

## **Benjamin Baker's guide to the State XC Course at Wimmera Hills Winery**

The course for the Victorian State XC Series at Wimmera Hills is great fun. There are no boggy bits even if the weather is wet, there is great spectator access, great singletrack and plenty of overtaking. We have not included the really rocky tyre-eating sections, instead we have built a whole new rip-snorting flowy new high speed return side of the loop with a couple of short sharp climbs thrown in to sort the sheep from the real mountain goats. It is a 6km loop with most of the climbing in the outbound leg. It is a fast lap – fat old supermasters like me do it in a ½ hour, I reckon elites will be looking at eight laps at least.

The superlap starts at the front gate to the Wimmera Hills Winery on the Elmhurst Glenpatrick Road. It is uphill for the first 250m all the way through the right hand turn and past the Cellar Door where a brief gentle downhill allows those who warmed up properly to get ahead - buoyed by the adoring screams of their supporters at the wine tasting area.

Continuing on vehicular track we swing left past the sheepyards and left again along the side of the woolshed. Open paddock continues to the 500m mark where you zip through the gate into the singletrack. Pretty much a steady climb for another kilometre of singletrack with some overtaking opportunities and stunning views over the winery to the Grampians in the blue distance. Only now do we pass out of view of the spectators at the winery.

After the first technical downhill there is good overtaking for 100m as you follow the contour from “Lookout Point” around to the north side of the hill. Two kilometres into the loop is the first AB divide to make the descent onto the bank of the channel. Any idiot can take the A line – its just a matter of guts - and a ladder bridge, avoid them both with the right hand B line. The bank of the channel is wide and fast and you maintain all your speed as you swing right through the channel itself and up onto the singletrack the other side.

Power down and around the head of the dam onto Lakeside Boulevard. I don't know if any of your fans will be enjoying the barbeque in the gazebo overlooking the vineyard but don't be distracted by the smell. Now for the magic: Its not firetrail but there is no problem overtaking. This is custom XC racetrack, open, flowing, a whole meter wide. Two kilometres of it before you climb back past the gazebo (looks like a tin shed actually) and swoop through some esses to the second AB for a challenging log (hey I need a new chainring anyway). Watch your head as you come out of the climbing left hand berm. A last glimpse of the dam, a few meters of singletrack and you dive into Hayden's Hollow - zip, jump, zip ... .. and C L I i iimb back out again – that last bit is 10m up in 20m along. The good news is that's the last of the climbing until you are at the end of the lap.

A bit of benched out singletrack next to the vehicle access track and you are into a km of flat out gravity. Yee ha! Let it rip. Well seriously though, take it easy your first time through, it'll still be here on the next lap and not crashing is always a lot faster than crashing. After the gravity section a cruise along the “Front Lane” parallel to the road takes you into the final sweeping climb next to the driveway and up to the winery.

Plenty of enthusiastic well wishers as you pass through timing and the feed zone outside the Cellar Door tasting area and you will be fully geed up for your next ~~excruciating~~ exhilarating lap.

We look forward to hearing what you think of it.

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