

31st Tour De Moore - GVC Masters 45+  
April 29, 2006  
by Dave Petree

One word best describes this race for me -- Maddening! I don't think I've ever been more frustrated by a group of racers demonstrating such apathy. Sometimes a single team can dominate a race and turn it into a negative affair. I don't remember witnessing an entire pack do so with such ambivalence.

The TDM course is easily described as a lollipop. The 'stick' is about 13 miles long and used for the out and back. The 'pop' is about a 14 mile loop. We old-farts did just one lap around the pop making our race a short 41 miles (the very end of the stick is altered on the way in, adding another mile through a neighborhood). The entire course rolls with only modest hills. Newcomers would probably find it more rolling than they would have thought given the Southern Pines locale.

I'd guess about 60 of us lined up for this affair. GVC had good representation showing Lonnie Brooks, Gary Moore, Terry Lanier, David Pendleberry, Dave Fuller, and me

The strategy for the race seemed relatively straight forward; cover the early moves and wait patiently for the big moves by the big hitters in the second half of the race. The big hitters were Mac Cannon (Hincappie Sports), Bill Holder (Raleigh All-stars), Keith Johnson, Peter Leousis (Carolina Masters) and Kent Williams (Smith Barney). Other teams had guys who could threaten, but one of the guys listed would almost certainly be in the winning move.

The pace started out fairly modest and Lonnie sat the front covering a flurry of early jumps. The pack was content to allow Glen Thrift (Mac's teammate) some Time Trial practice. When he was caught at around the 10 mile mark some counter attacks tested the pack but were short lived. Gary got caught up in some of that action before I could remind him to be patient (read: "pot calling the kettle black").

The first real action occurred about a mile into the 'pop' loop on a longish grade when Bill Holder slowly ramped up the pace. Peter Leousis followed his pull even harder and as we reached the top of the hill things were pretty strung out. The pace stayed hot until we made the first left hander that leads down a long grade. The pace through the turn and down the hill opened gaps that began to split the pack apart. Some riders would never regain contact. Mac took a hard pull up a hill a short time later that pinched a bunch of folks. He sat up near the top, took a couple of deep breaths, and jumped hard. I was on it and so too were Leousis and Holder. This had the right look and when I pulled through I tried to show my commitment to the move by jerking it really hard. It didn't work. Instead of dragging the break up the road they allowed me a gap. I looked back and saw Mac sit up. The pack was on us in no time. Leousis attacked again near the top of a grade and opened up a nice gap. This guy can really Time Trial and I was thinking I should go across when Mac told me he thought I should too. Ever been set up? I jumped and got across. Chris Dietrich (Squadra Vecchio), Bill Holder and one or two more strong guys did too and we had ourselves a good looking move. I don't know who drug the pack up to us but it had to hurt. As soon as we were caught, Mac attacked and Kent Williams covered. We still had half the race to go, but it was over. The two would remain clear. Should have never happened.

The pack was probably still 30 strong but you could count on one hand the number of guys who would put their nose in the wind for the next 20 miles. Mac and Kent hung just thirty seconds out banging away. Eventually it became clear that a few of us were simply dragging an apathetic pack along. It became clear too that Keith Johnson was working for Mac. Kind of dirty business. When you are as strong as Keith people will watch you. It's a dirty hand when you take advantage of that situation by racing for someone in another jersey. I'd bet a few riders would have raced differently had they understood the ruse going on. Keith had an amazingly successful day of one man blocking.

Within about five miles of the finish four or five desperate attacks were launched that looked promising. Gary and/or I were getting on each. The best was just short of the right hander that leads through the

neighborhood to Broad Street and the finish line. Bob Black jumped and I got his wheel. He had been saving his strength for this move and this guy can roll. We each took about two pulls at warp speed before Leouis made contact. We had a nice gap. I don't know how we were caught, but we were. I was toast but held my ground through the neighborhood mostly riding Keith's wheel. He led the pack onto Broad Street and I waited for him to jump. When he did, I stood up and tried to match him. There was nothing left -- blown up just a half mile from the finish! Gary would finish a respectable 13th especially given all the work he had done. Terry Lanier finished just three spots back. I barely remained in contact with the dwindling front pack.

I was glad for my friend Kent Williams. He and Mac had put in an amazing effort. Had just a few more racers been willing to take some hard pulls, it might had been for naught.