

Ben Warden (leader)	Honda CBR1000	Steve Mudford	Suzuki GSXR750
Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Cindy Lee (rear rider)	Triumph 675
Tony Stegmar	Honda CBR1000	Aiden Baker (3 rd ride)	Kawasaki ER6N
Ron Johnson	Honda CBF1000	Rhys Artridge (1 st ride)	Yamaha R6
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600		<i>9 bikes, 8 people</i>

I didn't sleep well the night before. I listened to the rain and debated whether to ride or not, hoping it would stop raining by the morning. I was daunted at the thought of a wet ride to Mt Baw Baw. I'd had a previously aborted attempt a few years ago where I'd lost my nerve riding solo in high winds on wet roads with fallen branches and gravel everywhere. Another time I'd struggled up and down on the GSXR. I decided to volunteer for rear rider.

Eight able-bodied riders showed up at Yarra Glen in defiance of the weather forecast, daring the skies to spoil our ride. And yes, it started raining just as we were taking off towards Healesville to Yarra Junction and beyond.

The two new riders left us after 15 km and the rest of us persevered. I rode cautiously along the slippery wet road to Noojee, avoiding all the shiny bits, thinking about all the crashes that had happened on that road. A brief stop at Noojee and then it was more of the same on the long road to Mt Baw Baw. I picked my way through the sticks and stones collecting leaf litter. My iridium visor didn't help one bit. It was dark and difficult to see through the drizzle and fogged up visor but I still couldn't help admiring the gorgeous scenery all around me.

By the time I rolled into Baw Baw and saw the guys lined up under the eaves of a building for shelter from the rain, I felt like we'd lost our challenge to the elements – well maybe I had ... a little maybe. The others didn't seem so defeated and after the usual banter, a few stories, a few chuckles, we decided to head back.

It was still raining. The immediate descent from Baw Baw resort was steep and slippery. At the first corner from the resort, I thought I'd push a little bit and test myself in the wet. I was surprised at how much better I felt going a little faster. The bike felt nice and steady going round the tight corners and I was able to steer easily avoiding the millions of sticks and odd pot holes. There was only one jolt due to a dodgy down-gear change, but otherwise, I felt in control and found myself really enjoying the ride. Of course that sense of control is an illusion which could have been shattered in an instant, but where's the fun in being so pessimistic!

I emerged from the forest on the ridge at Icy Creek where I pulled over and stopped. I turned off the engine and looked down at the beautiful scenery below. It looked like large puffs of steam clouds hanging still just above the dense green tree tops. The peace and tranquility I felt was broken by the sound of angry sports bikes. Oh yes! Back to the ride and onwards!

By the time we were heading back into Noojee the sky was blue, the sun shining hard and the air steamy. There were plenty of smiles over lunch. I felt great; I had beaten Mt Baw Baw!

Paul Southwell joined us at Noojee. Ben was persuaded to end the ride at Yarra Glen rather than Longwarry. None of us were interested in that long boring freeway ride back to Melbourne.

Riding from Noojee to Powelltown through the fast sweepers, I thought I saw something crawl right across the bottom edge of my visor. I dismissed it thinking it was only light reflecting in my side mirrors playing tricks on me. Then something crawled back left. Oh my God, a bug! I flipped my visor up and down a few times and shook my head to lose the offending insect. I regained my composure and speed. After a while I was climbing up past the Ada Tree about to hit the twisties when I saw a giant bug crawl straight up the inside of my visor between my eyes! It looked like the biggest bull ant in the world, or (please don't let it be) a wasp! I screamed! I slammed open my visor and shook my head while trying to stay on the road. A few more violent shakes of the head and flips of the visor and the bug vanished from my thoughts as I was now leaning into my first corner. There were no bugs, no wet or sticks or stones, just beautifully dry smooth flowing corners. Those corners never felt better!

The group hooned through Powelltown and Healesville to finish up at Yarra Glen. Back home, Steve and I were on a high. We conquered the weather, prevailing against the crappy conditions for what turned out to be a fantastic ride. I'm ready for more!

Cindy Lee