

CHARLESTON, SC
APRIL 22, 2006
by Gary Moore

I'll try to put together what I could see. Dave Pendlebury and I went down to Charleston for these races. Both were 45 min. races.

Saturday started wet but dried up well prior to our race. We saw some of the 30+ race which had a relatively small field with Smith Barney the most prevalent. This is a technical circuit. A narrow chicane just after the start, slightly uphill, a bend around to a short straight, to a right turn, some gentle curves, to a bridge where the road narrows before and after, then to a brutal right hand 120 degree turn with cobbles jutting 6' out from the apex, a short straight to the last right turn that you could carry speed through to the finish, with its slight incline.

About 45 riders lined up: Leduc, Patterson, Baxter, a large Smith Barney crew and many other strong riders. The pace started high and stayed that way for all but a couple of very brief slow points on the backstretch. Patterson went off with someone on about the 3rd lap. . They just hammered off the front of a very high pace. We were strung out and accelerating out of each corner. Leduc began chase within about 1 or 2 laps. They made a group that built a substantial gap of several minutes. Several attacks by different people followed over subsequent laps. I was just trying to stay near the front and close any gaps that others were letting open. (Prior to the start of the pro 1,2 race the announcer said the 40+ race was the fastest of the day). With about 8 to go Baxter attacked on the back stretch only to pull up and out after the chicane. The pace really picked up with 2 to go, with Smith Barney at the front. Patterson apparently just dropped Leduc and the other rider with 2 or 3 to go. We finished with a field sprint with me tagging along the back of out group.

The next day Dave and I were both feeling better. The SC Crit championship course is a flat rectangle with 2 sweeping turns and two 90-degree lefts. Right from the "go" a Jacksonville Racing Club rider jumped and showed us what the rest of the race would be like on the first lap. But because the corners are easier there wasn't quite as much acceleration to contend with. About 65 riders started this race. Every few laps a rider or two would attack, open up no more than a 50 meter gap, and the field would chase them down. On a lap close to midpoint one rider attacked into the 4th turn. I was in the right position to jump on his wheel and we opened a gap, made what seemed like a good effort, then were swallowed 1/2 lap later. I tried one other attack with a Smith Barney rider - we were chasing two off the front and made some space on the field, but we didn't work too well together and the field came trough. Three laps to go, and I was gasping, hoping for even just a little break which came with 1&1/2 laps to go. Everyone was jockeying for the front. I got bumped off into the grass by one tall Smith Barney rider (they seem to move sideways with little care) but was able to retain position. With one lap to go I was still too far back to really contend but was determined to join in the sprint. Going for the line, one racer cartwheeled sideways to tumble off the course just in front of me but everyone else stayed up so I was able to pass a few for 19th place. Dave finished with the field. The race was certainly harder than last years 45+ age group race. Patterson won the field sprint. Oh, there were also several Hincapie riders with us. Darren Fuller got 12th I think. Ketchse got 5th. Smith Barney had several other top spots.

Dave and I changed wheels and enjoyed a mostly leisurely ride through Charleston, over the new bridge with its great view and out to Isle of Palms and back. Overall a good racing weekend, or great speed training for Dave and me.