

**BEN HENDERSON
NSW STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS
31 OCTOBER 2010**

Having spent a bit of recon time at the Fitzroy Falls MTB trails during an [FTP](#) training camp in September, I was eager to compete for the first time on the very unique circuit. The trails offered endless tight sections of heart in your mouth pushing constantly to the edge, brushing against trees, jumping logs and hooking blind corners. It was relentless! No rest for either the mind or body at any moment.

With the wet weather holding off and the temperature building for our 9 am start, I was finding myself back in the headspace I'd missed over the last few months. One of nervousness, anticipation and focus. I was ready to kick off the new season where I'd left off in March.

After a reasonable start I had the opportunity to lead and I did so. Unfortunately I made a mistake that could only be described as dumb. After yesterdays practice laps a bridge was installed to cross the creek that was initially bypassed. With my head down I took yesterdays line and found myself on my own, looking back to see the field ride swiftly in the opposite direction, and subsequently ended up on my hands and knees in the bog. Not ideal. Having not really lost a great deal of time I was back on track and I tried hard to pass as many riders as possible up the following grassy climb. With just a few left in front, I began to lose time to the leaders as the tight single trail momentarily put an end to passing.

Coming through the finish I was now on my own with Matt Flemming, Josh Carlson and Peter Hatton around 30 seconds ahead. I was not unhappy with my situation with five laps remaining and I got to work.

Over the next hour I worked hard to catch the leading trio. As I gained ground the lead group started to splinter and I passed each of them individually. Hatton stayed attached after I caught him and we formed a new group of three once we reached Carlson. It wasn't long before Carlson showed his displeasure with the new situation and unleashed some serious horsepower through those substantial trunks of his and put Hatton and I in difficulty. I hung on as we repeatedly wound it up on the short pinches and it was down to two. With just over two laps remaining I successfully retaliated to Carlson's surges and began to stretch a small gap over the next couple of minutes.

Over the next half an hour I worked hard to extend a buffer, battling all the time to avoid costly mistakes as the fight between mind and body amplified. It was no longer a simple matter to co-ordinate the bike to follow my eyes as I twisted in and out of the trees, stumps and bushes.

Arriving at the finish line I was extremely happy to win my first State Championships. It was a result which had literally been a distant dream just a few years ago when I used to watch the big boys battle for the title. I had a strong sense of satisfaction looking back to my days in the under 17 State Series where my passion began. Junior Benny would have been wrapped!

A big thanks to my coach Mark Fenner from FTP Training, my TORQ/ANYTIME FITNESS team, Stromlo Forest Park, Capital Bicycle Hire, Crowne Plaza Canberra and the boys from Onya Bike Belconnen and Civic.