

Everesting attempt #2

After my previous failed attempt at Everesting I prepared myself for another go at it, although on a different hill. Friends had given me plenty of suggested climbs, but I opted for a smaller hill close to Lancaster. Condor Bottoms isn't very long but it is quite steep and is used by the local cycling club for a hill climb every September.



Photo 1: Sunrise. By this time I had climbed almost 2 000 m, but it was slightly warmer.

Condor Bottoms has an average gradient of about 7%, but as it is quite short I would have climb it over 100 times. I had a practice

ride a few days earlier where I did 8 repeats, so I knew the hill well. I intended to Everest on the August bank holiday Monday, but the weather forecast was for rain, so I went for the Sunday. The night before I packed up a small rucksack with extra water and plenty of food and then at 4 am I jumped on my bike and cycled to the top of the climb.

I dropped my bag behind a gate at the top of the climb, pressed start on my Garmin and at 4:20 am rolled down the hill for the first rep of the day. It was cold, very cold. I had worn a long sleeved thermal top beneath my cycling jersey, but I hadn't expected it to be this cold. Before I'd even finished one rep my hands were frozen, but I didn't have any gloves so all I could do was man-up and wait for sunrise.

The first couple of hours was OK, apart from the cold, and I had my first break as the sun rose when I had climbed almost 2 000 m. It wasn't long after this when I saw my first cyclist, another guy from COLT out on an early morning training ride. He waved, wished me luck and headed off. A bit later Mark turned up and ended up cycling with me for over ten reps. The Prof, Teacake and Sue, all from Garstang cycling club also soon arrived, although they all had plans for the day and only rode one rep with me, but it was a real lift to see other people.

Mentally one of the hardest points was after I had climbed 3 000 m. On a regular ride this would be a fair amount of climbing, but today it was only just a third. I really wasn't sure when I set off if I would be able to complete the ride, but I was determined to get further than the failed attempt, and to at least climb more than I had ever climbed in one ride, which was 5 200 m during last years Bowland Badass.

There isn't much to add about the cycling, rep after rep after rep. By mid morning I knew every bump on that hill, and could descend it like a pro. I had got myself into a nice rhythm and was slowly ticking off the reps. What made it manageable was the amount of supporters who turned out from COLT. Jack and Niamh turned up with some cake and then stayed almost the whole day. Howard probably cycled at least 25 reps over the day, keeping me company. Bob from the Lancaster cycling club drove up and took a

few photos. Stu arrived in his AA van, and stayed for a few hours. Podge turned up to chat with Jack and again stayed until the very end. Brett and his wife drove up also to give me cake. Can't have too much cake.



Photo 2: Bob took some very professional photos as I continued to climb up and down like a grinning fool.

Big Kev turned up to ride with me for a few reps and then returned later in his car, blasting out The Eye of the Tiger as he drove in front of me. Ian came a bit later straight from completing a very tough undulating time trial. He was then knocked off his bike on his way home. That wasn't going to stop Ian and he returned towards the end along with his lovely wife. Louise arrived a bit later with a homemade fruit smoothy, which was much appreciated. Matt, who had ridden with me on my failed attempt came out to shout abuse at me. Jim rode a few reps with me and gave me some OTE gels, which taste nice and are easy on the stomach (I've run out, can I have some more?).

It was about the middle of the afternoon when I started to feel rough. I'd done just over 6 000 m of climbing, but I was now cy-

cling on my own and was struggling. Podge, the only person still standing at the top, put a call out on Facebook to other COLT's to come and join me as I needed the support. Non-COLT member Richard was the first to turn up, soon followed by Kev and Ian, who all cycled with me to the end. Niamh and Jack turned up at the top again, all smart as they were going out. Howard returned with his wife, as did Julie, Ian's wife, who brought out a full chicken roast dinner and homemade crumble.

With that to come there was no way I couldn't finish, and slowly I neared the magic number of 8848 m. By this time it was getting dark again so for the last couple of reps Howard drove behind the four of us, until I realised that I only had one more rep to do.



Photo 3: All finished. It was dark when I set off and it was dark when I finished.

When I finished I had to help off my bike and struggled to smile as I was so completely spent. I had completed 113 reps of Condor Bottoms. After a couple of photos, where I look terrible,

Ian and Julie loaded me and my bike into their van and drove me home, along with my roast dinner. Very appreciated.

Obviously the first thing I did when I got home was to upload the ride to Strava, just to make sure that I hadn't miscalculated. 150 miles and over 16 hours is a long day on a bike, and I am proud of my achievement, but I can guarantee that I won't be doing it again. If friends want to have a go then I'll come out and support, but once was enough for me. A few days later and my name was added to the Hall of Fame on the official Everesting website and then a few weeks later Laurie contacted me to write a report as he had created a blog for any UK Everesting attempts. It's taken me almost a month to write this report and I'll end it to say that I couldn't have done it without the support of everyone who turned up to ride with me, hand me food or drink or cheer me on. A big thank you to you all and sorry if I've missed anyone.