

MELBOURNE TO WARRNAMBOOL CLASSIC, 2006

HISTORY

- The race was first held in 1895. 50 riders entered, 24 started, and only 7 finished.
- The first race was won by Andrew Calder who received 2 hours' start on the scratchmen. He took 11 hours, 44 minutes, 30 seconds for the 165-mile trip, and was reported to have "got through on eggs, milk, and beef extract".
- 95 years later, Olympic gold medallist Dean Woods clocked a stunningly-fast 5 hours, 12 minutes, 26 seconds to set the course record.
- The late Sir Hubert Opperman recorded the fastest time on 3 occasions - in 1924, '26 and '29.
- Only four overseas riders have won the event - the New Zealanders J Arnst (1903) and P Hill (1922), Switzerland's Daniel Schnider in 1997, and Bart Heirewegh, of Belgium in '98.
- The late and great Russell Mockridge, double gold medallist at the 1952 Helsinki Olympic Games, clocked fastest time in 1956 and '57. (He rode 5 hours, 47 minutes, 5 seconds in '56.)
- The race has been held 88 times. Extensive recesses were taken during the war years.
- It has been run in the reverse direction, from Warrnambool to Melbourne, 32 times.
- Only two Warrnambool riders, Olympian Michael Lynch (1986) and Jamie Drew (1999 & 2002) have won the Classic.
- The first woman to finish the race was England's 7-time world champion, Beryl Burton in 1980. Beryl, 43, clocked 7 hours, 11 minutes, 12 seconds.
- In 1901, Bendigo's Albert Nion pedalled 200 miles to get to the start of the race. He then defied atrocious conditions to win it in 9 hours, 20 minutes, 40 seconds.
- In 1909, Coburg rider Snowy Munro, 21, embarrassed the Victorian Railways Commissioners by clocking 7 hours, 12 minutes, 51 seconds - 5 minutes faster than the best train time from Warrnambool to Melbourne.
- The "Warrnambool" was held as a massed start event for the first time in 1996. The surprise winner was Bendigo's Chris White in 6 hours, 44mins, 16secs. Germany's Ralf Grabsch won the newly-introduced sprint championship.
- Another history-maker - the "Warrnambool" was listed on the UCI calendar in 1997, with 126 rating points.
- 1997 - The closest finish in the race's history. Switzerland's Daniel Schnider defeated Dennis Rasmussen, of Denmark, by a centimetre - after 265kms.
- In 1999, the course was extended by 10kms, and a king of the mountains classification was introduced.
- 2004: The "Warrnambool," at 299 kms, becomes the world's longest one-day bike race and is the world's second oldest bike race (behind Liege-Bastogne-Liege).