

Melbourne to Warrnambool Cycling Classic 2015

OCTOBER 17



Saturday, October 10, 2015

THE ORDEAL OF REACHING THE FINISH LINE

BY ROD MORRIS

JUST reaching the finish line of the famed Lakes Oil Melbourne to Warrnambool Cycling Classic will be achievement enough for a large percentage of the 300 entries for next week's 100th staging of the race.

Winning the Classic will be the ultimate, but for some, that may be an unrealistic goal.

For Peter Besanko, his place in the history of "The Warrny" is entrenched forever and a day.

Affectionately known as "Bulldog," Besanko is one of only eight multiple winners and one of only two to be three time winners.

Besanko started in the Classic 17 times, winning in 1984, 1989 and 1992 and on Saturday, October 17 he will see the chequered flag up close again.

Race organisers have invited Besanko to wave the iconic black and white race finish flag and the former champ jumped at the chance.

He was scheduled to have an ankle operation around the same but has delayed the medics by opting to be at the finish line.

The only other man in Melbourne to Warrnambool history to win three times was the great David Allen, successful in 1976, 1979 and 1982.

Dual champions in the race's rich history include Stan Bonney (1949 & 1957); Wally O'Brien (1958 & 1962); Bruce Clark (1971 & 1973); Mario Giramondo (1970 & 1975) and Joel Pearson (2009 & 2011).

Look a little closer at the years listed above and you will notice that no rider has even won back-to-back Melbourne to Warrnambool titles.

That fact doesn't speak well for defending champion, 22-year-old Geelong rider, Oliver Kent-Spark, who edged out Commonwealth Games cyclist Alex Edmondson in a close finish.

Third home in 2014 was the previous year's champion, New Zealander Samuel Horgan.



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Weather conditions obviously play a vital role in the running of the classic and race times vary immensely because of it.

Kent-Spark's winning time in 2014 was 7 hours 00.21 minutes, almost half an hour slower than Horgan's 2013 effort (6.32.12) but on par with the 7.00.23 set by Dutchman Floris Goseinnen in 2012.

In 1990, New South Welshman Robert Jordan stopped the race clock at 5.49.33 from a 42 minute handicap.

It was in a time when "The Warrny" was raced under bunched handicapped groups and not the mass start system that is now the format.

That race include a quality group of scratchmen, which - although couldn't catch Jordan, nor minor placegetters Craig Taylor (2nd) and Mark Hyland (3rd) - included Dean Woods who claimed fastest time honours that day, recording a blistering 5.12.26!

Woods' blistering time remains a record to this day.

The 2015 Melbourne to Warrnambool is a key feature on the Subaru National Road Series roster, which is the stepping stone for Australian cyclists' pathway to international stardom.

With the Jayco Tour of Tasmania scheduled to finish tomorrow (Sunday, October 11) NRS registered teams will finalise their list of riders for next week's Warrnambool.

The final field will be released early next week.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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