

# New to racing? Welcome. This might help.

## **Race Five – Leeston Classic, 48km Handicap, Leeston**

This course has similar features to the Open Day races at Eyreton but unlike a Graded Scratch this three-lap race is a Handicap.

Handicap? You race in small groups of a similar ability but start at different times. The organisers look at those who have entered and decide who should start first (the slowest group) and who should start last (the fastest group – aka Scratch). Everyone in-between starts in small groups with varying time gaps between them. All the small groups work (hard – keeping the pace high) and if the organisers get the handicapping right it will all come together in the last kilometre. (Note: it never ever happens that way.)

What sort of course is it? Basically flat, slight undulations all the way round. Sometimes the wind makes life interesting (as it always does).

How do I do well? Firstly, by staying safe. By now you should be able to ride through-and-off. You'll get lots of practice in this race. Secondly, by racing your race. Winning is great but rare. It's a numbers game, most racers don't win. You can enjoy yourself just as much by using the race to push yourself; test your fitness; test your racing strategy; or save your energy for the sprint.

Ok, but I want to win. As ever there are two ways to win; a breakaway or in the sprint but, this being a handicap, first you have to catch the group that started off first. So, you need to get your group to catch every group in front whilst, at the same time, avoiding being caught by the group that's trying to catch you. That means working hard, very hard. You have to share the work and you might find that some in your group can't or won't. A bit like life. If you want to win the sprint you'll have to save your energy during the race, risking that by keeping your powder dry you won't catch the first group off.