

BRILLIANT BART THE BENCHMARK OF FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND CYCLING. After A STRING OF RECENT SECOND PLACINGS, Bart took the Gordonvale Kermesse by the scruff of the neck to stamp the name that DURAJ is back in business, and the man everyone has to aspire to beat as the season progresses. As the race commenced at a leisurely pace, it wasn't long before Duraj sensed this isn't a Saturday morning bunch ride and quickly whipped the field up to around the 50 kmph mark and the race was on.

Through the first of the seven 7.5 klm laps Peter Bridgewater, Matt Driver and Gary Haydon were more than ready to match the solid pace set early by Duraj. However promising young rider Cody Haseldine suffered a flat tyre, and as Cody attended to his misfortune the rest of the field of ten in this A Grade field disappeared over the horizon. Cody was able to sit out a lap and re-join the group through the second lap. Where Peter Bridgewater and Duraj edged to around an 8 sec break over Haydon, and Kieran Mouldey. All reeled in. Next it was Bernard Cossar- Smith to have a crack at the lead. Leaving the judges area on their third lap it was again Duraj with Haseldine and Bruno Barbarisi hard on his wheel with the rest chasing hard.

During this lap young track star Brandon Hutton desperate for a few more miles in his legs whispered to the support vehicle "I'm done however I'll continue to roll along." On the fourth lap again Duraj slipped away constantly looking over his shoulder for someone to join him however no one in the pack prepared to have a go, although Gary Haydon appeared animated as if to say who's going with me, while this was going on Bart had managed around a 100 metre break from Tobia Kipper, Cossar- Smith and Haydon.

Duraj still looking over his shoulder through most of the fifth lap with the lead fluctuating between 18 to 20 seconds with the support vehicle arguing over the approximate distance ranging between 100 to 150 metres however whilst it looked as though the chase group were working together Durable Duraj was keeping the margin exactly where he wanted, and on the final lap suddenly with the wind on his back Bart Duraj barring any incident had the race shot to bits as he started to forge away, and the interest now was who will finish in the placings.

With Dural well up the road a strong move by Peter Bridgewater as they swung into Crossland road for the last time had Peter pinch a break catching the chase group a little by surprise, and this move was decisive as Bridgy had second spot at his mercy with Gary Haydon finishing hard with Bernard Cossar – Smith and Tobia Kipper hanging on. However all honours to Bart Duraj winning easily from Bridgewater, Haydon in Third followed by Cossar – Smith and Tobia Kipper next.

B GRADE

There might have been only seven in this grade however comments from Support Vehicle driven by the Maestro Oliver Wacek kept all informed that this group were consistently averaging 45 to 50 kmph. Tightly bunched early on Jamie Holman was the first to unleash sneaking out to around a seventy metre lead only to be brought back by Grahame Allen and Greg Reynolds closely followed by Tom Cook, Andrew Harper, Mick Mehonoshen and Nathan (the baker) Burstynowicz.

The duo of Harper and Holman both members of the infamous MAD DOGS team appeared to be enjoying the fact that they could actually ride as a team with both doing their bit at the top of the race insuring a very solid pace, so much so that Nathan (the baker) having the Easter hot cross bun syndrome, that is Baking for hours leaving no time for practice was feeling the pinch and retired from the race vowing he will up his training schedule.

Two laps out past the judges, it was Harper from Tom Cook, Holman and close up Allen, Reynolds and Mick Mehonoshen the pace still solid for such a small group. However Jamie Holman and Andrew Harper both looking very comfortable. The six riders left were still very compact until about 4 kmls out on the final lap, when again Jamie Holman attacked this time no response from team mate Harper and the super fit looking Holman quickly opened a large gap. Despite Grahame Allen and Mick Mehonoshen trying to coax the rest into bridging across to the tearaway Holman, the lead was increasing all the time, and the affable Jamie Holman had the race entirely in his keeping. The interest now in the minor placings saw The Mad Dogs quinnella the race with Andrew Harper second and Greg Reynolds just edging out Grahame Allen for third followed by Tom Cook starting to show a return to form and Mick just behind Tom. In a very good race considering the small field.

C GRADE

A whopping field of 18 riders listened intently to Commissair Don Huyser give instructions to the growing popularity of this transgressional grade. It was noticeable early in this race that our female riders weren't going to be intimidated by the big field and were doing very much their share of the work load right throughout the race, referring to our Track Star Gabby Thomasz, Mel Pryde, Alex Hall, Julie Scharf and Young Table lander Klare Marcic although a mechanical put paid to Klare's chances halfway through the race.

Early laps and Idan Piercy a convincing winner of the last D grade Criterium showed he was certainly ready for the lift in grade by matching motors with all the top contenders. Which included John Duel, newcomer Daniel Bakurski, Mark Procter and Aaron Locke a new arrival from West Australia who due to his partners new position as a training G P will see Aaron popping into our region every three weeks or so. Early on we lost one of our new riders with Robert Pickford pulling out through injury.

It was a pretty good sight watching the big field swing into Highleah Rd mid race with Alex Hall, Mark Procter and Gabby Thomasz riding strongly in the leading bunch with multiple of riders on their wheels showing they had claims for victory including John Duel, Alan Clarke, Brady McIntyre, Paul Mitchell and the (chief Baker) Greg Hutton hidden away mid field, but the race didn't end there. A lap out and the race was a quandary had they gone too fast for the likes of genuine sprinters Gabby Thomasz and Greg Hutton or WAS there a SMOKEY TUCKED IN BEHIND in the form of Andrew Pinchen or the Sandgroper Aaron Locke.

Idan Piercy, John Duel , Mark Procter and Alex Hall all had their admirers when spectators stated handing out their predictions including the author who suggested that the inform Gabby Thomas may have the edge in a final sprint. Into Crossland Rd and heading for the that sprint, John Duel went a long way from home with Mark Procter close at hand Gabby Thomas was perfectly poised and the West Australian Aaron Locke, who was trying to guess whose wheel he should jump on AND HE was coming through strongly as was Greg Hutton and Brady McIntyre. In a fabulous drive to the line Aaron Locke FINALLY BURST INTO THE CLEAR and packed too many guns over the concluding stages to take the race in a terrific first up performance from the fast finishing Greg Hutton just in front of Gabby Thomasz and Brady McIntyre next was Alan Clarke and Paul Mitchell.

D GRADE

Following the A grade it didn't give me much of a chance to do justice to the warriors division. A group that features riders on the comeback trail, others taking their coffee rides to the next level and usually some complete beginners learning their trade. However chatting to a few after the race the field of 10 turned into a pretty interesting affair over the shorter 5 lap course. One of the few times I caught a glimpse it was Kelly D'Andrea leading out from Todd Hartley and Trish Patel the

others all in close attendance including newcomers to me in Matthew Grillo, Jon Pearce, Frederick Boin, Jason Whiteside and youngster Caleb Simpson and of course Michael Etherington and John D'Andrea. First casualty of a brisk pace was young Caleb Simpson in his first ever ride, though out of contention the young rider never once threw in the towel on a course that is a very tough test for your first ride, and Caleb drew heaps of praise from the crowd for battling on to the finish in a ride that will benefit the young rider greatly.

Picking up the race in the concluding stages heading for home on Crossland Rd, Michael Etherington had the assistance of Big Todd Hartley who called for Michael to jump on his wheel and for a fleeting moment it appeared as though these tactics would give him the win only to use Michael's words " I thought I was home until these three blokes I didn't know went whoosh and I ended up fourth." The men Michael was referring to were Jason Whiteside, Frederick Boin and Matthew Grillo the trio put up a thrilling last 200 metres to take the trifecta in that order relegating Michael Etherington to fourth place and he was followed by Kelly D'Andre getting the better of Husband John.

Race Reporter Jonesy.

Ps for they that volunteered we Salute you however. When it comes to fair dinkum Road Racing we need everyone we can get..... Fathers, mums, boyfriends, Girlfriends! We need drivers, Marshalls and someone to bring Jonesy COFFEE so please help out whenever you can.