

# DC's Karapoti CX'perience

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Wellington-based Italiano, David Conti, shares his Karapoti cyclo-cross experience.

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The fact I was the only rider among more than 700 participants in the CX category at this year's Karapoti Classic kinda' says it all.

Established way back in 1986, the Karapoti Classic is New Zealand's original mountain bike race! Hidden in Wellington's rugged Akatarawa Ranges, Karapoti offers the "Classic" 50km route, but also the "20km Challenge" and even the "Kids 5km Klassic" too.

My first Karapoti proved a very "interesting" 50km experience. I had never been on-course before and given the mad plan of riding a cx bike I probably would have changed my mind if I knew what awaited me.

Sure, there was some fun; but mainly it was torture. A fun torture!

With my tyres pumped to 75psi I managed to avoid punctures. But as a consequence every little stone felt super bumpy - and man, the "little stones" were few and far between, because most of them were big rocks!



I expected the climbs to be hard work, even walking the steepest sections. But whilst downhills are typically the most enjoyable part of any ride, Karapoti on a cx bike presented a clear and present danger.

Where my trail bike would have floated me over the legendary Rock Garden, my cx steed slowed to a walking pace and greeted the rocks politely. Long fun descents proved to be a real test, with arms and shoulders on-fire from constant battering and having to hold on for dear life. I had to stop several times to stretch my cramping fingers so I could use the brakes.

Oddly, though, it was the fastest descents that brought the most joy. For some strange reason I embraced the lack of feeling in my hands and

constant sideways drift of my bike. This excitement led to inappropriate bunny hops over rocks and sweeping around banked corners, for which I received compliments from riders on more appropriate bikes. One even calling me a "crazy mother-f\*cker", which I guess was a compliment.

I had lined up aiming for a sub-4 hour finish, but thanks to physical pain beyond my expectations and a chain that seemed to drop on every single descent, I crossed the line in 4hrs 10min 26secs. But on the plus side, I won my category. And f\*ck yeah! I did the Karapoti on a cx !

A big thanks to Ben Wilde and Trail Fund NZ for the great tips, to Mansour Youssef for bike set up, Simon Kennett for company on the Tip Track... and to Dave Nendick and the Welly tracks group for enhancing how crazy it was to ride Karapoti on a cx, which of course is what made me so excited to do it.

