

Midnight Century – A ride Organiser's Journey – John McMullan

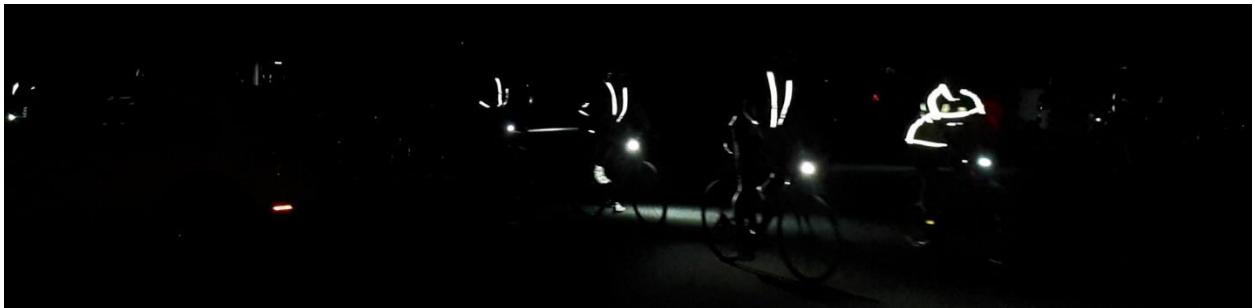
My Journey with the Midnight Century started three years ago on the final MC run from Brothers Leagues Club when I rode my first supported ride. I was accompanied by PJ to Forest Hill and the first control where I learned from Mark Riley that even though I was riding slowly he had plenty of time to get to Fernvale for the second control. I was impressed by the support arrangements and whilst I struggled in the later stages of the ride, I still arrived in a healthy sub 9 hours to a hot shower and a cooked breakfast.

Fast forward to the next couple of Midnight Centuries where the route was re-developed to be based at Fernvale and the support was taken to a whole new level by Simon who fired up the barbecue for a couple of rounds of cooked breakfast.

My journey doing support started at the Ride Organisers calendar workshop in the middle of 2019 where PJ announced that the Midnight Century needed a new RO. With large boots to fill I put my hand up and offered to be the RO provided I had assistance and Tara offered her support.

After a few rushed messages and conversations Tara were a little worried with only a few riders registered the week before but even so I worked out a catering plan that just needed quantities. The night before the ride we ended up with 20 registered riders which was a good number. I did my final shopping run on the Saturday morning then shredded the roast chickens ready for the evening. I loaded the red beast with all the necessary trappings for the support I was soon on my way to collect Tara and head to Fernvale.

We arrived a little later than I intended and found that most of the riders had assembled early. While I set up lights in the shelter Tara checked all the riders in and with some lending of hi viz kit the riders were soon on their way, resplendent in the light.



With some breathing space Tara and I discussed the detailed food plan – salad rolls for the interim control with a variety of nibblies to tempt the riders as well. I also included my favourite item as well – coffee to keep the riders awake on the ride. From past experience I found the coffee to be a welcome treat for the riders.

After a couple of hours I received a call for a rescue so headed down to Walloon to make a collection. I was surprised about the number of Wallabies beside the road and on the way back even found one in the middle of the road, spotted with room to take evasive action. It is amazing how well they blend with the road at night.

We returned to Fernvale to find that most of the riders had left Fernvale for the second lap. It was 2am by this stage and the temperature had dropped to a balmy 12 degrees. I added extra layers and we discussed the expected return time of the next riders and speculated as to what they would like for food and drink.

As the riders rolled in they commented on how well we had set up in possibly the coldest part of the route and that temperatures reported by Garmins were as low as 4 degrees.

I started cooking breakfast for riders with only Raoul skipping the cooked breakfast. There were a few cooking sessions for riders as they finished and as the breeze picked up the cooking slowed a bit. I now need to make a couple of wind shields for the bbq and gas cooker for next time.

The last riders rolled in just before 8am for their breakfast and as we packed up around 9am ish to head back to Brisbane, dropping the Brevets to Vaughan on the way.

Overall we had a good run with the support on this ride and I am very grateful to Tara for her assistance before and throughout the night. The riders seemed very happy at the end of a cold night. Fortunately all the leftover softdrink can be used on the next supported ride as can most of the non-perishables.

As my second supported ride as a RO I had a bit more of an idea how to cater but Simon had set the bar pretty well. As to next year? There is some help to be given on the Sunshine State 1200.

By the way, the rider with the longest ride time was 9 ½ hours. That was me riding unsupported a few weeks beforehand on the supporters ride.

Supporting rides is not for everyone but if you want to give it a go, contact the RO for a supported ride and offer your help.