

Cycles De Oro / The Printery Masters Race Report
Greenville Training Series-Race One Saturday, February 26, 2005

This is the moment we have all been waiting for, the start to the racing season. With new found motivation and new teammates the CDO Masters team made our migration south to Greenville South Carolina.

The sunny and clear weather brought together one of the most competitive field of 75 to 80 masters racers that we have ever raced against. Consider the names; Bianchi with Chris Foster, Mac Cannon, Glenn Thrift and Darren Fuller. There was a fully loaded Smith Barney team with Steve Carrol, Steve Sperry, Dan Moye, Jon Atkins, Tony Scott and Brian Elliott. Then there was Squaddra Vecchio with the "rocket" Radisa Cubric, a former European pro that won the field sprint into Greensboro during a stage of the 1996 Tour DuPont, was the U.S. Masters National champion in 2003 and is the former National Champion of Yugoslavia. You get the idea. This was one stacked field that after months of hibernation was ready to lay it down.

We were represented by Mark Griffin, Matt Mason, Dave Petree, Blair Palmer, Rodney Simpson, Will Shore, Scott Hill, Richard Melencio, Richard Howard and me. Strong and motivated, we set a strategy prior to the race that was designed to have teammates paired up to go with moves that could be dangerous. If a move stayed away great, and if not the plan was to all get together and line it up for the field sprint.

The race started quickly with Will and Dave monitoring the front on the first lap. As usual, it was the "one man show" with Will Shore putting his nose in the wind to cover anything that might go. After Will was done doing his duty Dave took his turn over and over again. Their heavy lifting was huge. Others then came to the fore: Blair on lap 2, Rodney on laps 2 and 3, Mark on laps 3 and 4, Matt on laps 4 and 5, and me when he reached his limit. Richard Melencio toughed it out even though sick.

As the race developed the team kept focus and got into most meaningful moves. The ones we missed, we chased until we brought them back. Near the end of the fourth lap it was apparent that the field was tiring when it allowed 2 riders, Mac Cannon (Bianchi) and Steve Sperry (Smith Barney) got a good gap, quickly. The Bianchi and Smith Barney teams were quick to move to the front to attempt to thwart any attempt to bring their riders back. Try as they might within a half a lap they were safely back in the comfort of the peleton.

It was clear at this point that we would probably be facing a field sprint of 75 testosterone laden middle aged males. The team quickly realized this and grouped together at the beginning of the final lap. Will Shore drug Rodney and Matt to the front where Blair, Mark and Michael were waiting to take them to the line.

To take the pressure off on the final lap we first threw Richard Howard off the front to force other teams to do the work. While the effort he made did not last long, it was well

appreciated. Any effort made to take the pressure off the others at this point was crucial. Then it was Dave's turn, again. Dave, riding better than I have ever seen him this early in the season unselfishly threw himself off the front. Again it worked but for a much longer period of time. Dave had the field strung out for what seemed like forever while Blair, Mark, Matt and I all stayed safely near the front, lined up perfectly behind one another. This was setting up nicely.

About a mile from the finish the fireworks began. Riders began riding aggressively to the left of the centerline. The referee on the motorcycle attempted to squeeze the riders back to the right nearly causing several accidents. Ignoring the referee, the race swelled with half a mile to go to both sides of the road. Blair was the lead, Mark second wheel; Matt third wheel and me fourth wheel.

Blair brilliantly forced his way towards the front with Mark barking out directions that would be right on target and educational to the rest of his team. As the sprint began and Blair finally faded (after about 2 miles of being on the front), the physical part of the racing began. More than one of us took hard body shots from other racers as we sped towards the finish. Matt was scraped off Mark's wheel during this chaos. I was bumped hard as well. But, this was still to be our day.

The results were fantastic. Mark with the win, Matt in 5th after being banged around in the sprint, me 12th and Blair, after his tremendous lead-out, finished 19th. We could not have been happier with the results given the talent levels and the aggressive nature of the field: two of the 1st five, four of the first 20. No other team even came close. In achieving this, we also succeeded at furthering the team's objectives to set a positive example of teamwork and sportsmanship, to race at the highest level of competition in the Southeast, and to have fun. Hopefully, we also furthered our final objective of giving back to the GVC and our sponsors. We hope so. But this was today, and now we must focus on developing a plan that will deliver equal or better results tomorrow. Stay tuned.

Ciao,

Michael