



RIDING IN DOUBLE FORMATION PASSING THROUGH MANY OF THE SMALL TOWNS ON THE EAST COAST



THE "NEUTRAL" SECTION ALLOWED FOR SOME RELAXING RIDING THROUGH SCENIC AREAS

TAIWAN:

TOUR DE FORMOSA

Some of the world's best deaf and hearing impaired cyclists gathered in Taiwan during the month of November to compete in a six day 950km race around the circumference of the island nation. It was the second time that the tour had been staged (the first time being in 2008) and it is hoped that this event will turn into a bi-annual "Tour de France" style of race that will provide high level competition for deaf riders and a chance to develop friendship ties with riders from many countries.

Words: Daniel Carruthers

20 riders representing seven countries (Belgium, Russia, USA, NZ, Australia, Czech Republic, and Taiwan) lined up to compete in the points based tour that traversed through some stunning scenery. The Russians with their team of four strong riders dominated the tour with Dmitry Rozanov winning four stages and taking the overall win ahead of world champion deaf cyclist, Nicholas Schrieber (USA). Daniel Carruthers (NZL) finished in third position.

The organizers of the Tour de Formosa are using this event to showcase the beauty of Taiwan's landscape and culture; and help further establish Taiwan's visibility on the world stage. It is also a major event that receives governmental support similar to that of the UCI Tour de Taiwan, although not as grand a scale.

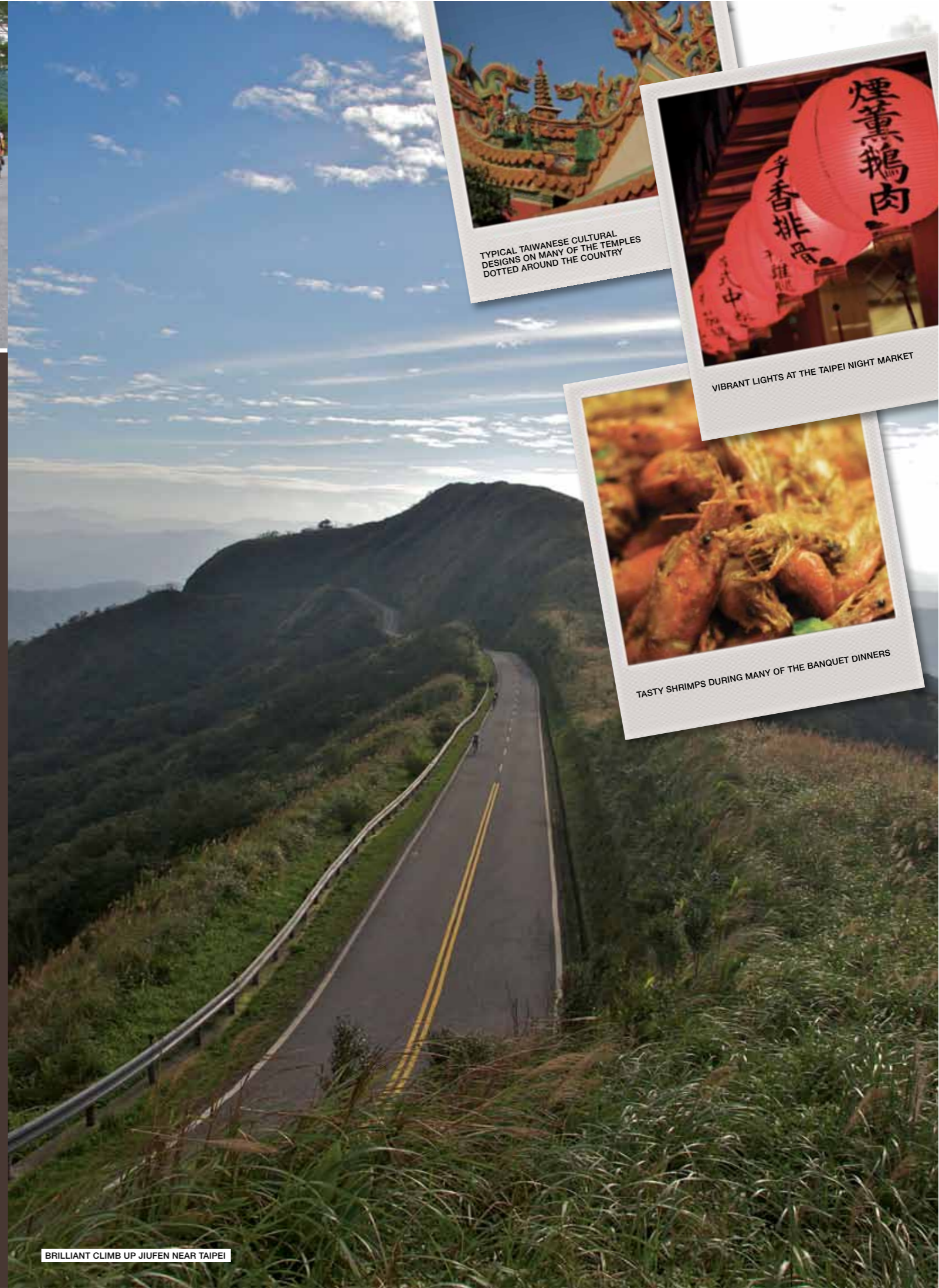
If you have never been to Taiwan previously, you will be pleasantly surprised that the country is a cyclists' paradise and contains a wide variety of terrain that would satisfy the discerning cyclist seeking quality roads, spectacular scenery, friendly drivers, and plenty of interesting foods to try. If you are headed to Taiwan at some point, be sure to ride in the surrounding mountains of Taipei - some world class riding to be found. Other great spots include the East Coast Highway 11 between Hualian and Taidong as well as the massive climb up Taroko Gorge and stunning scenic riding at Taiwan's famous Sun Moon Lake. Some brilliant rides can also be found down in Kenting where you can also enjoy some good surfing spots. You can visit www.danielcarruthers.com for further information or stories on epic rides in Taiwan. Also check out Inmotionasia.com, a cycling tour company run by a Kiwi in Taiwan.

The first day was a "parade" lap around the famous Taipei 101, one of the world's tallest buildings, where the deaf riders enjoyed a leisurely lap before going to enjoy a Taiwanese banquet for lunch. The banquet style is what set the style of eating for the entire tour. Riders were seated at round tables with revolving tops laden with a variety of Taiwanese (Chinese) style food but mostly fish with large gaping mouths and life-like eyes. Plenty of seafood such as large juicy prawns, tiny shell-fish, crabs, and not enough juicy red meat. A few of the riders were seen struggling to master chopsticks and opted for the regular knife and fork style of eating. While the food was interesting, it became the staple food for the week and quickly became boring. It was not satisfying enough for many riders and the result was a few outings for pizza and McDonalds! Breakfast in the mornings was a mixed bag. Typically riders enjoy western style but apart from brewed coffee and Nutella chocolate spread on white toast, there was nothing satisfying to eat as it was all Chinese greasy-style food to stay clear of when you are up early at 6am with 8.30am race start. There was mixed reactions from the riders about the food provided, but there was no choice. Normally at stage races you get to eat buffet style and can choose what you want to eat. One big eye-opener during the banquets was how quiet it is since most deaf riders are furiously signing and eating, the silence punctuated with loud guffaws or laughter. Sometimes you'd see other riders from other tables talking with other riders across the room - although different countries have their own sign language, the language barriers are

eliminated as all riders could communicate via sign. This also works well during the race for communication, there is no yelling or 'mis-hearing' that you can get in normal hearing races. Riders are not allowed to wear hearing aids while competing, so it is a race of silence for most - depending on the hearing loss level. To be eligible for the competition, your hearing loss has to be 55 decibels or higher in the better ear (mine is 92 decibels).

The second day was when the real racing began from Taipei's Banqiao District and finishing outside the Giant Factory in Dajia, Taichung. It was a 170km stage, but due to safety reasons and lack of police man-power, the first 90kms were done "neutral" double file format. At the 90km mark, atop a climb, was when the race officially started. After averaging 34km/h for almost three hours, the riders went into a frenzy and averaged 49km/h for the last 80kms! This was also greatly assisted by strong tail and cross-winds on the coast.

Each day, riders had to ride over half the stage before the actual racing would begin, so it resembled a 20-rider "training camp" where the lead car would control the pace between 30-35km/h for three hours or more. The riders were unleashed with only 70-80kms remaining, so it was like a slaughter house with riders attacking one after the other. Speeds often averaged 50km/h for the first 30 minutes till the breakaway got established. This was a pattern that characterized each day and the days were long - up to five hours each day in the saddle. Bottomline, it was good training and a good opportunity to socialize during the "neutral" sections. *Continued over page.*



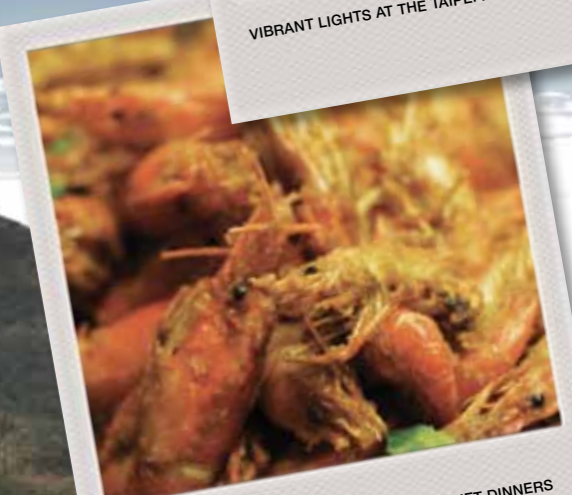
BRILLIANT CLIMB UP JIUFEN NEAR TAIPEI



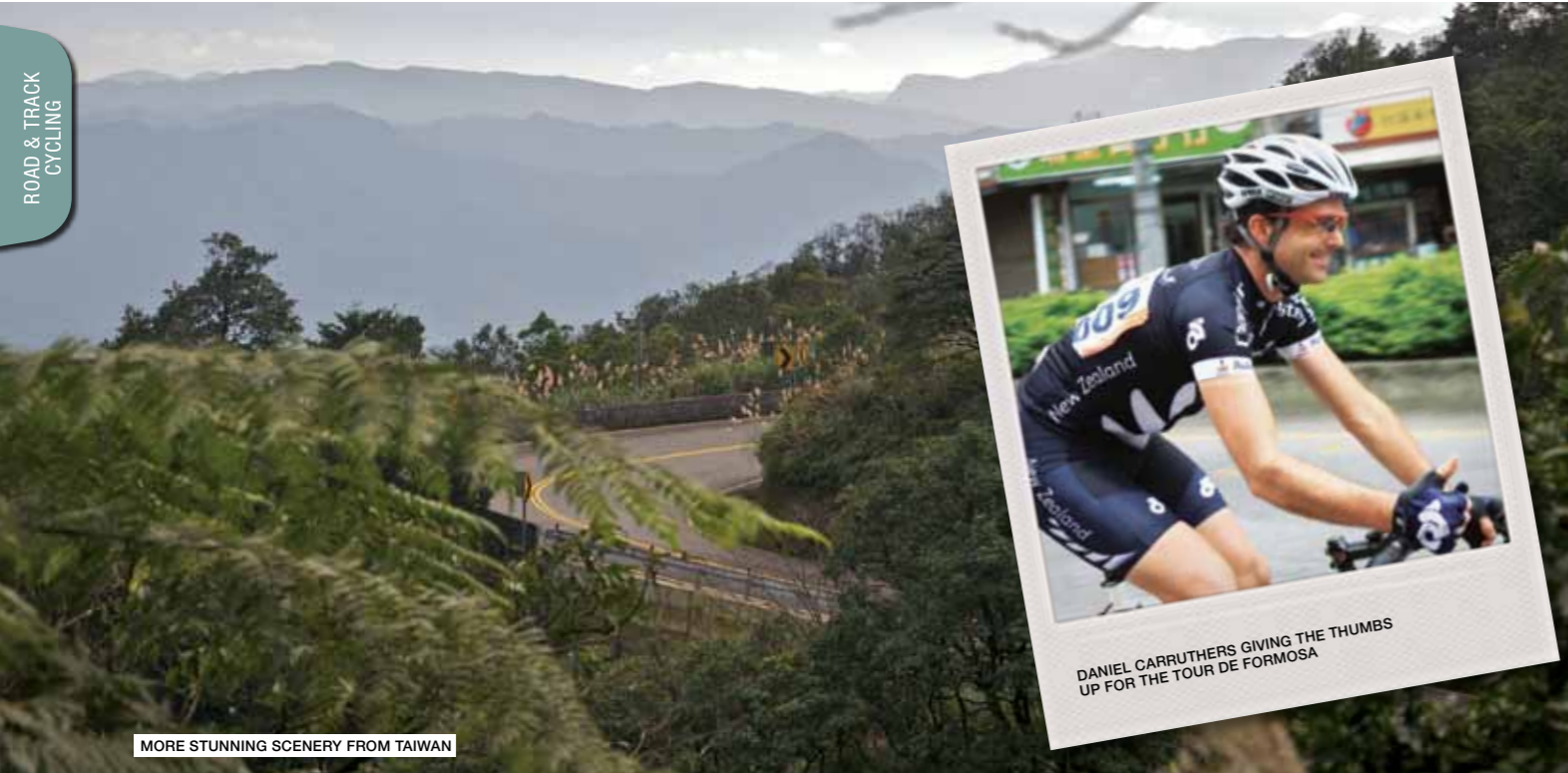
TYPICAL TAIWANESE CULTURAL DESIGNS ON MANY OF THE TEMPLES DOTTED AROUND THE COUNTRY



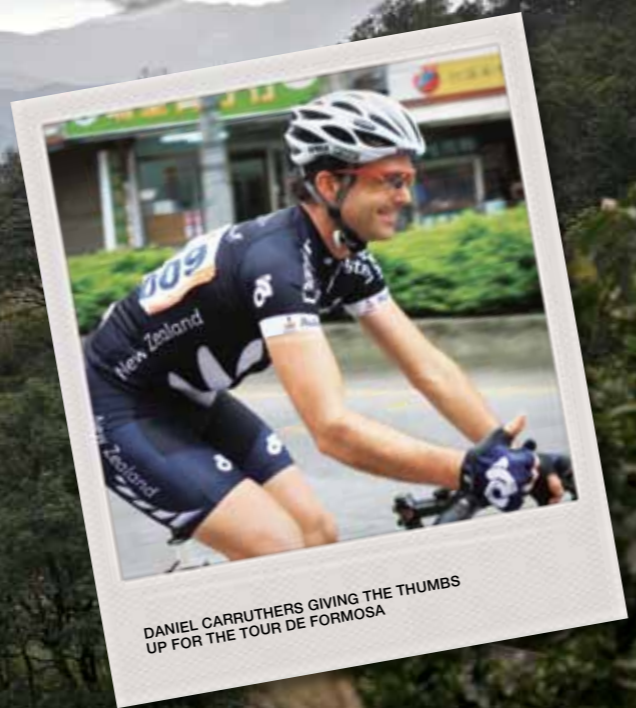
VIBRANT LIGHTS AT THE TAIPEI NIGHT MARKET



TASTY SHRIMPS DURING MANY OF THE BANQUET DINNERS



MORE STUNNING SCENERY FROM TAIWAN



DANIEL CARRUTHERS GIVING THE THUMBS UP FOR THE TOUR DE FORMOSA



THE TOP FIVE PLACE-GETTERS FOR THE GENERAL CLASSIFICATION OVERALL

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 Your gateway to Taiwan's world-class cycling!
 Run by a Kiwi, In Motion Asia provides stunning tours for all cycling enthusiasts in one of the best cycling destinations on the planet! Mention NZ Endurance - receive 10% discount
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CARRUTHERS FILES

I was the sole rider representing New Zealand and did not even have a support crew accompany me to Taiwan like all the other teams did. Most teams had three to five riders and had two support crew. This put me at an immediate disadvantage from a tactical perspective and I spent most of the race trying my best to survive. Each team was provided support cars and drivers – in my case I was lucky that the Australian manager volunteered to feed me from the support car.

Throughout the tour, I was struggling with cramp issues but was able to control it enough by riding smart and working in breaks when I could. However, I was under a lot of abuse from the Russians and Belgians for sitting on or refusing to keep riding hard when caught. In reality, I needed to ride smart as there was only one of me – a one man team, whilst the others had team-mates at their disposal especially the Russians who kept firing on all cylinders throughout the tour, winning five of the six stages on offer. I managed to get two seconds, a third and fourth that gave me enough points to clinch a podium spot.

The main racing highlights of the tour were:

In break of three – me, an American and a Russian during stage two to Tainan. The two riders were riding away after a flurry of attacks and I made it across to form the three-man breakaway. Initially I worked hard to establish the gap but then started taking shorter pulls, both tactically and for controlling a cramp – it was threatening to lock up but fortunately it did not. At the 5km to go mark, the American attacked hard while I was on the Russian's wheel. I decided to force the Russian to chase by refusing to do so myself. When the Russian saw that I was not going to pull through, he started chasing hard and it was a nice draft for a good 2-3kms, and when he sat up to force me to go it was at this point I attacked hard and established a big gap that the Russian could not close. My heart rate for the final 2kms was 191-195bpm! The gap to the American was closing, but he knew he had it and I was riding

for second.

A breakaway of five during stage three to Kenting, consisting of myself, the American and three Russians. I was stronger in the break but still not doing enough work to the chagrin of the Russians who kept trying to get me to work harder and also tried gapping me off the back on several attempts. We dropped one Russian and it was four of us going to the finish. At the 3km sign, the big Russian attacks and the American cannot cover him as planned so he gets a gap that myself and the American cannot close despite desperate chasing. With 1km to go, it became a cat and mouse between myself, the American and another Russian. I was last wheel and waiting patiently. I opened my sprint with 200m to go to take second place ahead of the American.

Outclimbing the Russian climber on the final day – I needed to climb well since the final stage finished up an 18km climb on Yangming Mountain. The Russian was only a point behind me and needed to win two points to take my third position. In the last 400m, going up an 18% grade, I made my jump and surprisingly gapped the Russian and rode in for fourth place.

Highlights off the bike:

Doing the Maori Haka at the start of day three in Taichung – in front of a large contingent of media.
 Enjoying Taiwan's famous Bubble Milk Tea as recovery drinks after a few of the stages.
 Enjoying hot spas in Taidong and Yilan. Yilan was particularly good for my legs since they were very sore from cramping. It was so good that on the final day I did not feel any soreness

and was able to complete a whole stage without cramping.

Swimming and body surfing in the ocean in Kenting.

The daily leg massages that helped to ease my cramp issues.

Eating a massive beef hamburger and fries on the final day of the tour after eating a steady diet of Chinese food.

Street food sampling in some of Taipei's World Famous Night Markets.

Hanging out with other deaf riders and trying to learn some sign-language.

This Tour de Formosa event was an attempt to help improve the level of deaf cycling in the world and it is now going to be a regular fixture alongside the World Championships and the Deaflympics, but with more a social emphasis. With myself being streamed into hearing education all my life, I never had to learn sign language and I was definitely finding it difficult to communicate with many of the riders. I was the only completely verbal rider there and many also found it perplexing that a profoundly deaf rider could also speak fluent Mandarin, an asset that came in extremely handy when communicating with the officials and others who were unable to speak English. In fact, during race announcements, instead of watching the person signing I would listen to the translator speaking in Chinese. They had very little English translation on-hand! The more deaf cycling events I participate in, the more I realise I need to start learning sign-language in order to fit in better at the next major event which is the World Deaf Cycling Championships next June in Quebec, Canada. ●



BUBBLE-TEA IS A FAVOURITE DRINK - A DEFINITE MUST TO EXPERIENCE



ROADS IN TAIWAN ARE SUPER SMOOTH AND A JOY TO RIDE ON



DANIEL CARRUTHERS ON THE VELOCITE NOIR CARBON WHEELS RIDING SOLO



MORE FANTASTIC SCENERY...



CARRUTHERS RECEIVING A SILVER MEDAL FOR STAGE 3 FROM THE MAYOR OF TAINAN