



### First Race Back

New Year's greeting to everyone. I hope your Christmas break was fruitful and you had plenty of time with your love ones.

After the Taupo 4 Hour back in November I had a bit of a break from riding, as after a doctor's visit, discovered that I have some compressed Discs in my lower spine. So it was perfect timing to have a bit of a hiatus from racing and let my back calm down after a full-on year.

My first race back was the Maramarua 3 Day Enduro, which I managed to win last year on my YZ250 two-stroke. Unfortunately this year I had missed the first day's racing (GNCC) due to my injury, so I would only be competing in the EnduroX and Sprints days of the event. This meant there was little chance in taking the trophy again. Still it was good to be back on the bike and I enjoyed every minute of it.

The EnduroX was tough; the sun was belting down, there was no wind and the track was very physical. I was riding the impressive YZ450F which I'm enjoying more and more as my time on it increases. If I had to fault the bike at all it would be in EnduroX mode. The gearing is just too tall for log hopping and super-slow technical stuff. So I spent most of my time in first gear. That, plus a combination of my poor fitness level at present from being off the bike meant I could only muster a 3rd place finish in the final. Still, I was happy with the result as this was also Round 1 of the three round SuperEnduro Series, so getting points on the board was a good start.

Then it was the Enduro Sprints and I was feeling much better on the bike. I won a few tests and was never outside the top three, finishing in 2nd overall. With a couple of top riders having issues, these two solid results actually put me in 2nd overall for the M3DE trophy. Not bad considering I missed the first day.

I was still feeling OK that evening so decided to race the 2-hour Bel Ray cross country the following day. These are usually very fast and can be a little dangerous if you are not careful.

The starting procedure sees riders sit with their hands on their head and engine stopped. When the gun goes off you start your bike and off you go. Having had two holeshots on the YZ already last year I was feeling confident about getting another one. The gun went off and I grabbed the clutch and took a big swing on the kick starter. To cut a long story short, I messed up my start sequence and the bike didn't start. I was last away off the line and I knew it was going to be a long day in the saddle.

After two hours I had made it back to 4th overall. I had some good speed but my first two laps of picking my way through the field gave the front riders a buffer I was not able to catch.

The good news is that my back seemed to hold out fine over the three events so the time off the bike has helped out.

The next event for me will be Round 2 of the NZ SuperEnduro series at the Te Puke EnduroX on Feb 7th. I'm hoping to get a little 250F to ride, maybe one of the new WR250s even. They look like the business!

