in the day some of the mud puddles turned into huge bogs that seemed to slow up the quads for some reason, but it was still possible to get past the traffic jam with your bike so that you didn't become part of what looked like a very very slow guided tour.

Paul Rowlands, Graydon Ilderton and myself had an absolute blast, flying around the trail with all of us pushing the same pace, taking turns to lead and swapping positions.

The loop was not hard work at all, but instead, it gave you time to work on your riding and try to correct some bad habits that might have crept in, specifically cornering on flat hard pack. I couldn't believe how I'd let things slip so far off. Given the amount of cornering at speed in this ride, it really helped me get things back together in this department.

On our second loop Gideon warned me that someone had knocked over a bee hive close to the track. I didn't really give it much further thought, as I was convinced that I could ride faster that a flying bee. Well, riding behind Graydon on a narrow path, I suddenly became aware of lots buzzing and soon there were bees everywhere, zooming and dive bombing around my face, I looked at Graydon ahead and increased my speed, but he seemed to be totally oblivious to my impending pain. And then all of a sudden, they were gone. The bees had probably found another victim to terrorise. Later, I asked if Paul and Graydon had had the same experience, but as it turned out, it was only me. Maybe the guy who knocked over their hive was also on a Honda I don't know, but those things can fly quite fast.

The highlight of the ride for me was getting onto the tar roads, where the police stopped all of the traffic to give us right of way. We hit tar and got the bikes pinned in top. The police were there to direct us onto a gravel track, or down a side street. They would start to become very agitated as they realised we were not braking. The closer that we got to them, the more uncomfortable they seemed to get. So with the rear locked up and stepped out, you could see the relief in their eyes as they realised that we did intend to turn



Boosting the river bank



Single wheel vehicle crossing

after all. Only to go through the same thing with the next bike.

The Bonnievale Bonanza was very well supported, with over a hundred riders and huge sponsors from all over. Hot Seat Racing, one of the main sponsors, issued certificates of completion to the finishers (and starters) of the ride. Huge prizes very given out at the lucky draw afterwards. Everyone got something. From wine to helmets. This really was a nice touch.

The Bonnievale Bonanza ranks with some of the most enjoyable rides I've had this year. Well done to everyone who was involved with this ride. It was a fantastic day, in a beautiful town. A scenic, no pressure ride - just what the doctor ordered!

Keep it Pinned, Richard