

First year in the Chair

Summary

2023 has been a year with many positives. Growth of our sport in some disciplines has been refreshing given the financial stresses effecting so many New Zealanders.

All school cycling events were well supported with almost 1600 rangatahi riding their bikes enjoying what the sport offers.

Events:

Cancellations luckily were not the topic of concern for event organisers for the first time in 3 years. The uncertainty which has plagued our calendar has lifted participation numbers which reflect the confidence riders have again.

Our calendar year typically remains the same each year giving parents and coaches stability, it traditionally starts with the Škoda NI and Škoda SI MTB events in March.

Numbers of riders increased in the NI but dropped ever so slightly in SI which is surprising because MTB has seen the biggest growth over the past years.

July is always the busiest month with five events over three disciplines (Road, Track and CX) happening. Škoda SI and Škoda NI Road champs kicked off in Cambridge and Christchurch which sadly showed a very slight decrease in riders, from reports presented racing was fierce and some exciting finishes. Škoda NI and National Track Champs were held very soon after road champs with an increase of riders. Busy July finished off with the Škoda NI and Škoda SI CX champs happening on the same date with both events attracting more participants. Watch this space for new initiatives CX have planned for the future its another code gaining popularity.

Jumping forward to late August, the strongly contested Škoda Southern Tour presented by Cuddon Engineering and Škoda Northern Tours presented by Safetyfinder continue to provide quality fields of riders who for many were experiencing their first stage race. Riders who attended were rewarded medals and jerseys for their efforts and for some winning National titles in Time Trial, Hill Climb and Crit. Both these events showed an increase from previous years, testament to the quality and hard work of organisers who we are very appreciative of.

Škoda SI track champs wound up track racing for the year in Invercargill with less riders than the previous year.

Capping off a year without cancellations the Škoda National MTB in Blenheim and Škoda National Road Champs held in Manawatu - both awesome events that produce some outstanding results. A heartfelt thanks from our Exec goes out to the multitude of people who give their time to these events, we all know without the support our landscape of events would look so different.

To our host event organisers your dedication to providing positive, happy, fun experiences for our young cyclists cannot be thanked enough. You are the backbone of schools cycling - without events we would not exist. All of New Zealand's top riders competing around the world on pro-contracts started at School Cycling events - proof that with hard work and dedication, anything is possible.

Overview:

As hoped school cycling is returning to where numbers were prior to COVID.

End of year nearly 1600 riders from 277 schools took part in the 13 events offered, pre COVID they sat around the 1800 mark.

Importantly for the future of our organisation, sponsorship and funding is an ongoing concern - Škoda New Zealand's support has come to an end in 2023 which we have been very grateful of having.

Continued reliance on all funding sources to assist with the operational expenses for events will be very important moving forward into 2024. We thank all those local community trusts, councils and businesses who have given to School Cycling this past year, it has been much appreciated.

From the Tech bench:

Not a lot of rule changes were made for 2023 - gearing for age groups has finally been resolved! Inclusion of composite teams is another item which has been under the spotlight and will hopefully be finalised in 2024. At the end of the day we want more kids on bikes having fun. Gender inclusion policy document has been adopted by Cycling NZ as will be the code of conduct policy.

Cycling NZ School Rules are a living document - they do change now and again, a reminder to check them before attending any event.

Riders Focus Group:

Again we were lucky to have a group of young people who wanted to contribute in school cycling. They meet regularly and give our exec a riders perspective, one idea coming from them for 2024 is the "Passion Award" - look out at 2024 events for that initiative.

Recognition Award recipient: Ryan Fitzgerald Taieri College

Ryan was a worthy recipient for this award for all his hard work with the school MTB team at Taieri College, the sport has grown massively because of his dedication.

Congratulations "Mr Fitz"

In closing on behalf of Cycling New Zealand Schools I wish to thank everyone who has contributed to a successful year. To all the school TIC's, coaches, parents who give your time for our rangatahi your support is appreciated.

To the people who "make it happen" - Cycling New Zealand Event team, event organisers, commissaries, sponsors and volunteers you are our "Rock Stars" - without your hard work we would not be giving our rangatahi these opportunities and lessons in life.

Waine Harding

Chair