

Carten 100 – 10th May 2014 – Dr. Daf's Ramblings – The Mental Edge

My experience in long distance cycling has confirmed to me that mental strength is probably more important than physical ability when it comes to finishing long events. With the weather forecast telling us we may be up against "Marmite Mk2" on Saturday, I thought I'd share a few ideas that may help when the going gets tough:

Take it easy

Carten 100 is not a race and it's not a sportive. You may have a time or average speed in mind, but believe me, if you are being drilled by a 25mph headwind for mile after mile, thoughts of clinging to a time may well be a negative motivator. Wait for a tailwind year and record a personal best then.

I'd recommend you start the ride slowly to ensure that you've less chance of blowing up in the second half of the ride. I'd also recommend not going anaerobic (the state where the body's need for oxygen can't be met – i.e. when you've panting and speech would seem ridiculous!) unless you really have to.

Break the ride down

You've just done a 50 mile training ride, you're back at base – do you fancy popping out for another 50? – Me neither! The thought of riding 100 miles can be daunting, but if broken down into smaller sections of say 30 miles (the feed stops fit in nicely with this strategy) or even less (say stop for a couple of minutes every 10 miles for a quick bite and a drink), then the prospect of a whole day battling the wind can't take hold, as you are focussing on smaller, easier targets all the time.

Last year I stopped at a point I hadn't planned as I was being battered by the wind so badly. I sat away from the roadside, ate an energy bar, had a drink. I probably spent 3-4 minutes off the bike, but definitely made that up in the next 15 miles as I was physically and psychologically refreshed by the break. Unscheduled breaks are fine, and can be helpful in the long run.

It may get emotional.....

I have suffered tantrums before now after several hours of battling a persistent headwind. It certainly does get emotional. I'd be surprised if there weren't a few tears on Saturday from some battling the wind. There is that iconic line "pain is temporary, quitting is permanent" which I have used on myself on more than one occasion. A friend of mine who shall remain nameless phoned his wife 5 miles from the end last year and asked her to pick him up, he'd had enough. She swore at him and told him to get on his bike and see her in Tenby! He's obviously pleased she made him do that now.

Let's hope the weather sorts itself out between now and Saturday, but if not, I hope that you find a nugget in my ramblings that will give you an edge on Saturday. Best of Luck.