



REGULAR



Photo • Simon Hayes

Headaches and All That Jazz

As this is my first column, I thought I would introduce myself by recapping where the past 12 months have taken me. My year began with a win at the National Track Championships at Dunc Gray Velodrome in Sydney. This secured me a start at the World Track Championships in Manchester where I won a bronze medal in the Scratch Race. This was definitely the highlight of 2008 for me.

After the Track Worlds, I headed straight to the AIS road program in Varese, Italy. I found it difficult to find my road legs after coming off the track season. You'd think it would be the same and you could carry your fitness through but it's not the case. My first race on the road was the Tour of Flanders. Needless to say I didn't achieve a great result. But I did finish, which was the aim for my first couple of races so I could just do some road kilometres again. After a few more solid races I was able to find my legs and started to achieve some podium placings and really enjoy being on the road.

I raced in Europe for a couple of months before heading to the US

to race with the Jazz Apple Cycling Team. All didn't quite go to plan however and after being there for only 10 days I experienced a severe migraine. Thinking I was possibly over tired and still suffering from racing, I went to bed thinking it would be gone by morning. Little did I know this was to be the first of many migraines I would experience. Within the next two weeks I had six that completely debilitated me.

Having been to see a doctor he prescribed me with medication to ease the pain. But he couldn't tell me the reason why I was getting them. The same sort of pattern continued for the next month. My training and racing was being interrupted to the extent that I had to miss one of the biggest events on the US calendar – The Triple Crown Series.

I was becoming increasingly frustrated, not only by the fact that I could see my season slipping away, but as to the reasons behind this continuing problem. My initial thoughts revolved around a crash that I had in 2007 during a stage of the Route de France. That crash left me needing stitches in my head and

face. I also broke my collarbone, shoulder and ribs, which earned me a four day stay in hospital.

By this point I was advised to come back to Australia so that I could get some tests done in order to get to the source of the problem.

When I arrived home in Australia I had numerous tests, scans and MRI's all of which came back clear. I then went to the AIS in Canberra and after doing a bike fit, we discovered that due to an oversight, my stem was four centimetres too long. At first I was quite shocked that such a small measurement could have such a huge impact on my body, but soon it all made sense. I sit on my bike for between 20 and 25 hours a week. With my stem being too long, I was putting huge amounts of stress on the nerves in my neck from reaching too far.

Once we found the source of the problem causing my migraines it was a case of numerous ongoing physiotherapy treatments to correct my neck muscles and nerves. I still have the occasional headache but nothing my weekly physio treatments can't help. All is back on track now but I can definitely say that I learnt a very valuable lesson

about how important bike set up is.

I think, well I hope, I have been able to turn my early end to the road season into a positive. Coming home earlier than anticipated has given me a bit more time to complete some extra units for my Bachelor of Business/Marketing degree. This year I embarked on the challenge of studying via correspondence, which has been quite difficult at times I must say. Previously I was studying on campus and had the luxury of being able to ask questions during lectures. Two years ago at the beginning of my degree who would have thought I would be calling boring lectures a luxury!! Oh, how things change!

Over the past couple of months my coach Matt Gilmore and I have been working to improve my aerobic capacity. This has meant plenty of quality time with the ergo so as I write this I'm looking forward to heading into track camp in Adelaide to get back on the boards. So what with training, physio and studying for a degree, 2009 promises to be a busy year. Bye for now, Belinda 🐼