

Cycles DeOro Masters Team
Greenville Training Series/Donaldson Center
February 27, 2005. Day two:

Day one was behind us. With great teamwork we had managed to fulfill our highest expectations -- A win plus fifth place (Mark Griffin and Matt Mason respectively). Day two now stared us in the face and we knew it would be difficult to hold serve. The field was a bit smaller but so was our team. And all the hungry talent was still there.

The pace started off more reserved than day one. Chalk that up to cutting, cold damp air, and the fact that everyone was watching who would do what. We responded with Richard M. and Rodney setting the early pace. A hard attack came before half the lap was down. We missed it. Rodney launched out of the field to try and cover the move. We watched as he dangled for what felt like forever. He was unable to make contact. Michael and I, riding on the front, buried ourselves to bring it back. The effort nearly saw us blown out of the race before it really got started. It was meant to be a long day.

Before we could recover, another attack came. Matt and Rodney covered it. Starting lap two we had two solid riders, both capable of the long haul and finishing well, in a good looking move seven strong. A good hand to play! Michael and I took position again up front and began the tiring, punishing task of riding herd. Several other teammates would show their faces up front in this effort too (Rich Melencio, Blair Palmer and Scott Hill). We seemed to be clicking on all cylinders. The gap to the break would eventually open up to nearly a minute over the next lap and a half. What we didn't know was that the effort to sustain the break was taking a big toll on its members -- Rodney and Matt included. Suddenly it was coming back to the field fast. Deal another hand.

A very tough lap and then some would follow. It provided some of the hardest racing I can recall - ever. This was cooking up to be a real tough bird. Another attack ripped the field before the end of lap four that saw six riders get clear. It was a dangerous group and they opened ground quickly. With two thirds of the lap gone, all but two of those riders rejoined the peloton. On the backside of lap five another attack came from Glen Thrift. He and two others would stay clear -- just barely. The chasing was intense. We started the last lap with five riders up the road.

The pace stayed very high but we managed to get ourselves lined up on the backside of the lap. Blair Palmer put in an enormous effort riding tempo. As we approached two miles to go a Smith Barney rider attacked and Matt followed the move. That move came back as things got very heated up. Michael made one final effort to get in front of the DeOro train to keep them out of the wind. This lasted for about 200 meters. A half mile out we were quickly closing the gap on the break-away riders. It would be close. With four hundred meters to go Matt managed to put in a hard effort that actually saw him drag Mark clear of the field. As he blew, a surge of riders lead by Smith Barney's sprinter (dragging Tom Sunday and Darren Fuller) closed the gap with about two hundred meters to go. Mark would be forced to get on the back of that train and fight it out. The five break-away riders held on crossing the line just ahead of the charging Griffin and company. Mark would finish third in the field sprint (eight for the day).

We still hold the overall lead. The hilly course next Saturday should play to our strengths as well as the flat speedway course on Sunday.

Two great riders have joined us this year and they proved their value this weekend. Welcome on board Blair and Rodney. Some old faces made new contributions as well and their efforts will not be forgotten. Special thanks to each of those guys. This is going to be one heck of a year.

Stayed tuned race fans.