

TOUR DE MOORE  
APRIL 29, 2006  
by Matt Mason

Interestingly, the Tour de Moore saw our team start six racers in the 45+ division, but only four in the 35+. Proof that we are getting older. Also evidence that we were in for some rough sledding in the 35+ race which was, once again, remarkable for its talent pool: Sprouse, Brown, Stiel, Grice, Massey, Osborne, Frahm, Creed, plus strong presences from former teammate Peter Hymas' Back to Dirt team and from the new Sledgehammer Charlie's team. Our answer was an on-form Rodney Simpson and Blair Palmer, and not quite as on form Rich Melencio and Matt Mason.

I'm not sure how much of it was me and how much of it was really the race, but this race seemed hard. It covers 55 miles starting and finishing in Southern Pines, taking in 2 laps of a lengthy loop out in the country. No climbs, but some moderate terrain that becomes hard terrain at 30+ mph. The race averaged over 25 mph. We tried to rest Rodney and Blair and let them pick their spots for as long as we could. Even so, they were left having to fend for themselves too soon and too often. Rodney was obviously on form and making some difficult selections. He and Blair were still positioned solidly in the lead pack on the long and mostly flat several-mile run in to the finish in Southern Pines. I was grimacing and hanging on by a thread to the back of the train by this point. Richard had hung in for as long as he could before he fell off the pace.

Kurt Massey attacked solo early on the run in and held a 25 second gap most of the way in to Southern Pines. I gave him slim odds, since the field inevitably amps it WAY up when the course hits the last 3 miles which are punctuated by a series of turns and neighborhood streets and a longish uphill to a final flat 500 meter sprint. That section is always chaotic and you can count on having to make big efforts to have the position required to win. Three of the big guns attacked hard as we entered this section and gapped the field slightly. I threw what I had (not much) into closing that gap and promptly blew for the final time. Nothing to do but cross my fingers for Rodney and Blair. Blair pulled a George Hincapie of sorts. His steerer tube had a mechanical problem. Fortunately, it was not catastrophic, but he could not sprint. Rodney saw the same surge that blew me up cause him to lose positions. He still netted a very solid result, maybe 12th or so, against stiff competition and without a lot of help. He'd be the last one to blame the team, but we're kicking ourselves over it. Next week, Rodney.