

Wake Habitat Cycling Challenge Road Race
Memorial Day Weekend (Saturday)
Cycles DeORO Masters 1,2,3

The challenging course of this event gave the ever improving DeORO boyz a chance to show some serious form. Two riders had standout performances. More on that later.

The race was held once again near Lake Jordan and the tiny community of New Hill. The course was lengthened this year. We were slated to race nearly 60 miles (4 laps) on rolling terrain. What made this race so tough though was the talent level. I know we tend to say that a lot, but it really is impressive -- National and World champion David LeDuc, National Champion Randy Parker, World Champion David Grice, former Pro standouts John Patterson and Pat Raines; Keith Johnson, Roger Friend, Rick Creed, Barney Baxter, Ronnie Hinson, Derrick Powers.... Each of these guys put their stamp on this race and everyone felt the squeeze.

DeORO lined up with Terry Lanier, Scott Hill, Michael Satterfield, Mark Griffin, Rich Melencio, Matt Mason, Rodney Simpson, Blair Palmer, Lonnie Brooks and myself. Rodney and Rich had targeted this race and we were a determined team to support them.

I saw the writing on the wall early in the first lap. Rodney and I managed to make a six up break along with John Patterson and Roger Friend. These two were pulling so hard I couldn't pull through. Rodney could. He was clearly going well. He had done his homework well in preparation for this event. We were flying, but it was not to be and soon we found ourselves back in the pack.

The burners stayed on HIGH with attacks and single file chasing characterizing the racing. We managed to place one or more riders in every break that looked promising. No easy feat. The team was hitting on all cylinders. By the time we started the third lap, Roger Friend, David LeDuc and Barry somebody had managed to pull away from this hard charging race (I don't know how they can do it). Matt Mason put in a hard, long pull on the longest uphill section of road early in the final lap with me in tow. The effort finally put the pack within sight of the two lone riders. The sight inspired me to follow up his effort with a shorter hard dig.

I would learn later that LeDuc rode Friend off his wheel on the rolling hills early in that lap. The look on Friend's face when he came back into the field said volumes. The hard chasing would finally bring back LeDuc about mid lap. The racing was intense. I popped. So too did Richard. A small and very select group of eight riders (David LeDuc, John Patterson, Derrick Powers, Kurt Massy, Ronnie Hinson, David Grice and Barry (?) and Rodney) managed to slip away with about 5 miles left to race. They would put about two minutes on the field by the time they raced for the line. LeDuc attacked with 2 kilometers to go and held on for the win. Only Patterson, Hinson (racing 45+) and two others beat Rodney to the line. Patterson would be disqualified for unsportsmanlike conduct giving Rodney third for the day. This would be a career best finish for many of us on such a difficult day with so much talent. Rodney can now retire, although he won't. I can't say enough about how impressive this result is.

Matt Mason, after sacrificing himself countless times during the race would also show incredible form. As the pack started up the final short climb that lead to the right hand turn and 250 meter drag race to the line, Matt had worked into near perfect position. Rick Creed would bury himself in an effort to clear the field and drag Pat Raines into position to win the field sprint. Creed faded as they reached the top of the hill and Pat made the turn with Matt in tow. Matt could either jump and hope to open up enough ground to hold on for the win or ride Pat's wheel and wait. He chose the first and stomped the pedals and held off all challengers to the line -- WOW! What a day for DeORO.