

Thoughts on the Strollergaine

Chris and I decided to enter the recent Strollergaine at Forest Lake and treat it like a cyclegaine. That would mean we would be unofficial but we thought it would be good navigation practice for MTBO and good practice for the next MTBO ROY event at Samford.

It was a beautiful afternoon, and the area was ideal for a metrogaine as Forest Lake probably has the highest level of road inter-connectivity in the Brisbane, via a myriad of bicycle tracks and paths through parks that snake their way through the suburb.

So we rolled up to the hash house just off the main Forest Lake Boulevard collecting a few bemused stares for competitors and organisers alike who perhaps thought we had showed up to the wrong event. Fortunately, the organisers were quite happy for us to participate as an unofficial team so we were issued with our maps and clue sheets.

The final instructions had revealed that controls were clue-based, and that's almost universal for metrogaines, but with a brilliant twist. Each location-specific question on the clue sheet had three possible pre-defined answers, one of which was correct. This simple innovation dramatically reduced the problems and confusions that tend to accompany clue-based controls. Immediately, all uncertainty at control sites was removed. One reached the centre of the circle, looked for an object that matched the clue, and checked the answers on the control card, ticking which one of A, B or C was correct. It really wasn't possible to guess the correct answer and to discourage anyone fancying their chances, the organisers had sensibly set the penalty for a wrong answer at three times the points value of the control. Also, ticking an option for each clue made tallying up scores at the end of the day much easier than it usually is.

There were three novelty controls and they were three of the four one hundred pointers. The clue for the first we encountered told us to approach the gentleman sitting a table in the middle of the park at the centre of the circle and do as instructed. Sure enough, there was a gentleman in a bowler's outfit sitting at a table. 'What are we supposed to do?' we asked. 'You're my first customers', he said, "Complete this Sudoku puzzle and I'll punch your control card". Well, that was a first for a metrogaine! Chris likes Sudokus, and it wasn't a hard one, so we were away in five minutes. Later, at the next 100 pointer, we found the gentleman's wife, also in a bowls outfit sitting at another park table. There, we had to draw icy pole sticks out of a bag, one by one until we found two that had the same design drawn on their ends. The great majority of sticks were blank, so it took a while.

The event started at 2.30pm and so with a three hour time limit, it was going to be dark for the last 30 minutes or so. We didn't have lights so we planned to come in around 5. Near five we found ourselves at the third of the novelty 100 pointers, at the back of a queue. This one was on the edge of the main lake not far from the HH and was definitely designed specifically with the kids-oriented theme of the metrogaine in mind. There were two challenges. The first required the competitor to 'fish' for plastic ducks in a wading pool using a rod and line with a plastic hook on the end. The task was to snag the one duck of five with the number '2' on its base (which was hidden by the water). The second task was to lob plastic balls onto a blow up surface with three rows of three indentations, the aim being to

get three balls in a row into the depressions. Chris was hopeless with the balls but much better with the ducks. It took a while to earn the 100 points because we had to wait for the kids who were there when we arrived to have their go.

All in all, it was an extremely well organised event. There were lots of families with young kids which, I'm sure, was the main aim of the organisers. The course would have been quite challenging for teams on foot to clear. We didn't manage to clear the course in 2.5 hours but we weren't really pushing it as Chris had trained very hard that morning and was feeling quite drained (Just as well. That meant I could keep up!).

Congratulations should go to Vicki Ward and her team and I commend their multiple choice clue system to future metrogaine organisers.

Dave Firman