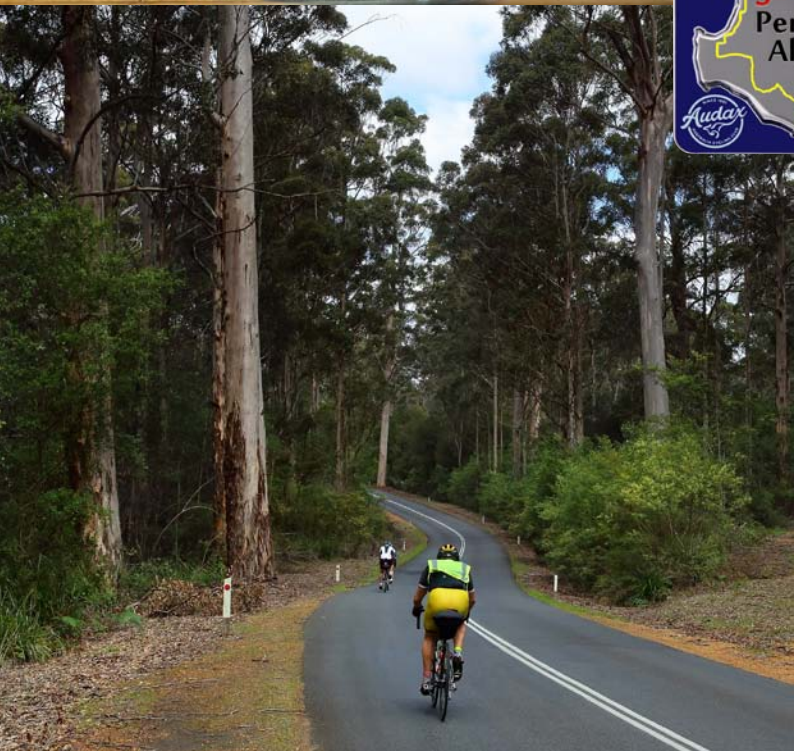






Audax endurance record smashed!

A little blue dot on a monitor, appearing late on the first evening of PAP and then moving when others were still and dead still when others were moving. To many viewers, **Tom Nankivell's** SPOT tracker seemed to be malfunctioning. In fact, it was bearing silent witness to a remarkable feat of endurance and a new Audax world record, as Tom now explains.

“**A**UDAX: FOR cyclists with a spirit of achievement”. So says our website, or at least it did prior to the recent revamp. It's true that we celebrate achievement, although we take a broad view of what that means. Thus we celebrate 'lanterne rouge' types as much as the 'tête de la course'. We have a special honour—membership of the Adrian Hands Society—for people who have finished PBP in more than 89 hours. We give major awards for slow and steady 'never say die' riders like Bec Morton who has just achieved an Ultra Randonneur (ten Super Series and ten 1000 km rides); and we hold in great esteem our multiple PBP anciens, such as Peter Moore who has completed six editions, and stalwarts like Matthew Rawnsley and Chris Rogers who have accumulated over 100,000 brevet kilometres. Of course, while Audax isn't officially a race, we also celebrate our elite athletes too—champions like Oliver Portway, Stephen Lee and Matt Rawnsley (again!) who have completed PBP in around 50 hours or less.

But what if you're not so fast that you'll ever do PBP in under 50 hours, yet not so slow that you'll ever do it in over 89; not so resilient that you'll ever achieve an Ultra, and not so addicted that you'll ever get close to 100,000 km; and not so ancien(t) that you've had time to accumulate half a dozen tours to Brest and back? You erect your own set of goal posts, of course!

I first did this in 2007 when I claimed the record for 'the fastest 5000 ever', completing my 5000th brevet kilometre during that year's PBP, just seven months after my first ever Audax ride (*Checkpoint* No. 34, Summer 2007/08). I don't actually know whether mine was the fastest 5000, but as no-one had thought to bother keeping tabs on such matters before then, no-one could dispute my claim! This year, with PAP coming up, I realised that another chance for an Audax record was in the offing.

Achieving this record would require even greater feats of determination, endurance and resilience...and an innovative strategy. My plan began on the first morning of PAP as I hammered down the coast from Perth. My goal was to get through to my first sleep stop as quickly as possible, to be in a position to go for the record. But whereas other riders would be sleeping at Nannup (366 km) or Pemberton (440 km), I had my sights set on Albany at a mammoth 686 km.

Realising that I would be riding all through the night, out in front and on my own, the ride organiser gave me a SPOT tracker when I reached Nannup, and my blue dot appeared. It kept going, into Pemberton nearing midnight, past Shannon in the wee hours, through Walpole on dawn, and then onwards to Denmark before finally reaching Albany at 2 pm, hours ahead of the clock. While

this mighty effort had already left me quite exhausted, now I would really need to knuckle down and show my true grit and resolve if I were to achieve the record I was seeking.

In the hours that followed I frequently felt like I was getting nowhere and had to call on all my reserves of staying power, but as I left the Albany checkpoint just after 6 o'clock I punched the air with the pride and excitement of having achieved something that surely no other Audaxer ever has before, or probably ever will: remaining at the one checkpoint during a randonnee for a full 16 hours!

During this 'longest ever' checkpoint stop, I managed two showers, three sleeps, four separate snacks/meals, and lots of chats with numerous randonneurs as they were arriving or leaving the control. I also had time for a massage in town, saw some of the sights of Albany and, but for a longer rod, could even have done a spot of whaling in the harbour!

I had gone from the front of the ride to the back, leaving Albany nearly two hours after the checkpoint closing time, and had to pedal like Cadel to catch up to the main field. But the record—and surely Audax immortality—were mine!

Now, where's my medal?

