

DARTMOOR CLASSIC SPORTIVE – 2011 REVIEW

No sooner had the dust settled on the 2010 Dartmoor Classic Sportive than planning began for the 2011 event. The burning questions were “How can we improve on our performance?” and “Can we even maintain the level?”

Our first action was to send Ron Keegan and Stewart Bergman to London for the Cycle Show. The purpose was to visit as many stands as possible and see if any of the exhibitors wanted to come down to Devon and take a stand at the Depart Village.

Despite a traumatic return train journey they had a worthwhile day with many useful contacts. The most useful and in the end most productive in terms of raising the event’s profile was with the team on the Specialized stand. Em and her team were enthusiastic and made an offer to attend provided any sticking points could be resolved. With understanding on both sides we were able to come to an agreement and as such the event would be labelled and marketed as “The Dartmoor Classic Sportive in association with Specialized”. The results of this association would be plain for all to see over the weekend.

The club’s next move came as a result of a chance meeting. While at work and giving a talk on IT security a member of his audience turned out to be a member of the Dartmoor Rescue Group. The result was that the Dartmoor Rescue Group offered to help man the Princetown Control as long as they could use our event to raise funds. This they did with the help of Specialized as they raffled a Secteur Comp Compact bike while in the Depart Village and sent 10 willing helpers to Princetown.

With the past weather history of the event and it being on the same days as the Glastonbury Festival we were once again in some trepidation leading up to the weekend. We need not have worried. It was “wall to wall sunshine” from the time we arrived till the time the site was cleared.

The first job was to mark the pitch lines from High McCann’s scale drawing. We then had the marquees erected including the one we did not know why we had it ordered. We had toilets, bike racks, skips, bananas, tables and chairs put into the right places and ready for action.

The team from Specialized arrived and soon had their “Chill Out” Zone erected – and it was magnificent.

Saturday morning was a repeat of Friday as the various exhibitors arrived and in no time we were into registration. All the pre-event work of enveloping route cards, timing tags, cable ties etc. paid off as there were few delays for the new team to deal with. Those that had an issue were swiftly dealt with at Stewart’s lap top.

From Thursday through till early Sunday morning the 50 plus marshals had collected their jackets and flags. The 7 route markers with their assistants had loaded up their cars with arrows and warning signs. All being well only the stupid could go off course more of this later.

A short night’s sleep and dawn came with a morning mist surrounding the ground – all looking good for a hot sunny day. Very soon the first of the Sunday arrivals were with us for registration and then it was time to get the pens into action.

At 7 a.m. sharp the first group were away and from then till nearly 8.45 100 riders left the HQ for a day on Dartmoor. Soon after 09.00 the first of the unfortunate returned. There was the broken chain, the triple puncture victim. For the rest all went well.

Barby and Yvonne had gone just past Hound Tor and a short descent with a hard right hander. This was at the request of the Carriage Club who had their event close by. The idea was to keep rider on the correct side of the road in case a horse box was coming the opposite way. They returned from their duties in mid-morning say that it had been a magical experience. They were up in the Dartmoor mist and could not see very far. The only sense that functioned was hearing. As they waited for riders to emerge from the mist all they could hear was the sound of

approaching voices, the whir of the wheels and chains rolling over sprockets. The riders would then whirl by and as they went up the hill the other side the sounds gradually faded away. Then the next group repeated the sensations. The steepest part of Holne Chase caused a few problems. It was not only the riders who struggled. One car suffered a burnt out clutch as the driver tried to slip the clutch for far too long.

By mid-morning came news of a more serious accident. One rider had descended from Coombestone Tor, possibly at too high a speed, and at the bottom came off. As he lay prostrate on the road another rider rode into him coming off worst. The rescue team retrieved him and his bike and a marshal was sent out to slow later riders down.

The course was as in previous years with one important change. The triangle of roads around Princetown (Two Bridges, Rundlestone and the village itself) were to be travelled in an anti-clockwise direction and not the previously used clockwise direction. This was to avoid the mayhem outside the control. Unfortunately and despite signs and marshals a number of riders were still running on 2010 mental guidance and went the wrong way at Two Bridges. It took sometime for corrective action to be put in place.

The Dartmoor Rescue Group plus the club team ensured a swift turn round at the control and set the riders off on the loop to Tavistock and beyond for the 100 milers or back via Two bridges for the 100km riders. They were fortified by SIS product and with flapjacks and the by now legendary quiches made by Bakehouse Country Kitchens of Torquay.

Just before Noon the first of the riders came back into the HQ to applause from the waiting friends and relatives. From then till about 5 p.m. there was a steady stream of finishers all relieved at having completed their chosen route.

The biggest applause came when the team from Axe Vale Community College came together in one group – a mixture of pupils and staff. The Dartmoor Classic had been a year long project. It had been incorporated into various subjects in the school curriculum including business studies where they had gone out and obtained sponsorship. It had been used in geography for route planning, in science to calculate the calories burned and in many other ways. They had started from scratch with their physical preparation and had steadily built up fitness. It all called for a group photo on the Specialized podium.

A slick system had been developed for finishing riders so they obtained their time, the appropriate medal, souvenir and most importantly for many the Specialized goody bag containing a Dartmoor Classic Tee Shirt, inner tube, recovery gel etc.

It was then time for most to relax, get a post ride massage from Anna Mairie' team from Exmouth's Massage Clinic; indulge in a meal from Lyn's Kitchen, chill out under the Specialized Dome or listen to the live music while eating an ice cream.

The riders had all gone by 6 p.m. The helpers had the site cleared by 8.30. To the casual observer you would not have known that the event had taken place but it had and the Mid-Devon CC hope that all enjoyed the experience because we had enjoyed hosting it.

Oh – the planning began for 2012 next day