

Blue Bell Bike Race

PA State Master's Road Race Championships, June 5, 2004

The day was grey and overcast. The roads were extremely wet from heavy overnight rain. It continued to drizzle, punctuated intermittently by heavier showers. The Pro/1/2/3 field was small and the races took considerably longer than the promoters expected, so our race start was delayed by about half an hour. We eventually lined up about noon. We were to do five laps, making up twenty-five miles of racing.

The course is quite technical with many sharp turns, including one of about 170 degrees. However, it only has one sprinter's hill. No surprisingly, the field had many of the state's notable sprinters in it.

Bob Kehl of Guy's Racing launched an attack from the gun, which brought an immediate response from Art McHugh. The field was soon back together. Several attacks were launched over the succeeding laps. I even tried one myself, just after the start-finish. There was nothing doing – the sprinters reacted quickly, neutralizing attacks within a matter of yards.

Eventually on lap 3, Darryl Vreugdenhil launched an attack doing up the sprinter's hill and got a small gap. At the top of the hill, going around the 170 degree turn, he was able to open it up a bit more. On the succeeding straightaway, Art McHugh jumped across the gap and made it to Darryl's wheel. The two of them were about 100 meters off the front of the field. A few more meters and they would be out of sight around the numerous turns on the course.

I decided to make my move here and attacked down the left side of the field. I took a small group of two or three with me, but no one would pull through. Dropping back into the draft, I took a breather and then surged again, this time slipping away from the field. I put my head down, chasing hard at about 28 MPH. My HR hit about 180 and stabilized there. I gained ground very slowly. It took the best part of a mile to bridge up. Once on, I sat on for a few minutes and then began taking my pulls. We were not working very smoothly. Tri States Velo, that had a large squad in the race, chased and launched Tom Kellogg, who bridged up. We were only away for another quarter mile before the field caught us.

There were no more serious breakaway attempts. I stayed at the front and stayed glued to the wheel of Art McHugh or Patrick Gellineau, the two strongest sprinters in the field. We went through the start-finish for the last lap four abreast. I took care to keep an eye on the likely contenders – Art McHugh, Patrick Gellineau, Bob Kehl, Tom Kellogg. The last time up the sprinter's hill was fast and separated the contenders from the rest of the field. We entered the last two miles of twisting and turning through neighborhoods at high speed, in a long single file. Then with a mile to go, a rider went down on a rain-slick 90-degree corner, just behind my right shoulder. This was the signal to put the pedal to the metal and we took off. I was secure in the knowledge that the strongest riders in the field were in our group of eight. Through four more 90-degree turns, I was

able to work my way up to the 7th spot. Turning into the final straight, sprinting out of the saddle, I was able to pick up another place and crossed the line 6th.

Art McHugh won the race and the gold. Bob Kehl took silver. Patrick Gellineau was third, but since he is a NJ resident, Tom Kellogg in fourth took the bronze. Darryl Vreugdenhil was fifth.