



 Promising cyclist Dylan McKenna 18, suffered chronic fatigue but after doing The Lightning Process he was up racing again. Picture: David Caird

News

Young cyclist who fought back from chronic fatigue with winning style

Michael Smith, Herald Sun

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TOP young cyclist Dylan McKenna has overcome some tough obstacles.

Before the Mitchelton Bay Cycling Classic last year, glandular fever knocked him flat.

He recovered and took his place in the field, not expecting much.

“I didn’t even know if I’d finish,” McKenna admitted.

Not only did he finish, he was 12th of the 38 starters in the first men’s support race, his maiden senior test.

He did well again in the second race, 14th of 54 starters.

In the third race he gained attention with a top 10 finish, seventh of 45 riders.

“I’ve never seen this young man before, but I like what I’m seeing,” race commentator Matthew Keenan, who calls the Tour de France for SBS, said. In the fourth and final race, McKenna was in the lead group in the final straight. A crash in front of him took him down, but he recovered to finish 19th of 49 starters.

“This young man has been so impressive and courageous this week he deserves a round of applause,” Keenan said.

McKenna was looking forward to a good year, but his toughest obstacle was to come. Around May, he started to feel tired, his body ached and within weeks he couldn’t get out of bed at the family’s Castlemaine home.

”It was shocking,” he said.

“I felt too exhausted to move. It was a struggle to get to the toilet.” His mum, Marg, brought his meals to his bed.



📷 Picture: David Caird

“It was very distressing to see him like that,” she said.

Doctors couldn’t find anything wrong, but eventually diagnosed him with chronic fatigue. Over the next two months, the family tried many things, including a chronic fatigue physiotherapist in Melbourne.

“Nothing worked,” Marg said. McKenna began to lose hope. “I wanted to sell my bike, (but) Mum wouldn’t let me,” he said. “I used to be Dylan the cyclist, now I was Dylan the sick kid.”

A friend told the family about a course called The Lightning Process.

The friend’s daughter had battled anxiety and depression for years — but no longer felt their effects after a three-day course. McKenna did the course in Melbourne, finishing on July 22. The next day he took his bike to Castlemaine Cycling Club track and lined up in a 33km race.

Starting off scratch, the backmarker, he reeled in the field, sprinted clear and won.

“It was the sweetest win,” he said. Five months on, he hasn’t looked back.

He has completed year 12 at Bendigo Senior Secondary College, trained each day and works at a bike shop.

McKenna was back at the Mitchelton Bay Cycling Classic, held from January 1-3, claiming 19th of 60 in the first men’s support race and 11th in the third and final race.

THE LIGHTNING PROCESS

It teaches participants a brain’s response to stress, threat or illness can become ingrained and may continue long after it’s needed.

The course provides participants with a series of physical and mental exercises.

They calm the body and are said to create new neural pathways in the brain, breaking the cycle.

Ian Cleary, who runs the course in Australia, said McKenna “did brilliantly”.

“He threw himself into the training,” he said.

University of South Australia clinical neuroscience Professor Lorimer Moseley said it might not be for everyone, but there was “a big chunk of science” supporting the underlying principle of the “plasticity” of the brain.