

## 2008 - World No.2 Tries Karapoti

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Downhill world no.2, Tracy Moseley, was tripping NZ and took time out to experience Karapoti. This report is from her website [www.tracymoseley.com](http://www.tracymoseley.com).

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It was not on the plan and I only decided when we arrived into NZ that I would do it! We were in Rotorua enjoying their 70k of single track when I picked up a copy of *NZ Mountain Biker* magazine and saw a calendar of events. I noticed that the Karapoti Classic was on a weekend that I had free, so next thing I knew I had emailed the organiser and had an entry sorted.

The Karapoti Classic is a legendary mountain bike race. It's the longest running mountain bike event in the Southern Hemisphere, with 2008 being its 22nd year! It's a true old-school mountain bike race. A 50km loop around the mountains just north of Wellington in the North Island. I had heard of it but never thought one day I would be doing it!

Having entered, I told a few people that I was doing it and got some very interesting responses... Everyone telling me how hard it was and recounting various tales from their own experience or others'. I have to admit that when I was stood on the start line of the race at the banks of the river, I was a little apprehensive as I really was not sure what I had let myself in for.

Apart from having not ridden 50km for a while apart from once last week on the road, I also had to cross a river to start, where I had already watched people in the earlier categories end up in the water up to their necks! Feeling it was not a great way to start the day, I chose the longer but slightly less wet option; I only got up to my knees!

I was competing in the 19-29yr category but because we started with all the non-elite women and over-50 men, I really had no idea who I was racing against. Although I had told myself that it was just a challenge rather than a race, my competitiveness could not be dampened and having started at the back of the grid due to a last-minute toilet stop, I got really frustrated waiting for so many people to get

through the river. I just had to be patient and slowly shuffle my way across the water with all the other people, and then once on the track I started my mission of trying to pick riders off one by one!

The track started with a flat 10km mostly single track up the scenic Karapoti Gorge before heading up the first of three horrendous climbs! The first one, I think, was the worst as it had the most false summits I have ever experienced; one banner even said the top and then it seemed to just keep dipping down ever so slightly just to climb up another short stinker of a climb.

*Tracey Moseley on the Rock Garden*



It really was a brutal climb, and I tried to ride as much as I could, but some bits were too steep. The descent however was pretty damn good, aptly named the Rock Garden, it a downhill single track full of good rock slab roll-offs and drops.

Unfortunately some people weren't even having fun going downhill; after all of their pushing up the hill, they were then pushing back down the other side and causing an even bigger challenge to me than just the track alone! I quite enjoyed the extra obstacles, although at times I got frustrated as I really had strained my lungs getting up the damn hill and I wasn't able to fully let loose on the descent!

However the fun was soon over as the 2nd climb approached. This one is named Devil's Staircase and it was pretty much like climbing a set of stairs for 2k. It's a clay ridge line in the bush that is so steep you can only ride bits and pieces. There was only one line so everyone just formed an orderly queue and pushed or carried their bikes up one by one! It was a long and tough push and one that really got my calves burning. However the prize was a fantastic 8k descent down a flat-out fireroad!

The 'Big Ring Boulevard', as it's called, even had a few berms developing on some of the corners, allowing you to carry just a bit more speed. No sooner had I just got into that and really started to pick up some speed, the fun was over and it was back in the granny ring for another 30mins of gruelling climbing. This time though it was rideable, but only just!

I think knowing this was the last climb gave me some extra strength, and I managed to climb it all. I then really pushed hard to the finish line. I crossed the line in a time of 3hrs 17mins and took the win in my category, very much to my surprise!! I was really happy with my time and how I felt.