

The Alpine Dream

With Dr H G Nelson and Rampaging Roy Slaven

HG: And a big welcome back to viewers from around the world joining us in the exclusive resort setting of Bright, holiday destination of Australia's well-heeled rich and famous, the Athens of the South. This weekend we focus once again on Australia's Premier Festival of the Pedal, the Celebration of the Cycle, the Parade of the Pushie. It's the Audax Alpine Classic and here with me to provide comment, colour, movement, emotion, pathos and above all gravitas, it is of course none other than the Lithgow Legend, the All-Seeing Sage of Audax – welcome back into the saddle - **Rampaging Roy Slaven!**

Roy: Yaaiirssss, thank you HG. It's just great to be here in Bright again. If there's anywhere in Australia – in fact make that anywhere in the world HG – that rivals Bright for class, refinement, gentility, sheer *je ne sais quoi* – then I'm certainly yet to hear of it ..

HG: ... Well there is Smiggin Holes ...

Roy: Of course there is. But really HG, Smiggin Holes is your winter playground and Bright is your year-round resort for the glitterati, so personally I put them in separate categories. In fact I'd like to see Bright launch a bid for the Summer Olympics to follow on from the Smiggins winter tilt. How good would that be? You've got all the facilities here and ready – track and field at the footy oval, gymnastics and Greco-Roman wrestling at the Wandiligong Community Hall, sailing on Lake Catani, swimming and water polo at the Porepunkah weir, and so on. It's all ready to go – come on Jaques Rrrrrroggggue – what are you waiting for? – announce it now!

Anyway back to the business at hand, the Classic. Now, you hear people rambling on about your Tours de France, your Giros d'Italia, your Paris-Roubaix. Well, to me they don't rate a candle, not a burnt out matchstick, to this event, the Alpine Classic. **All those Euro-trash, hi-tech, shaved-leg, substance-abusing, carbon-fibre eating overpaid poncing primmadonnas of the pedal prancing up and down the Champs-Elysees in garish lycra. THAT'S NOT CYCLING! - IT'S VAUDEVILLE, A HIGH SPEED MARDI GRAS, CABARET ON WHEELS!!**

(Pause)

No, give me a hairy pair of legs like gnarled old tree trunks, a sagging pair of baggy knicks, a faded woollen jersey, a dentist's mirror stuck to the Styrofoam helmet, a proper cast-iron pushie with mudguards racks and a K-Mart dynamo generator. That's what we want to see, that's the spirit of Audax, that's what this event is all about!!!

HG: You're right there Roy. This sport does risk going the way of irrelevancies like the America's cup, Formula 1, golf, tabletennis, beach volleyball – the human spirit overwhelmed by technology. Back to basics I say. But tell me about your early days as a wheelman – I hear you were pretty big on the Lithgow cycling scene.

Roy: Well, of course that's for others to say HG. But I can tell you that even this Alpine Classic is a bit soft compared to what we Lithgow Wheelmen got up to. Gears and brakes for starters – never had 'em in Lithgow ...

HG: ... so that would have been your track racing wouldn't it ...

Roy: ... track racing, road racing, mountain climbing, your proper long distance events like Paris – Vladivostok – Paris, herding the cattle, delivering the milk. You name it, didn't matter – same bike for the lot. None of this specialisation rubbish.

HG: And you've got a few ideas for this event, based on the way it was when you kicked off the whole concept back in Lithgow

Roy: Yes HG. I'd like to see it run in winter. At night. Nude.

HG: Well it would have to be in winter if the Bright Summer Olympics were on, to distinguish the franchise, wouldn't it. But nude as well? At night? That's increasing the degree of difficulty, that's going to raise the bar a little isn't it?

Roy: Shrink the bar more than a little I would have thought HG – that's what we found on those Lithgow winter nights anyway. Still, a bit of shrinkage makes the seating issue more straightforward.

HG: I see what you mean there Roy, I think. But look, we'll have to come back to these bold ideas a little later in the show – it's time to get onto this year's edition and the issue of the moment, the talk of the town, the buzz around Bright is about just one thing at the moment – the weather. It's an inferno out there Roy, 41 degrees here in downtown Bright and God knows how hot up there on the slopes of Buffalo. How will this play out Roy, what will it mean for these riders today?

Roy: Nothing, HG.

HG: Nothing!!!

Roy: Nothing. That's to say, it should mean nothing HG, to a true Audaxer. Complaining about the weather would be like complaining about the bike seat being only a tenth the size of your arse, or the fact that someone put a few hills in your way, or your pushie didn't come with an engine and a chauffeur. Just get on with things and suffer in silence. What else is this event about?!

HG: I see Roy. All the same the organising committee here have published some hot weather guidelines, which I thought it would be worth running through for the viewers out there. They're employing a highly sophisticated system developed by the Australian Association of Sports Scientists which uses something called the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature or WBGT for short. Now as near as Roy and I can make out – and we've studied this carefully – this involves getting under the shower in your bike helmet, running outside in the nude and standing in the sun, reciting Advance Australia Fair backwards while thinking of a number between 1 and 1000, multiplying by the square root of two, subtracting the digits of your birthday in reverse order and adding back the number you first thought of. If you can get through all that in under 28 seconds and haven't been arrested for insanity or indecency, you're right to go.

Now Roy and I thought that was all a bit complicated so in consultation with the Smoko Institute of Biometric Analysis we've come up with a more practical measure called the DWAT, which is short for Dead Wombat's Arschole Temperature. All you need for this one is a dead wombat lying in the sun by the side of the road – plenty of those in these parts – and a rectal thermometer ...

Roy: Standard part of the Audaxer's cycling kit HG

HG: ... of course. Now you simply insert the thermometer into the appropriate part of the dead wombat – helps if it's not squashed too flat – wait 20 seconds, and read off the result. And if your reading's over the threshold temperature ...

Roy: 57 degrees, which is technically known as the Furry Underground Creature's Khyber Indicates No Go for Heavy Outdoor Toil – an easily remembered acronym HG

HG: ... the event's off – what could be simpler? We put it to the test a bit earlier with Fatso the Fat-Arsed Wombat and fortunately it proved conclusively there was no need to pull the pin on today's event.

Speaking of which, we're starting to get some pictures – sorry, I should say vision – coming through right now. What have we got here? – looks like four old blokes by the side of the road doing something with sticks. Talk us through this manoeuvre Roy ...

Roy: Well obviously HG they're about to start a fire and boil the billy, as you do halfway up Buffalo in the Classic. Forget those substance-laced "energy drinks", "power bars", "carbo gels" and the like. They're just overpriced rubbish. A chipped enamel mug full of hot billy tea, ten spoonfuls of sugar, a touch of eucalyptus and you're set to climb anything in sight.

But perhaps my analysis may have been a bit premature there. This bloke's not unstrapping the billy from the packrack after all. No, it's the blacksmith's kit he's gone for HG. Looks like we're about to see some on the road Audax-style bike repairs ...

HG: Cracked forks perhaps. This could be a very special moment we're about to bring you viewers.

Roy: Watch this closely and learn, kiddies at home. You can try this out the back of Dad's shed when you bust your new tricycle. Now, see how one of these fellas has grabbed the nearest road sign for a bit of reinforcing rod? Superb work. I love a good bit of improvisation HG.

HG: Sheer poetry, Roy. Can't do that with carbon fibre! But while that's going on we're cross-cutting to some on-road action featuring a few of the favoured riders. Who are these old blokes in the red and yellow jerseys?

Roy: Looks like it says "Eastern Veterans" there on their kit, HG. German colours, obviously, so these would be your returned soldiers from the Russian Front who've taken up long distance riding in later life. Good on 'em I say. Great gesture of international reconciliation to see them making the long journey down under to participate alongside our boys from the Yackandandah RSL Cycling Auxiliary.

HG: And now here are some of the younger lads, mere pups in Audax terms. Some more than slightly carbon-fibre-eurotrash looks here I'm afraid though. Take this bloke with the white earphones in ... what's this, getting real time strategy from his *Directeur Sportif*? Not on I say. Look up his number Roy so we can report him to the event director ...

Roy: Let's see, HG: "Gasparini". "Angelo don Gasparini" of the "bicigaga" team. How do these people get let in to start with? Italian, obviously. Pure eurotrash, as you just said. Could be mafia as well.

HG: Let's see who else we've got here on this rogue "bicigaga" team Roy: "Marqués".

Roy: Spanish eurotrash

HG: Carbon fibre frame, garish lycra, the lot. Still, looks like he's recording a good time, Roy – 7 hours 45 minutes.

Roy: Of course he is, but so would you HG on that sort of gear – and I'm not talking about his bike.

HG: Also on the team we have Christiansen ...

Roy: **Danish** Eurotrash! Save us HG. Probably a bodywaxed adult film actor off the bike to boot ...

HG: Could be right Roy, but it actually says here he's pulled out at the last minute. Who else have we got – let's see – van der Valk ...

Roy: ... stop it, HG, you're making me puke ... Where are the locals? What's happening to Australian cycling? Aren't our own lads good enough any more??

HG: Here's one onscreen now: O'Neil. But Christ Almighty, look at the kit and the bike!

Roy: Italian! Carbon fibre!! EUROTRASH WANNABEE WANKER !!!! And I know this bloke too – only last year a cast iron bike and a simple aussie club kit were good enough for him. But no, just 'cos he misses some self-imposed, arbitrary, meaningless, who-gives-a-stuff, that's-not-the-point-of –Audax nine hour time target by three irrelevant minutes, suddenly that's all out the window and he's jumped onto the technology bandwagon. If I was running the event ...

HG: ... as you should be, Roy ...

Roy: ... as I should be HG, then this bloke and all his type would be out on their waxed arses.

HG: But hang on Roy, this O'Neil character's pulled over to the side of the road and hopped off his fancy bike just above Eurobin Falls ...

Roy: You sure that wasn't Eurotrash Falls HG?

HG: Well it would be appropriate in the circumstances Roy. And look! - now he's turned around and headed back to Bright – looks like a clearcut case of cheating here Roy

Roy: Anything to get under 9 hours. I don't know what this event's coming to...

HG: And now we're getting reports of large numbers of riders stopping at Bright and refusing to continue up Buffalo – including at least half that "bicigaga" mob and more than a few Eastern Veterans

Roy: I predicted this HG.

HG: But I thought you said the weather wouldn't be a factor Roy?

Roy: No HG, nothing to do with the weather. My sources tell me this is a planned protest against Dingo Dell being dropped from the route this year and replaced by a turnaround point at some clapped out overblown faux-European *Chalet* full of out of work off season eurotrash ski-instructors. And I support this protest HG! What could be more Australian than Dingo Dell? A *Chalet* is just soft!! In fact I'd have moved the checkpoint to the top of the Horn and made the riders climb the summit carrying their bikes. **That** would be a proper challenge. These Audax organisers have just lost the plot