

## **A DAY AT THE RACES; TEAM FINDLEY SHORT CIRCUITS AT BASHALL** **27/2/11**

A breakfast-time recce of the Bashall short circuit in the Team Bus last Sunday morning was encouraging. Heavy rain, 3.5 degrees C and poor light encouraged Team Management to hide in the vehicle and keep the heater warm while our heroic and highly skilled mechanic braved the rain and cold outside Clitheroe Race HQ to get the bike assembled and John off to the start. Déjà vu – we were here last August Bank Holiday and it was just as Wintry, so maybe Summer had arrived early for this Clayton Velo Spring Classic northern season opener! How's that for a confusing 3 seasons in one sentence.

Over 80 riders were entered for the 50 mile race, split into 4 handicapped groups with John off first with the 4<sup>th</sup> Cats together with another SCC rider whose name doesn't appear on the BC start sheet but hi Simon and we hope you had a good race.

As the short circuit is still roughly 4 miles round and John's group had an 8min 30secs start on the Elites, Team Management calculated that a target first lap average of around 28 mph was required if our rider was to emulate the successful Marshalls Pasta juniors tactic at last year's Eddie Soens and catch the Scratch group as they left the line, thereafter hanging on to take the flag and maybe get Team Management's photo in Cycling Weakly..... Sadly, as many of us know, management targets can often be, er, challenging and, sensibly, John had other ideas centred on taking the first Prime. At the finish he reported that he had succeeded in this and the Team joyfully blew the expected winnings on a full, celebratory, beans on toast lunch. Unfortunately, the organisers later said the Prime had been won by another competitor riding "slightly ahead of the group," unseen by John from his vantage point leading said group. Ah well, that's bike racing, and unhatched chicken counting.

Whilst initially John's group can't have been far off catching the Elites and thus completing Phase 1 of our Team Vision (our unofficial Team chronometer time check at about 7 miles indicated a gap of 7-18), it was in fact, as they say, all downhill from here. Lacking race radios Team Management had to resort to novel "direct input" methods as our sophisticated, Argos sourced chronometer (10 year battery, green webbing strap, backlight) revealed that the Dean Downing powered scratch group were reeling in "our" lot at the alarming rate of about a minute per lap. This was with Mr Downing seemingly cruising these early laps, having time to grin sociably at spectators as he passed. How do they do it.....

We were a little concerned at the risk of crashes on the initially very wet roads and early on spotted one unfortunate rider retiring to HQ with apparently minor crash damage. Our Peloton representative later confirmed that someone had gone down just ahead of him under braking but fortunately had landed on the verge. We hope he was OK. Dropping our man's tyre pressures

a bit before the start seemed to keep the Conti Black Chilli rubber gripping even at these low, some might say chilli (couldn't resist that one), temperatures and no dramas were reported so the Team Mechanic's on for his bonus then.

To cut a long story to a short circuit the inevitable happened as the Elites caught all three earlier start groups and a break motored on to an unusual "dead heat" finish shared between Messrs Downing and Murray. John? Unfortunately we can't report his final position as the organisers only placed riders to 44<sup>th</sup>, but we know he finished only a minute or so down on this "recorded" group. Whilst the Team understands the organisers' reasons for the limited result it was nonetheless disappointing to see John's finishing position unrecorded but there you go.

Anyway, it was an enjoyable race, especially as viewed from inside the Team Bus, and the beans on toast were excellent, if rather premature. Pics on <http://www.cyclingimages.co.uk/portfolio158092.html> if anyone's interested.