



Press Release
(For immediate release)
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Tour hailed a success

Southland has once again been thrust into the spotlight thanks to the tireless efforts of a sporting club delivering New Zealand's premier cycle race.

Cycling Southland last week hosted the 56th PowerNet Tour of Southland and captured significant exposure for the region in the process.

With 27 editions of the event to his credit, tour director Bruce Ross was well aware of its impact.

"It puts Southland on the map – there's no doubt about that. It's a whole week of national and international exposure," he said.

"It's a huge effort and we've very fortunate that we have a very strong volunteer base to service the event. We're very proud to host New Zealand's premier cycling event but it does take a lot of work and a lot of effort."

Despite Mother Nature throwing a snowy curveball which forced the cancellation of the penultimate stage on Saturday, the 2011 Tour – won by Christchurch 19-year-old Josh Atkins – was a success.

"It was a difficult tour but I think it was very successful and the changes we made, particularly to the course, were positively received," Ross said.

"There were a couple of things sent to try us obviously – mainly the weather – but I think overall the organisation and the team we've got shone through in the end.

"I said before the start of the Tour that I was really excited about the wealth of young talent coming through and yes, it might be a changing of the guard, but we're really pleased with what's happening with New Zealand cycling and it's great to see that unfolding through the Tour here. It's very exciting for the future of New Zealand cycling."

Cycling Southland chief executive Nick Jeffrey said the Tour was a valuable platform from which to showcase the province.

"The event space is challenging right now and it's hard work with regards to the current economic situation. For us, considering the amount of prime time television coverage, newspaper inches, internet and radio, it's a phenomenal promotional opportunity for Southland and we recognise that and try and maximise it for the region," he said.

"Sure, it's about putting a bike race on, but it's also about doing something for the province."

The Tour was a huge logistical challenge annually for the club.

"The thing that's struck me is that, at the end of the day, it is actually a club that delivers this. Cycling Southland by definition is a club with limited staffing resources. Fortunately, we've got a great servant in the form of Bruce Ross and his family, together with the huge amount of support we get from volunteers which just can't be understated," Jeffrey said.

"It's just a massive undertaking and for a sporting club to deliver an event like this is pretty staggering."

The majority of those involved were volunteers who took time off work to make the Tour a reality.

“The number over the past 12 months has tipped over 50,000 volunteer hours ... those people are the lifeblood of the club and of an event like the PowerNet Tour of Southland. They are the fabric which holds it all together,” Jeffrey said.

“It just blows me away because volunteerism these days is just getting harder and harder, people’s time is getting more and more precious. We all know that personally.

“The level of support from officials and volunteers continues to grow and hopefully that’s an endorsement on the type of event we run. But it’s nothing you can take for granted and we need to take every opportunity to say an overwhelming thank you.”

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