

2. on the beat

Believe it or not, we don't sit around drawing pictures all day...



Degani Cafe Bakery | Girls team 2010
from left: Row Fry, Niki Fisher (Design by Peppi), Amy Bradley, Maddison Vit & Naomi Williams



Race Pepp

JAYCO CYCLING CLASSIC WITH DEGANI

Road cycling is one thing, road racing is another, and criterium racing (or crit racing) is quite another. Based around small road circuits, the idea behind this style of event is to race hard and fast and try to cross the line at the end in first place. The races are only an hour long, so they're fast, scary (because of all the corners) and great for spectators.

The Jayco Bay Criterium Series is Australia's premier criterium racing series, based around Melbourne and Geelong. It's a four race series with a different course on offer each day. Some are open with some ups and downs, others are tight, with 180 degree corners at each end and long straights in between.

The Series attracts Australia's fastest road cyclists — Olympians, Tour de France stars, you name it,

they're there. This year I was lucky enough to line up against these speedstars as part of the Team Degani Café Bakery Women's team. Degani Cafe Bakery, not only operate the best coffee houses in Melbourne, but they also support local cycling in a big way. So I was in, but first: a bit more background.

Crits, being fast, intense and sometimes dangerous, tend to be either loved or hated by cyclists. Funnily and strangely enough, I'm not a crit lover. Quite the opposite. In fact, just mention the word 'crit' and shivers of fear shoot through me like a school kid waiting for his headmaster's wrath.

If I'm not conjuring thoughts of skin ripping of me as I hit the tarmac, I'm wondering how many contorted bodies and carbon fibre rigs I'll have to dodge to stay upright. Then there's the fact that the racing is very fast, sending your heart rate sky-high as soon as the start gun fires. You can

understand why I started on day one with at least a little trepidation.

True to form, it wasn't long into the first day before I heard the familiar clang of bikes crashing and girls screaming. Day one was terrible but thankfully I — and my team — all managed to stay on our bikes and finished in a good position.

The racing settled down a bit over the later few days. There were less crashes and the racing actually got a bit fun (who'd have thought it!)

I'm painting a dramatic picture but, drama aside, it was a great week. While the racing was hard, it was also an awesome adrenaline rush and finishing the Series brought with it a great sense of accomplishment.

So, like an alcoholic who knows they probably shouldn't, I've already started thinking about next year.

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assie: land of beautiful mountains, pub-only towns and a Jesus-look-a-like character performing yoga in the local park.

We headed to Tassie to compete in the Blue Dragon mountain bike race. The event, based in North-East Tasmania, offers some great riding in truly spectacular countryside. Think New Zealand with a cheaper airfare and less tourists.

Saturday saw us pedal up a huge mountain, take in some stunning alpine views, then hurtle down the other side (with me hoping my brakes wouldn't fail!). They didn't but my tyres did so I had to walk the last 10km of the 50km ride. Luckily I got to ride one of the most fun sections of trail before that rather deflating experience though; the trail weaved its way down the side of a mountain under rainforest canopy with logs and creek crossings to negotiate.

The local Lion's Club provided a delicious lunch once we finally arrived at the finish and the local river that runs through Derby was very refreshing on the 30+ degree day.

So that was that. The local café's were bursting with tourists that afternoon, as we sat around, sucked in the fresh country air and were quite happy to be where and we were.

Later that afternoon we packed up the wagon and headed to the pub-only town of Weldborough. Luckily, it was a great pub and the patrons were very accepting of the load of loud and lairy bike tourists that rocked up on their doorstep.

I snacked on a vegetable wrap that night, had some dinner and woke up sick! So that put a dampener on Sunday but by all accounts the second day of riding was even more fun than the first so I'm itching to get back there next year.

The last day of our trip saw us touring Launceston, checking out the local café's, eating a very tasty burger and swimming in a big, deep waterhole — it's what they do in Launceston, and it's easy to see why.

It was a great few days away and a good chance to refresh before powering up the computer.

If you love mountain biking and you're after an adventure, check out the Blue Dragon.

“FAREWELL, MAINLAND, YOU'VE SERVED ME WELL. (ALTHOUGH I'LL BE BACK ON MONDAY!)”



PHOTOS: ANDREW HARRIS
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