

Tour de Lac (Tour of the Lake)

After the Paralympics I ventured to the beautiful shores of Lake Geneva and was based at Laussane, Switzerland. The plan was for Nigel Barley and Karl Livingston to compete in the Marathon distance race that was run in conjunction with the main event the Tour de Lac. This is a 177km road race for Hand Cycles around Lake Geneva. Not long after arriving we made contact with event organizers and some of the other competitors and found out that, contrary to our knowledge, the organizers provide support riders for the longer event and that if the boys wanted to, they could do the long event! They, after a bit of coaxing from me, decided on doing the longer event!



Carbo Dinner



Pre race meeting.

177km is a long day for any cyclist, for an athlete powering their bike by their arms it's a very long day. The course is predominantly flat, except for a 9km climb at the foot of Mt Blanc to blow the cobwebs out.

Race day dawned and the boys fronted up to the line feeling the jitters. For both Nigel and Karl, this was their first big outing, internationally. The idea of this experience was to expose them to the competition they will have to race against in the years leading up to Beijing Paralympics and give them an idea of where they need to be at.



Karl & Nigel pre race, proudly wearing the green & gold.

The first 500m metres of the race was neutral so that the flag would be dropped right out the front of the Olympic Museum. The pace was fast and furious at the start and the pace was on straight away. Nigel stayed with the front pack, Karl dropped back to the second one. Unfortunately for Nigel he crashed at 5km. He went down the road on his side at 30km/hr and lost a fair bit of skin. To his credit, he got back in the bike, chased the pack down and caught them at 8k, only to have his gear cable snap and then spend 30 minutes waiting to have it fixed.



Karl paired up with a British rider and worked well together right from the start of the race. They swapped off turns and were setting a good pace from the outset. Nigel was up against it from the start. The race has a cut off time. You have to be at 100km by 4 hours. At 42 minutes, Nigel was at 8km, waiting for the service vehicle to repair his broken gear cable! A big change of plans!.



Yes, it is quite an affluent town!!



“rolling hills” on the bike course.

We waited for Nigel at the 100km mark. He got there at 3 hours 58 minutes! He was exhausted. He had to Time Trial the 92km to make the cut off. As a result of the intensity he had to ride at, he vomited 5-6 times. He made the cut off, but still had 77km to go!

It was a gutsy effort by Nigel and one that will be the making of him as a person and an athlete. It would have been easy for him to give up, but he took up the challenge and finished the race. 7 hours and 15 minutes! Well done mate, an awesome effort.

Karl finished in 6 Hours 35 minutes. It was a gutsy effort and one that really tested him out mentally. He averaged nearly 27km/hr! I asked him how was after he finished and he told me that he was feeling a bit dizzy, seeing stars and getting a bit tunnel visioned from the intensity, at Nyon,(40km from the finish) “but I just pushed through it”.

It was great for Karl to have all of his family there at the finish, to share the experience with him. It was quite emotional for all of us. He had nothing left and I have no doubt he did his absolute best effort.



Karl at the finish.



Nigel at the finish.

This race was a great event and an experience that the boys will never forget. Very tough! But having an opportunity to race around Lake Geneva, through some beautiful countryside in Switzerland and France, ride right through the centre of city of Geneva, pay \$40 for a 100gram steak!, get tired of seeing the latest Ferraris', Lamborghinis' and Porsches, and meet many athletes and their families, was well worth the trip.

I thought months ago that Karl and Nigel are 'hard nuts' and have the potential to do well in the sport of hand cycling. I definitely know that now. I have the utmost respect for both of you. Well done guys. I wish you all the best in your quest to make the Australian Paralympic Cycling Team to represent Australia in Beijing 2008. You can do it!

Andrew Budge.