

Melbourne to Warrnambool Cycling Classic 2015

OCTOBER 17



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The legend of Wayne Hildred

BY ROD MORRIS

In the 1980s, Wayne Hildred was considered somewhat of a trail blazer in Australasian cycling.

Born in New Zealand on 12 September 1955, Hildred crossed “The Ditch” to race in Australia in the late 1970s....loved the place so much, he stayed.

More than 30 years since migrating officially, Hildred is still heavily involved in cycling.

Earlier this week on Monday, Hildred got a call – somewhat surprisingly – from race organisers of the Lakes Oil Melbourne to Warrnambool cycling classic.

“Dust off your bike, you’ve got a start,” was the message relayed to Hildred.

Recently turned 60, Hildred didn’t really have to dust off his bike, as still rides regularly and in his hometown of Bright in North Eastern Victoria, he and partner Susan own and operate a small café, Bright Velo, which is regularly inundated with leisure and professional cyclists, whether they be out for their Sunday morning coffee ride or completing a training camp.



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Hildred received an invitation to attend this Saturday night’s post-race dinner and as he’d been in training for the Tour of Bright (December 4-6), thought he could get a start in “The Warrny.”

“I was half hoping to be a wildcard entry and then the call came on Monday.”

Hildred’s invitation to the start line arose because of a small number of withdrawals from registered teams entered in the National Road Series.

Hildred is a two-time Australian road champion and a former winner of the Melbourne to Warrnambool, one of very few that will be lining up this Saturday when the 2015 version gets underway in Werribee.



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He is one of only 21 multiple winners of the national road title, sitting in a group that includes the likes Sir Hubert Opperman, Russell Mockridge, John Trevorrow, Robbie McEwen, Deane Toseland, Keith Rowley, Eddie Smith, Barry Waddell, Graeme McVilly, Peter Besanko, Neil Stephens and Simon Gerrans.....not a bad lot!

Hildred's two Australian road championships came his way in 1982 in Collie (WA) when he beat home Terry Hammond and Peter Besanko and 1986 in Mount Gambier (SA) when he crossed the line ahead of Michael Lynch and Anthony Hughes.

"A year later the titles were held at the Sandown Raceway and I was leading with a lap to go before I punctured," Hildred explained.

"I hung in there for second place behind Allan Dipple, but that was certainly a championship that got away from me."

In between those 1982 and 1986 victories, Hildred also ventured across Bass Strait and won the 1983 Examiner Tour of the North, which was the Apple Isle's official Tour of Tasmania.

His early-career trail blazing campaign also stretched to Europe and in 1982 he was a member of an official Australian road team, known as Mavic-Clemenso alongside Shane Sutton, Eric Bishop, Phil Sawyer, Bob Shannon and a handful of Belgian and Dutch riders.

"The team was established by a sports journalist Noel Truers who worked on a large number of major European races," Hildred said.

"We didn't have much success, but we got a start in a few prestigious races."

Hildred has a close affinity with the Melbourne to Warrnambool, having ridden in seven previous editions, 1978-80, 1982 and 1985-87. He was in Europe in 1981 and back in New Zealand in 1983-84.

His best effort was 1980 when he established a new fastest time record of 5.37.10 in "The Warrny."

It was a mark that stood for 10 years before guy by the name of Dean Woods had completed the journey in 5.12.26. That time has stood for the last 25 years.

"I had 12 riders in the scratch bunch in 1980 and Woods had 35 in his bunch 10 years later, but it was still a great ride," Hildred conceded.



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Hildred also competed in nine Herald Sun Tours during the late 1970s and early to mid 1980s.

He finished 4th in 1980 (won by David Allan); 10th in 1982 (Terry Hammond); 5th in 1983 (Shane Sutton) and 8th in 1987 (Stefano Tomasini).

“It was a great time for Australian cycling,” he said.

Hildred is not expecting anything out the ordinary this Saturday.

“My aim is to just reach the finish world,” he predicted.

“In an ideal world, I would get a good handicap, start in one of the front bunches and just stay there till the finish line.”

“But then I realized the Melbourne to Warrnambool is not a bunched handicap race anymore, so look for out front very early in the race and then filtering back through the field,” he laughed.

Updated weather forecast –

In Werribee Saturday: Mostly sunny, maximum 21 degrees celsius; 11km/h winds WSW; 60% chance of rain.

In Warrnambool Saturday: Mostly sunny, maximum 17 degrees celsius; 24km/h winds WSW; 10% chance of rain.

NB: courtesy Elders Weather

FURTHER INFORMATION:

ROD MORRIS

Caribou Publications
0401-760-912

KIPP KAUFMANN

Cycling Victoria
0430-303-577

