

2005 GOULBURN - SYDNEY RACE REPORT

Cycling fans and riders alike didn't hold back their enthusiasm in the lead up to the long awaited return of the Goulburn-Camden Cycle Classic this year after a four year absence from the cycling calendar. Traditionally a handicap event, race organisers chose to hold the return event as a scratch race with two divisions and a teams classification rolled into the one race. Twelve teams of five took part in the race along with around seventy individual competitors from around Australia. There was no shortage of cycling talent in this years event with several Giro d'Italia competitors and numerous domestic and international professionals including David McKenzie, Trent Wilson, Russell van Hout, Ben Brooks and Olympian Stephen Wooldridge just to name a few.

The riders were treated to dinner on the house the night before the race thanks to the Greengrocer Cafe in Goulburn and many a race plan was discussed in the party atmosphere with a live band and sign-on following dinner. The morning of the race the tension began to build as did the cloud cover and the race was underway on time departing at 8:40am. Riders headed out under neutral race

conditions towards the southern highway on-ramp at Goulburn where the race would officially begin. Upon entering the highway the competitors were met with the slightly unnerving sight and sound of the race helicopter hovering only metres overhead. As the rain began to fall many resisted the temptation to look up as the race wound up to a steady 50km/hr. It wasn't long before local larrikin and strongman Richard



Vollebregt decided it was time to test the legs and go it alone. He was then joined by Michael Tolhurst from Canberra and the early morning breakaway was established. The bunch seemed keen to give the pair some breathing room while still holding onto the reins. The gap grew to two minutes and as the feed zone and first hill climb sprint of the day approached Vollebregt attacked his breakaway companion to take the prize. By this time the bunch was becoming increasingly nervous with the impending climbs to come and with the major players of the race yet to make a move the tension was certainly building. The rain had cleared and the expected attacks came as soon as the climbs were reached with Trent Wilson applying serious pressure to the bunch over Bendooley Hill. As a result the field shattered and a break of nine very strong riders formed chased by the remainder of the main bunch and several smaller bunches off the back.

The break began to close on the pair still up the road as the race descended from the Southern Highlands to the first sprint of the day in Bargo. As they came into Bargo the pair had been reeled in and it was David McKenzie who rolled over the line to take the sprint ahead of a disinterested bunch. As they raced on towards Tahmoor and the second sprint within 15km it was Ben Brooks who decided to lunge for the line to take the money. With the main bunch steadily falling away

from the leaders it was clear that the eventual winner would emerge from this breakaway. Trent Wilson, who rides for the professional team Selle Italia and is a former team mate of David McKenzie, had stated prior to the race that "Were going to drop 'Macca' on Razorback. If he's in the finish with us, we're in trouble". True to his words Wilson began the attacks at the foot of the southern face of



Razorback and immediately began to put some of the breakaway members into difficulty. Reducing the breakaway to six riders Wilson took the first of two hill climbs on Razorback and the break headed down and around to the second and more difficult northern ascent on Old Razorback Road, known well by the locals for its devastating gradient in the final kilometre.

Trent wasn't going to die wondering as they say and repeatedly attacked the bunch on the climb dropping his team mate from the bunch although not the rider he was looking for. McKenzie hung in over the top as the under 23 rider Richard Moffatt took the final hill climb with a last second lunge in front of Wilson.

The break had been reduced to five as they began the final descent towards Camden with Wilson's team mate Russell van Hout in hot pursuit one minute behind. Knowing that both David McKenzie and Ben Brooks possessed a superior sprint finish to him, Wilson gave one final attempt at a lone breakaway. Although a gap developed it was short lived and the break resigned itself to a sprint finish. Knowing it was an uphill finish the Victorian McKenzie jumped early and immediately got a gap which he held to the line to finish ahead Ben Brooks followed by Peter Hatton and the courageous Trent Wilson. Richard Moffatt rounded out the top five. The winners finished in 3 hours 59 minutes and 15 seconds with an average speed of 45km/hr. McKenzie's performance combined with two of his team mates finishing in the main bunch was enough to give them the win in the team's classification as well resulting in a great weekend for his Victorian Institute of Sport/HLP Team.

David McKenzie had these words to say about the race and his victory: "It's great to see the race back. It's a really good course, the last 30 kilometres is where it all happens. It's the perfect sort of finish (for me) with the downhill into Camden, obviously sprinting is one of my better qualities so I had to make sure I stayed with the bunch. I sprinted off the last corner as was able to get away. I was lucky enough to win and have my team win as well, so it was great. I had a ball!".

Overall the entire race weekend was a terrific success for the riders, fans, spectators and organisers with thousands of people along the race route and at the finish to witness this great race. The race finish also coincided with the Camden Spring Festival and Lifestyle Expo so spectators were treated to several activities and stalls throughout the day including a roller derby. Although support

for the race was skeptical before the event, all parties involved including the police and government officials are keen to see the race return as an annual event with planning for next year already underway. Race organiser Paul Hillbrick said, "I am very much looking forward to next year's event with the councils and local members support we can put on an even bigger and better event".



The race was covered from several angles by both camera crews on the ground and in the air and a 30 min highlight package will be broadcast on SBS on Sunday 9th October 10:30am.

Words by John Mulligan