

President's Report - Huttcross 2018

Huttcross has grown considerably since its inception in 2009. From one of the earliest cyclocross races ever held in New Zealand, Huttcross has expanded to a full winter series, boasting the highest participation rates of any cyclocross event in the country.

Huttcross was founded firmly from community roots and continues to echo a *racing for local people* ethos throughout its structure - from volunteers, to venues, to participants. There are many touch points across our community that enables Huttcross to operate. Some of these are highlighted in this report but inevitably not all are explicitly detailed in this report but, without doubt, we certainly acknowledge and appreciate every effort that goes into making Huttcross what it is.

In March 2018, a number of Committee members exited after donating considerable time at the helm. Dean Johansson extended his tenure to assist with the upskilling of a bunch of enthusiastic apprentices, for which we were very grateful. This group of apprentices consisted of 5 committee members plus 1 co-opted member (providing Council liaison) as well as significant on-the-day support from our wider community for event timing and registration. We elected to provide a free season pass for a regular crew of five hardy early risers who in return guaranteed their services for course set-up and tear down throughout the season. This initiative worked effectively as well as being a lot of fun across the small cohort of regulars.

Over many seasons, Huttcross events have been run exclusively on Upper Hutt City Council (UHCC) land. Ongoing landowner concerns about turf impact - particularly around areas sensitive for flood protection - were reinforced and strict limitations were imposed. While this was a point of frustration for some Huttcross frequent flyers, the Committee remained cognisant of the issues raised and worked in partnership with UHCC to achieve a functional solution. This involved the purchase and storage of ground protection material as well as mindful course design to minimise impact. The outcome was a greatly improved relationship with UHCC.

This year, use of a brand new venue was secured thanks to the support of Wellington Family Speedway. This venue provided a welcome new challenge to riders as well as alleviating some of the impact on UHCC land. Feedback from Wellington Family Speedway was positive following the event and it is anticipated we will be able to use this facility for coming years.

Improved utilisation of social media provided wider marketing of the series with a boost in participation. In 2018, 336 people raced a total of 887 times over 6 rounds. The first round was our most popular with 199 A, B or C grade racers (and a strong rally of children racing in their separate race, so over 230 riders in total). Round 3 was hit with particularly appalling weather, which prompted a drastic change in course design as a result of flooding, but still saw a remarkable turnout of just over 100 purists and hardy souls. There was a drop in participation in the late rounds in the Series, likely related to calendar conflict with very early Spring events in other disciplines.

Across the grades, B Grade was the most popular with 45% of all race entries, followed by C Grade (33%) and A Grade (22%). A mandatory promotion for the first 20 riders in B Grade in Round 1 improved the distribution of participants at subsequent events. 120 riders elected to purchase a full season pass. Ensuring riders paid to play (eg paid an entry fee for every race they participated in) improved rider experience for C Grade.

Overall, women made up 17% of race entries with the majority racing in C Grade. Ad hoc feedback throughout the season suggested that many of the women who participated preferred to race with men of equal ability than to compete in a separate women's event.

A poll was undertaken on social media mid-season to gain insight into the preferences of participants regarding course options. The overwhelming response (over 90%) was for A and B Grades to race the same course layout for differing durations rather than offering differing technical challenges.

In 2018, Huttcross enjoyed excellent sponsorship from Crucial Custom Cycles and Wheelworks Handcrafted Wheels, each providing high calibre spot prizes. The club's ability to provide brand exposure for C3 during the season was limited by the flags and banners available. Wheelworks branded flags and banners added to the vibe trackside and provided prominent sponsor logo placement. Both sponsors have indicated interest in continuing their support for 2019. Cowbell Coaching provided sponsorship for new race plates as well as a gazebo for timing. Custom printed tape would provide an excellent opportunity for a new sponsor as well as assisting the club in enhancing the presentation of events. Feedback from Upper Hutt Community Rescue was that the Huttcross events were very enjoyable for them to attend due to the atmosphere.

Our community is bestowed with fantastic local photographers who graciously offered their images for Huttcross articles on Chainslap magazine, which enabled the club to further promote the events, garner new entrants to the series, promote the sport of cyclocross more widely and acknowledge sponsors and supporters publicly.

Finally, as a result of a well supported series, Huttcross was able to purchase a trailer for the storage and transportation of club equipment and carries a strong financial position into 2019.

At close of the 2018 season, the Committee sought to:

- (1) Extend venue options to minimise the impact on any one area, reduce the burden of events on UHCC land, while maintaining presence in the Hutt Valley;
- (2) Improve the value proposition that club membership adds by launching club membership in lieu of season passes and entitling members to "race for free";
- (3) Improve the experience for kids that otherwise end up in C Grade by considering a separate timed Kid's Grade;

- (4) Improve the sustainability of event delivery by reducing volunteer manpower requirements throughout the season (namely outsourcing timing);
- (5) Reduce the number of events to in the Series to 5 to avoid early Spring events conflicts;
- (6) Encourage Huttcross participants to travel to NZ Cyclocross National Championships by constructing a season that leads into the pinnacle national event.

I have no doubt that these areas of strategic direction will provide a newly invigorated Committee opportunity to further bolster cyclocross racing locally while staying true to the roots of Huttcross' community.

Kim Hurst (Committee Member)
On behalf of Dean Johanssen, President 2018