

Merrickville 200

by
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Seven “Grizzly Vets” and one new member toed the start line. At seven bells with the thermometer reading -1C we where off. For the first 250m I lead the peloton. Anita then surged by me and opened a gap, sensing a break Trevor sprinted after Anita. After a turn or two they where out of sight. The rest of us cycled as a group till the first checkpoint into an unfavourable cross-wind. Upon arrival I managed to share a few words with Anita who quickly departed.

After consuming 2 pecan butter tarts and a chocolate milk I headed out solo with the intent that the “Peloton” would reel me in quickly. Tailwinds to Jasper made for easy cycling. I even had some wishful moments where I though the forecasted rain would not be coming. But alas as I turned south into a headwind precipitation in the form of ice pellets started. Winds were strong enough that I rode a good portion of that section in my 30X17. I kept looking over my shoulder for the “Peloton” to come to my rescue. Unfortunately they only caught me at Frank's Pizza where we all stopped for lunch. Anita was no where to be seen, the only sign of her passing was the puddle beneath the table where she had her lunch. As I waited for my scrambled eggs, ham and brown toast Trevor devourer a burger and fries and hustled out into the cold and rain.

After my brunch I too skedaddled out before the shivers kicked in. Upon turning into the wind I could see Trevor about 500 meters ahead. So the chase was on! Eventually I caught up to Trevor and found out he was riding slowly as he was not feeling well. We rode together till we finally turned into the direction the wind was blowing. Upon feeling the tail wind pushing Trevor sped off leaving me to battle on my own. In the village of Oxford Mills the control is a convenience/gas bar where the friendly staff offered paper towel to dry ourselves off. By this time Anita was at least an hour ahead of Trevor and me. She only stopped at the checkpoint to get some plastic bags to help keep her extremities from freezing.

After consuming a Snicker bar, and a chocolate milk. I poured a Pepsi into my water bottle for the final 60km push. I beat Trevor out of the checkpoint as he spend time trying to call his better half to inform her of his progress. This last stretch was primarily downwind. When the road turned to expose you to the wind it was definitely noticeable. As I approached Ottawa I attempted a couple traffic light sprints and missed them both. Got to work on my acceleration this summer. After arriving at the Cheshire Cat finish control I joined Grace, Peter's wife at a table and ordered a nice warm soup. I was quite disappointed in that I had no desire of ordering a pint of imported beer. Must have been due to the cold rain. Within minutes everyone arrived except Alan and Wesley. After finishing my soup I head home and re-traced the route and spotted both Alan and Welsey pedalling the last 5 km. I learned later that Wesley had decided to do an extra 21 kilometres in 3 stages.

Peter Grant's Comments:

What made the ride really good was the pleasant company of everyone riding. It was a treat to ride all day with David and chat. I am still sorry for not chasing Wesley to tell him he was going to Spencerville. He is a strong young rider. He was well ahead and riding strong, going up hill into the wind and off route.

We were mis-lead by the weather forecast!

The forecast was for 10 - 20 mm of rain. Actual was 23.8 mm !! That extra 2.3 mm was very wet.

The high was forecast as 5C but actual only reached 3.3

And wind? It was forecast as 30 kph gusting to 50 kph. Actual gust reached 56 kph.

I had a great ride until I discovered the weather was worse than forecast.

Alan Ritchie's Comment:

Well that wasn't a very spring-like outing. Perhaps a little too much character-building.



The crew!