

## IVCA - Dick O Brien Leisure League 2017 Round 5- 14th May

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The 5th round of the Dick O Brien Leisure League commenced for the second year at the newly located Cycle Superstore now located on Airton Road Talaght, with a start time of 9:00 am. The weather forecast was for sunshine with some showers in the later part of the day with temperatures rising to 16 degrees.

A total of 7 riders signed on for this challenging event which accounted for 5 IVCA members and 2 guests. The route planned was ideal preparation for those taking part in the Wicklow 200 next month which proves to be an exceptional challenge given the new start point and early climbs.



Before setting out the group remembered Gay Farnan, Director of the Leisure League who passed away on the 29th March this year. Gay initiated and set this route some years ago to help prepare tour riders for the Wicklow 200 in which he played no small part in organising.

After some discussion, the group was advised of the safety rules and the route which for the early part of the tour would be scenic with breathtaking views of the lower lakes and a planned tea stop in Laragh.

The group set out at a steady pace in the direction of the Belgard Road and Blessington. As the group commenced the ascent up the Blessington Road to Brittas the pace remained constant to ensure the group stayed together. The weather looked promising and everyone was in good spirits.



The group proceeded through Brittas and took the left turn in the direction of Manor Kilbride and on to the lower lakes, as we made our way towards Blessington the sun was shining brightly on the lakes and the views were breathtaking.

From Blessington we made our way onto the N81 in the direction of Poulaphouca taking in more stunning lake views continuing to Hollywood where we stopped.

As we set out on the climb from Hollywood the group began to string out a little with everyone going at a steady pace and all riders meeting at the top before commencing the climb to the Wicklow Gap.

As we climbed the Wicklow Gap the group strung out again with each rider progressing steadily to the top where we regrouped and took in the views and even had time for a photo.



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Before commencing the 6.6M descent into Laragh it was agreed to leave a time gap between each rider to ensure a safe run. The first rider to take off was **Evelyn Doyle** now known as the **Rocket Doyle** and the rest followed as agreed. The descent was fast as usual with strong winds making riders err on the side of caution.



With the sun shining, all arrived in Laragh exhilarated for the well-earned Tea Stop. The atmosphere was good with lots of fellow cyclists filling the air with talks of bikes, climbs, routes and the usual banter. The group took time to reflect on times when Gay Farnan cycled with us and when he provided support on the route in later years. This was the point of no return and with no backup car the only way was up. It was recalled that a few years ago a rider had to avail of Gay's back-up to get

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him to the finish. The rider enquired as to a flat route home and when the geographic location was explained he was very relieved when Gay offered to put his bike in the car and take him to the finish.



After a very enjoyable tea stop we commenced the approach to the Glenmacnass Waterfall with the road gradually rising and turning until we reached the top. Just as we got over the top we could see dark clouds rolling fast and then the heavens opened. A number of riders stopped to put on their rain jackets and the waterproof riders carried on resulting in a split in the group.



No worries though, the challenge was enjoyable and I'm sure Gay was looking down to see every rider was safe and that he even arranged for the rain to stop. As we proceeded on the 16K stretch to the Sally Gap the head wind got stronger, nevertheless one of our guest riders broke from the group and went so far ahead that he went through the Sally Gap in the wrong direction. The remainder 6 riders regrouped and before descending to Manor Kilbride a brief safety warning was given advising of the sharp right turn across the bridge and to take note of the cross winds. It was agreed that the

group again would descend with a time gap between each rider for safety reasons. The **Bullet Brogan** lived up to his name with his skilful decent.

The cross winds proved to be very strong and riders bike skills came into play resulting in a safe yet fast descent. As the riders levelled out the pace increased and continued until we regrouped at the fork in the road near Manor Kilbride. After a short chat Evelyn Doyle and Pat Murphy took the lead and set a steady pace to bring the group out onto the Blessington Road for our final decent into Tallaght and on to the finish where we met up with our guest rider.

A special thanks to our guest riders **Brendan Johnston** and **Martin Casey** who did more than their fair share on the front. A most enjoyable and energising day and a good time had by all. The next event is the Wicklow 200 on the 11th June see the website for details.

Tony Pearson