

Granite Belt Duet Cyclegaine – Organiser's Report

The double event weekend down in the Stanthorpe area was a suggestion by Paul Guard, a good suggestion. I had set a cyclegaine down there several years ago and more recently, Richard Robinson had run one on the same map, prepared by the late Eric Andrews.

I'm a great fan of the Maprun phone app and have used it close to 100 times in the Tuesday night Brisbane urban orienteering events, and a couple of times for MTBO. I was pretty sure it would work well for cyclegaines but the size of the map and its relative remoteness were the unknowns.

The map, at 1:50,000 scale is large and has a lot of bitumen riding in the eastern third so for this year's event I decided to only the western two-thirds concentrating on the state forests. The key task in preparing a course for Maprun is to be able to accurately place the GPS pins using a map overlay on Google Earth. I asked Rob Crosato to check whether the Andrews map was georeferenced and fortunately, it was. He offered to set up the course in Maprun, for which I am eternally grateful. I chose clearly defined control points such as track junctions and obvious track bends. Liam St Pierre printed the maps, on Teslan, and they were beautifully clear and sharp – works of art!

On the Saturday before the event, I tested the start and visited six controls in the area around the HH and the app was working perfectly. So far so good.

Sunday's weather was perfect, cool and dry. I had been overwhelmed by the entry numbers. The three previous cyclegaines in the area had attracted around 60 participants each. Everyone always said they had a great time and loved the area but numbers were always relatively low. Not for the Duet event! There were 62 teams and 142 entries, although a few teams were a no show. Maybe they were tired out by Girraween scrub the previous day. The large parking area at the Passchendaele Forestry Station was filled by vehicles by 8:30. Teams collected their maps, planning their course and set off.

That's when the problems started. Some teams rode down to the start at the entrance to the Forestry Station, their phones beeped to start their countdown clock and off they went. Others had endless difficulty getting their phones to recognise the start. It wasn't a good sight to see a knot of riders milling around at the start trying to get going.

In the end, for all but one team, at least one team member got their phone to start and record the controls they visited, so we had scores for all but one team. Maprun attempts to automatically upload scores to the cloud as soon as competitors register at the finish, but that didn't happen for a few teams (probably lack of data services). The important thing was that everyone came back with a grin on their face. Four teams in the 3hr consisted of a dad and one or two kids all aged between around 9 and 12. They came back with the kids still looking bright and happy. Cyclegainers of the future?

Congratulations to Gary Sutherland and mates who whizzed around the course picking up all controls except the two in the far SE of the map, and finished with 20 minutes to spare.

Congratulations to Craig Steffens and Stu Gordon for getting the 3hr high score and to Kim Beckinsale and Jan Leverton who I think have entered almost as many of the Stanthorpe cyclegaines as I have been involved with and who came down for one more. Jan was the only casualty of the day with a respectable amount of bark off her shin. And congratulations to all other teams who participated in my Maprun rogaining experiment.

We'll have to sort out the startup problem and rather than armchair placement of controls, visiting control sites and recording GPS coordinates would allow greater flexibility in placement and make the task of setting the event up in Maprun less tedious. Otherwise, I think the Maprun experiment was a success. There's no risk of losing an expensive control punch which is a plus in more public areas.

David Firman