

A STORY FROM THE ROAD.... Jeff Black

I would have to give kudos to our race hosts for an excellent venue and overall great experience this weekend. The weather was questionable going into Saturday morning, but the rain held off and the sun finally decided to break through the clouds in time for the Time Trial, so it did warm up a little. The first race of the morning was the Circuit Race, and we set off with a couple of probing attacks right off the bat launched by Chris Sandelli (FSU), and Jonathan Bowerman (unattached). This being my 4th race (I am mostly a multi sport athlete), I had a better expectation of what would be happening, and did fairly well of not letting anyone out of reach, and did my best to reel them in without getting wrapped up in being out in the front for too much time. After the first lap, things settled in to a fairly consistent rhythm, with Zach Rubble (unattached, another multi sport athlete) doing the bulk of the pulls, with intermittent pulls by myself and others. This made for a fairly uneventful race until the last lap, where coming up to the hill before the finish line two guys behind me locked handlebars and panicked, sending one of them at 90 degrees across the field behind me. This sent Mike Frazier (Team AJ/Nutrishop) airborne, and my teammate Hugo Casanas (Team Powerhouse) plowed into him, resulting in Mike's bike receiving multiple frame cracks. I was looking forward to a second place finish when I looked back to my right to see the results of the carnage from the crash and if anyone else was left, when Zach passed me on the left and dropped me to third. Lesson learned, I won't look back again.

By far for me the hardest race was the Time Trial, upon finishing I was sure I was going to lose my lunch. I was redlined the entire 6 minutes of the race, the only question was did I take the two corners fast enough. I have only been on my current TT frame about two weeks after a warranty replacement and upgrade, and am still feeling out its capabilities. I did finish ahead of Zach Ruble by two seconds, and after losing a second to him in the morning's race, I finished the day off in first place overall by one second.

Sunday we awoke to very cold but clear skies, and with a mid afternoon race start time, I was thankful for being slotted for a pm race, as the temperature warmed quickly. I enjoyed taking my time preparing for my race, as I got a chance to watch some of the late morning action and took advantage of the opportunity to talk to and get to know some of the other guys racing in CAT 5. The race took off pretty much like I had hoped with a slower start, however I had taken note of who I needed to watch for to protect my standing, and when I saw Zach Ruble shooting to the front off the left side, I quickly jumped on his wheel and from there the race was on. Zach set a relentless pace, and I matched him swapping pulls back and forth up to the first pass on the dirt road. Five of us in the front plowed through the loose dirt and mud on the far left, recovered quickly with Chris Sandelli leading the charge up the hill and broke off the front leaving the rest of the group shredded and trying to recover from the turn onto the dirt road. Going with Chris, Zach and myself were Joshua Valentine (FSU), and Jonathan Bowerman. Chris dug deep and powered us all through the dirt road till the end, where I took over duties up front, and from there Zach (doing more than his fair share) and I took turns leading the group back around to the dirt road again. Once again, Chris jumped out to the front on the dirt and set a great pace, with Zach and myself taking over back on the main road. Coming back for the start of the third lap, I had just finished a rather long pull, and Zach went for the attack up the hill to the finish line leading the others with him; I was already gassed from my pull (another lesson learned), and unable to match the pace

despite trying. Jonathan tried to get me on his wheel to pull me, but I was already maxed out and unable to go. I watched the four of them slowly pulling away, still hopeful I could recover on the downhill and catch them, but it was not to be. I still finished several minutes ahead of the main group, but on my own at this point I lost a little less than two minutes to the four leaders. Chris and Joshua went on to take one and two for FSU respectively, with Jonathan snatching third, and Zach hung on to finish fourth. I came in after them for fifth place, and lots of lessons learned from my first Road Race. Needless to say, I lost the overall to Zach, and finished second, with Jonathan taking third. All in all, this made for a very enjoyable weekend, and I am looking forward to mixing in more cycling races with my multisport racing.

Jeff Black