

Saturday June 4th, North Carolina District Road Race Championships 35+

Richard Melencio, Scott Hill, Blair Palmer, Mark Griffin, Lonnie Brooks, Matt Mason, and Rodney Simpson lined up to take on the field of 74 riders in Aberdeen North Carolina. We knew the day would be long (nearly 60 miles) and hot and humid. Fortunately, for all, the sun stayed above the clouds keeping temperatures around the 80 degree mark.

The race began predictably with a bang with Smith Barney sending off Pat Raines in suicide break with one other rider. This move ultimately played into the hands of the calm De Oro team to keep Matt and Blair as protected as possible. The break gained nearly two minutes before finally coming back about 3 laps into the 6 lap event. We had been patient and called this one right conserving as much energy as possible.

The usual flurry of attacks began as soon as the two riders were pulled into the main field. Scott, Richard and Michael covered what we needed to and let other teams shoulder as much as possible, but we knew that if we did not do something to take the pressure off it would soon be on again. Rodney Simpson, fresh off of the ride of his season, if not career, launched into orbit an attack that would only see one rider go with it with 2.5 laps to go. This perfectly played unselfish move set up what would be one of our finest team finishes ever.

With a lap and a half to go, Derrick Powers and Rick Creed made a strong move to get across. Derrick the time trailer and Rick the sprinter were closing ground quickly. Mark Griffin reacted as soon as he could get a clear shot. Out of the saddle for at least 250 meters Mark sprinted as hard as he could to attempt to reach the four riders that were now ahead of him. He did it. That means 2 De Oro riders in a 5 man break, with our best finisher represented.

The plan for the rest of the race was simple. Sit in. If the break stays, great and if it comes back the balance of the team was in position to fight for the win.

In the break on the final hill on the final lap, Rodney, with the field closing in on the break, took a long hard pull. Not being a good sprinter, Derrick Powers immediately attacked the group of 5 dropping Rodney and one other rider from the break. Rodney had made the ultimate sacrifice....go as hard as you can to make sure the break stays away.

With Powers attacking a couple of times before the line and Mark and Rick Creed in tow, the field could not bring them back. Creed somehow out foxed Mark for the win. Mark took home 2nd (the silver).

In the field sprint Matt, Blair and Michael all had good position except for the fact that Matt was in the wind with 400 meters to go. At about 300meters Matt jumped like a cat on a hot tin roof and propelled himself to the front of the field. Inside 50 meters he was piped at the line by only two Pro 1/2 riders, finishing 3rd in the field sprint and 6th overall. Blair blistered the sprint as well for an 11th place finish overall as Michael faded to 14th.

So, the old De Oro guys do it again. 4 riders in the top 15 overall, no other team even came close. There was one South Carolina Rider in top 10 which means that the De Oro Masters team took 3 of the top 10 places in the NC RR championship!

On another note, in the 30+ race Craig Appaneal crashed hard breaking his collar bone and cracking two ribs. This is one tough guy.....he finished the race in this condition and I believe took a top 20 spot. Wish him a speedy recovery!

Michael E. Satterfield