

Ramblers Cycling Club – Middle Road Return Race

24th August 2019

A Grade

Teams racing meant that the race in A grade was a little different to usual. The normal old hitters, elite young guns and Kirsty lined up for a slog into the howling headwind on the way out to the turn around. The only rider willing to have a dig in the headwind was visitor Jack Pronk from Green Performance Coaching, soon followed by Ben Earnshaw of Taradale Clocktower. Until the pace seemed too much for Ben and he returned to the bunch.

Everyone still together apart from the lone leader, they made the turn around and all were thankful it was a nice tailwind home. Suspicious pace set by Jack's Teammate Will Green had others fearing when the fireworks would start. It was Max Williams who launched an impressive move up and over one of the smaller climbs on the way home, Green matched the pace.

Kirsty happy to sit in and make the Taradale Clocktower lads do some work, Andy T (great to have him back from his trip!) set the tempo and created a small gap, closed by Kirsty to be countered by the hammer Gary Hall, with his sidekick Chris Clark glued to his wheel – they were gone and joined the leaders not long after. Unfortunately, from this surge in pace, Toby Evans lost contact with the bunch.

Leaving Kirsty, Jason and Andy to battle it out for the series points. Again, Kirsty pressured Andy to try and beat Jason and get some valuable points off him (she only needed 2 more). Jason showed his form and Andy couldn't quite beat him to the line, after executing a perfect lead out for Kirsty. Kirsty edged out Jason and now they sit tied on points, ahead of the Apley Road SHOWDOWN.

William Green took the win, with Max close behind and Jack Pronk coming in 3rd after spending ¾ of the race off the front.

B Grade

BOTS number 3 and nerves were on edge, a quarter ton of riders lining up to flog themselves half to death in the name of going the fastest. What would the Emperors evil plan be without Finn? Would we be able to force Zane to the front? Would Hulky finally be able to make a break stick? Would Jack steal a road sign?

We started "riding" our bikes, and I use that term loosely. One may have been forgiven for thinking that we were there, in



fact, to pass the time of day whilst enjoying the scenery. Such was the lack of willingness to set the pace into the wind, the dreaded C grade catch up became a serious possibility. During this time there was a strange apparition in lycra, double takes were made, the B grade world as we knew it was called into question, as Armchair Alexander was veery briefly spotted at the front or the bunch.

Deer farm and Richard rose to the occasion. Between himself and Patroclus they had the rest of us hurting, enough that those that had convinced themselves that they would be dropped, were.

On to the flat and Rouleur Greenwood decided to do a bit of work, rolled over to find that he was, in fact by himself 🤔. The rest of the bunch decided that it would be fun to leave him there and did just that 😡.



Camp David hill had always promised to be the race definer, and with the GPC featherweight hill hitman absent, Hulky was free to show the rest of us what suffering is, which he handily did. Fatties to the back and the string strung out, casualties were had. An opportunity was lost here with the pace coming off and some of the heavyweights were allowed to get back on.

Those of us in the know, knew that an attack at the turnaround was on the cards, with such a big group going around last was sure to be a death knell. The plan was scuppered by a dastardly car coming at the wrong moment, kudos to the peloton for obeying the marshal and keeping us all safe. 😇

Now with the wind beneath our wings, the race was on and we all went hurtling back to Havelock with abandon. The ever elusive break was excruciatingly close to coming to fruition with Hulky, Brice and Attacki Acki making a trio from the Camp David Decent. Spencer put in a good whack to close the gap and one by one riders jumped across, until the gap wasn't a gap and the group was back together. The pace stayed high from here, thanks in no small part to "soon to be A grade" Woodward and a great lead out from Patroclus coming into the final straight. The sprint wound up early on, with speeds on the flat well in excess of 60kph, and punctuated by Peppers free ride home coming the other way. No one could match the explosive legs of Park at the end though, with the final result Park in First, Woodward second, and Acki a very respectable third.

https://youtu.be/7Ccuhz_hGNw

An old man angry

Apparition at the front?

The camber is wrong

C Grade

The final Team race for the Spring series attracted another big turnout of 23 riders, despite the fact that we were battling 35km/h strong SW into Middle Road for the out and back course. CHB Bats team enhanced their chances of taking out this race by having the largest number, 9 in total.

At the start line, we were greeted by a Hastings rider by the name of Kel Birch. My first reaction was oh no...Kel told me that he hasn't raced Ramblers for 3 years, but some of us know that he is a Zwifter, putting out huge efforts and intervals on his indoor trainer. He supplements his training by participating on long Sunday Bunch rides. We know Kel will put pain to this race.

Headwind into middle road and not too far from the sweetshop, CHB rider Shane Janssen had a puncture. So that was pretty much the end of his race. At this stage also, was when Kel decided he would show his strength while others were trying to shelter from the nasty headwind. Kel stayed on the front up to Blind Road, with the occasional look behind to see if we were still following him. Dave McCallum did try and close the gap and pull the bunch with him but I think we weren't that keen. On the Rowe Road intersection, was also when we lost another rider Mike Emery who had a mishap with loose gravel and a temporary road sign, so he DNF.

Superwoman Sandy featured strongly again, leading from the front with the boys sitting on for parts of the race. Headwind did not deter Sandy at all and was prepared to do the hard work. Prior to Camp David climb, Kel probably decided he had enough of being alone. He was joined by Cameron brothers of Dylan and Justin. Craig Wiggins, Mike Burnsey. James Hillard and Stephen Helena also decided that this was a good time to forge ahead. The highly organised CHB team also had an experienced rider in their team in Chris Gurnard Johnson, who was actively strategising the race and giving out instructions to his fellow team mates. This was a huge advantage and shows how team racing can be successful and exciting.

At the Te Aute Trust Road turnaround, the leading group led by Kel was already a few minutes ahead. With a strong tailwind I'm sure the confidence was high that if we all worked together and pushed the pace a bit maybe there was a chance of catching up. On the descent on Camp David, Simon Pepper lost control of his bike whilst descending and ended up on that same nasty spot that has caught out many riders. A few riders in front turned back to provide assistance, sacrificing their own race to care for Simon. Latest report is that Simon is OK, and recovering. He wish Simon a speedy recovery.

In the end, Kel dominated this race finishing first. Brothers Dylan second and Justin third. With one more race in the Spring series, Dylan is the overall series leader with an 8 point buffer over Stevo Watson who is on equal point with Dave McCallum.

D Grade

Riding 26km into a strong, gusty headwind wasn't the easiest but as the bunch of 18 battled against the elements, it was the fast return journey we all focussed on. Unusually, the majority of the group ascended the Camp David climb together and with a good amount of work by the CHB riders, we turned at the long awaited cone.

Assisted by the tailwind the pace was on and quite quickly the bunch strung out - Dean Gough and Greg Tattersfield showing their strength to sit just off the front but remaining in view. The unfortunate crash in C Grade slowed the race briefly but the two leaders kept their gap of two minutes. Back in town, Chris Jarrett took third showing that he's both a great climber and has the power on the flat and Graham

Hoffmann held strong throughout the race for fourth. Jo Baker, David Barclay and Cheryl Christie were also in the mix at the checkered flag.

E Grade

Thanks to the CHB riders who joined us for this series teams' event you made racing good and strong. There was a strong southerly in our face all the way out to Rowe road which was a matter of survival sometimes. The chairman for some reason had his brakes rubbing and nobody told him (thanks team were his final words) then when he finally released, he stopped to fix the problem only to find he also had some nails in his shoes, well done Steve!

When we got to the turnaround we knew it was going to be super-fast coming home, then we really ripped into it and teams racing began with Doug Robert taking a leap off the front then letting other teams chase him down with Dave Lay having ago at chasing to no avail, the CHB riders weren't going to chase which was annoying left Mal Warren to have ago coming down passed the deer farm reaching a fast scary speed with road works both sides of the road but Doug was still maintaining a good lead and the rest of the CHB riders sitting in behind Dave and Mal with Rosemary Weskett and Jo Robson taking their turn as well ,good riding girls.

As we turned on to the last straight we knew we weren't going to catch Doug so it was just who was going to take the minor placings with Dave second and Wayne Ewing third mal forth .That race sure was fun but for this time of the year you are not as strong well done everyone so congratulations to CHB you deserved the win.

The Bystander.

F Grade

The day threatened rain, which fortunately, did not eventuate, instead we had a sunny but chilly day for racing. With it being one of the team series race we had a grand turnout, with eleven cycles on the start line. From the start, for the first few kilometers the bunch struggled into wind until the bunch was split with five pushing out from the others. As a group we pulled together until passing Mutiny road and the uphill started. We were then split and had to carry on pushing into the wind without any shelter from a bunch.

It sure was a relief to reach the turnaround and have the wind behind. The other six F graders were stretched out in ones and twos still heading for the turn. On the homeward stretch speeds got into the 60s. Managing to catch up and pass and then drop Su the tandem managed a fourth placing with Carole once again taking line honors, Angus 2nd and Tim 3rd.

Once again well done to all.