

2010 National Championships, Adelaide SA

Cross Country

A 'Microwave' is what was expected in Adelaide after a week of over 40 degrees leading up to the event. The feeling of cooking from the inside as you climb at maximum heart rate in hot, still air. Fortunately it never came. A polite 27 degrees greeted us for the biggest race of the year, a competition for champion of the country.

With months of hard training and the final weeks of preparation at Stromlo, I was ready to tackle everything the Adelaide course had in store and make a strong bid for the title.

Getting off the line in a rather slow manner, I had work to do before the first single track. I managed to slip into third position as the field began to storm up the first climb. McConnell and Taberlay led - spreading the field instantly. After the first lap of six a group formed comprising McConnell and Taberlay, myself and Norris. With a 50 sec lead over the other big names it was a great position to be in and we looked to push our advantage. Nearing the top of the course, the group had splintered with McConnell pushing the pace. I felt my front tyre become a little squelchy just as I passed through the first tech zone. I'd have to hope it would hold enough air to get me to the bottom tech zone. A lot of fast, rocky descending lay in between. Norris caught me as I struggled to turn corners with the rapidly deflating tyre.

With a new wheel I rejoined the race. Now in fourth I had some work to do. Ticking off another lap I again increased the buffer from the chase group. Unfortunately I would relinquish the time I had worked so hard for. With a completely unexpected mechanical, I stopped to check the damage. Surely this wasn't it. But it was, there was nothing I could do and the race for me was over. I stood on the side of the track, helpless, to watch riders pass, each one a hit of reality that this years bid for the champions jersey was over.

Dan McConnell continued to ride strongly, increasing his lead over everyone, eventually taking the title in convincing fashion. Spending three out of the last four weeks with Dan, I gained a sense of satisfaction seeing someone truly deserving don the jersey.

I do want to thank all those whose support put me in position to fulfil my dream. Unfortunately racing doesn't always follow the script, which is what makes it special. Firstly thanks to Peter Dowse, manager and friend from Capital Bicycle Hire for his amazing support before, during and after the race. Thanks to Crowne Plaza Canberra and Shimano for their extremely generous assistance and Micko from Onya Bike Belconnen and Civic who brings everything together. Also thank you to Maxxis and Berg Physio for their crucial long time support.

Looking forward to Shepparton this weekend as the new look National Series continues to provide a professional event for the pinnacle of mountain biking in Australia.

