

NEW
WORLD RECORD



“ *Had I known how much suffering I would experience in the last four hours, I don't think I could honestly say that I would have even started.* ”

— Dr Mitch Anderson

LABOUR DAY:

Twelve Hour World Record Ride

TEXT BY DR MITCH ANDERSON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY KORUPT VISION

“**T**here was loneliness, too, as the sun set, but only rarely now did doubts return. I knew that this would give way to total absorption to the task at hand. But at times I wondered if I had not come a long way to find that what I really sought was something I had left behind.” Tom Hornbein: Everest: The West Ridge.

For a period of time in my early twenties, summiting Everest fascinated me, and I read every book I could get my

hands on. The physiology of altitude and its stressors are incredible. The similarities with endurance triathlon are undeniable, and I think that's what drew me to the subject. Unfortunately being a great mountaineer and an outstanding author are not mutually inclusive, but there are exceptions. I stumbled on this fantastic book by anaesthetist and mountaineer Tom Hornbein. He and Willi Unsoeld were the first to ascend Mt Everest by the difficult West Ridge. It's generally

accepted as one of the greatest feats in mountaineering.

So I wrote my favourite quote down and kept it firstly in a black leather Filofax, then had it written by my desk, and now it's Blu-tacked to my desktop screen. It resonates with me now more than ever. And by now, I mean it's 4am, and my pregnant wife is happily snuffling and puffing away in a warm bed, but my mind is racing. Navigating turns and avoiding collisions. Holding the lines. Pedalling.

Pedalling. Pedalling. Body aching. But that was 72-hours ago!

The Hornbein quote was always the succinct reminder that I needed to ground my endurance efforts as part, but not the sole purpose of my life. Training for 30 Ironman races in my 20s and 30s necessitated a lot of loneliness but an immensely satisfying total absorption to the task at hand. And every time I was off training, I had left behind a loved one, my studies and social life. But I loved the challenge of the preparation for a climb. Mountaineering never escaped my imagination, but it was confined there as a hypothetical. My thrill was swimming, pedalling and running - preparing for a mountain called Kona.

So, when I retired from triathlon two years ago, I didn't have a physical goal. I had seen five different psychologists over five years, trying to get over the damage of

an abusive marriage and resultant depression. I was seeing a psychiatrist, doing CBT and trying to avoid taking anti-depressants. I had given Craig Percival (I have permission to discuss his medical details here) strict advice to get back on medication for his depressive illness, but I didn't have the insight to do likewise. My doctor convinced me that it was necessary (along with therapy) and my life light bulb switched back to full wattage!

I was fertile ground again in all aspects of my life, and the seed for this attempt was sown and germinated in response to watching multiple rowing Olympic gold medallist, Drew Ginn attempt the world 24-hour record of 897km, currently held by Austrian Christoph Strasser. With the catalyst of Drew ripping lap after lap of Brunswick velodrome ad infinitum, I thought I should do my due diligence by shooting for the less prestigious 12-hour record to see if I had the temperament, motor and desire to tackle this new mode of riding. The record of 458km seemed low hanging fruit, compared to the monument of 897km for 24-hours.

So, Danger (Damien Angus) and I work-shopped it on the Saturday rides. Mothers Meeting at 40km per hour! He

and I have built such a combined depth of physiology, medicine, nutrition, game theory and race experience, that neither of us would have succeeded nearly as much in sport (and life!), had we never met. Craig and Lindell Percival and I were having similar chats about his epic BinBin8 plan and how they would execute in March. Danger and I agreed that a nine-hour trial on a Sunday in May 2016, on the South Melbourne criterium circuit (1km loop) would be a good start. I am no track cyclist, so it would be road time

