

2005 - 20 Years Young

What can we say: perfect conditions, a record field, a record 11 countries, great racing and a superb atmosphere. If the endless emails we've received are any indication, then the 20th anniversary Giant Bicycles Karapoti Classic was one of the best yet.

We're glad, because 2005 was certainly our best Karapoti yet. Obviously some of this comes back to the months of work before hand, but much of it is also due to the great crew we had this year.

The people-power at Karapoti has always been a mix of family, friends and enthusiasts. My wife, daughter, father, two sister-in-laws, two nieces and a handful of training partners all play a huge part. But the difference this year was a great group of volunteers, many of them from the 300-odd who missed out on a start.

Of course Karapoti isn't complete without the odd cock-up here and there. What happens, for example, when \$10,000 worth of medals & ribbon turns up two days before the race and the ribbon clip doesn't fit on the medals? Well first, a handful of said medals are seen bouncing off walls and flying out windows; then the race director's wife steps in and solves the problem!

This year was always going to special. Karapoti is the longest running mountain bike event in New Zealand, so there's a lot of history and nostalgia wrapped up behind the results. Our anniversary exhibition at Upper Hutt's Expressions Gallery captured this, but really what capped this year's event was all the old-timers who came out to play.

It was great to see the original 1986 place getters, Tim Galloway, Simon Kennett and Ash Rawson, with Tim and Ash riding their 1986 bikes. Tim said with a wry smile that although he hadn't ridden that original bike for more than 15 years, it didn't pose much of a problem because as a retro devotee from way back his current bike is 17 years old!

Upper Hutt's own Alistair Rhodes was of course one of those old-timers. In 1986 Alistair was the oldest competitor. This year he was back again to compete in his 18th Karapoti, except ironically he wasn't the oldest competitor anymore.

Also back was Trevor Woodward, who notched up his 12th sub-three hour clocking around Karapoti.

And as creators of this event it was fitting that the Kennett brothers carried off the family team prize.

Nelson's Tim Vincent was back too, overcoming a puncture to move past Upper Hutt's own Wayne Hiscock and Aussie Tim Bennett on that last haul up Doper's Hill to claim his third Karapoti title. Now Tim has a shot at joining Karapoti legend Jon Hume as the only four time winners of the race.

Another legend in the making might well be Rosara Joseph. The women's race was a doozy this year,

with half a dozen women knocking on three-hour pace for the first half of the race. Anika Smail and super-vet Andrea Murray lost out to multiple punctures, while Myra Moller got up after a big crash to finish third. Sonia Foote had one of her best ever races to nab second and break three-hours, but the race really belonged to Rosara.

Only a year ago she finished third here in her first race as a pro. With another couple of years and a fast course, who knows what her future might hold.

And what of the future for the longest running mountain event in New Zealand? Perhaps we can foresee it in the entry of two anonymous riders this year. Mark and Paul Williams might have gone unnoticed if not for their family team title, "The Dare". Turns out Mark lives in the USA and Paul in the UK; one dared the other to ride Karapoti and the rest is history...

That two brothers could be drawn to Karapoti from the other side of the world is confirmation that the attraction of this classic is still every bit as inspiring as it was for Paul Kennett when he created Karapoti 20 years ago. See you all next year.



1986 winner Tim Galloway was back 20 years later with the same bike