

Melbourne World Track Championships

Early in March I was selected to ride in this year's World Championships. I was absolutely stoked to be selected to ride in this event. As any athlete knows the world championships are what we all strive to compete at, second only to the Olympics. As 2012 is an Olympic year the selectors and athletes would have a harder job than usual. So I was buzzing when I heard confirmation that I would be traveling to Melbourne to go up against the world's best.

The men's sprint team came together early March to begin what would be a fiercely contested training/trials camp. The men's sprint squad is comprised of five members each bringing their own individual skill set. All five riders were working hard in order to earn a spot in the team sprint and get one of the limited spots in the individual events. Some good results from the team over the last year meant that New Zealand was able to enter four riders in the individual sprint and three in the Kierin. After a hard week of trials mid-March the team was announced, I would be the reserve one and two rider in the team sprint, ride the individual sprint and the keirin.



We arrived in Melbourne on Friday 30 March to calm warm conditions, perfect for fast times. Once we dropped off our bags we suited up, built our bikes up and jumped on for the 10 minute ride to the track. With big bike lanes all the way to the track along the Yarra River (center city) it was easy to get from a to b. when I arrived into the Veleodrome at the Hisense Arena I was met by huge stands running up both sides of the track and was told that the event was sold out. I was already pumped for race day but had to take a few deep breaths and make sure the following week of final preparation went to plan so that I was able to race to my potential. Over the next few days we spent time getting used to the track and our surroundings. A few good times during this this period gave me some confidence moving towards race day, however I could feel the nerves building as more and more teams and big names started arriving.



Wednesday finally rolled around and I was feeling confident and comfortable on track. Even though I was not in the team sprint that night I approached it as if I was, ready to race if I was needed. This proved to be good for me as it extinguished any nerves I might have had. After watching the Kiwi boys get the bronze medal (the first sprint medal by New Zealand EVER!!) I was pumped and ready for Friday. Friday came around fairly slowly. I spent the morning before the flying 200 winding Eddie Dawkins up (room mate) about how much I was going to beat him by and he returned the favor, this worked well to pass the time and get us hyped up to race.

Arriving at the track I was seeded 18th out of 56. Waiting on the fence to start I was absolutely fizzing. A good crowd of Kiwis had turned up along with some family. When I rolled out I heard a cheer go out, which reminded me of racing at the Invercargill Velodrome. I felt good and put everything into the sprint and it felt fast. Looking up I saw 10.034. This was the fastest I had ever gone and also the fastest any New Zealander had gone. To put this in perspective last year I came second at the national champs in 10.800 and the Olympics were won in 9.89.



This time qualified me 12th and I was to face Scott Sunderland, double Commonwealth gold medalist in the first round, which you must win to progress on to the quarter finals. Because of his speed over the 1km time trial I knew I had to keep the pace slow and try and come around close to the end. I raced tactically well but just didn't have quite enough gas to get around and lost by about half a bike length meaning I finished in 13th place, an awesome result for my first World Championships.

The next event was the keirin, looking through the heats there was no real easy heat. Every heat had at least one past or present world champion. I went into it knowing I would need to find a good wheel to follow and then attack with one to go. I did this well but had to go two wide around the last corner and just didn't have the legs to get around. In the repechage there were two riders to watch for and because there were only four in our race it was slower than usual. With one and a half to go I made my move and felt like I was in a good place coming through the corner. However, the French rider in front of me swung into my front wheel causing me to move up the track to avoid a crash. In doing so, I broke my seat and that was the end of my racing. Even though I did not qualify for the semi finals I felt I rode really well in an event I do not specifically train for.



These champs have been a huge step up for me and another reminder of how close the New Zealand sprinters are getting to some of the big names.

At these champs more than I ever I can appreciate the huge amount of support myself and the team get. There was an awesome Kiwi contingent in Melbourne and, judging by the messages of support, an even bigger one at home in front of the TV. Thank you all so much for your support and thank you specifically to local groups ILT, Community Trust, Cycling Southland and the Cycling community for all your help.

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