



Team Swift Race Report #1

Anton Nicola
01/11/04
Early Bird Crit #2
3rd. Senior 4/5

I wasn't really sure what to expect when I woke up at 5:45. I didn't know if I was going to be able to finish the race, or if I would crash, or if I would do really well. I basically went into the race blind. I guess that would be kind of logical since it was the first race of my season. We drive to the race in beautiful morning weather, watching the sun come up to warm the day for a race. When we got there however the fog decided to roll in and it was bitterly cold. I layered up and warmed up. I didn't feel too athletic. Believe it or not, I was kind of nervous too. I had a goal for the race. Win it. And if that didn't work, get at least 4th place. At the start line I took off all of my extra layers. I only had my bibs and my jersey on. I race better with just those. With all 97 of us Senior 4/5's on the line ready to go, the whistle blows, and we're off to 50 minutes of racing ahead of us. I suspected that since the field was so big, Alto Velo would try something at the beginning to drop all of the lazy guys in the back. They've done it before. Sure enough they did. Right off the start line, they sent a guy up off the front. I saw it, and quickly chased him down. The pace through the whole race was pretty steady in the upper 20's mph on the long straights. However the whole field would slow way down for the corners, then we'd sprint back up to 26-29 mph. The whole race it did that. Occasional breaks would get up the road about a hundred yards, but that's about as far as they got. The field didn't want to make the same mistake they made the week before. That break stuck, and they won. So every time a racer would attack the field was all over the attack. It was like a lion chasing its prey. They would not let anyone go. The whole race I would have to take the gutter to catch back up to the front third of the pack. Guys would just keep coming on either side of us, and before I knew it, I was in the middle of the pack. I got trapped in a lot during the race. Very scary place to be in a 4/5's race. So when I would finally get free from the middle, I would take the gutter up towards the front of the pack. They left a lot of room between the curb and the field, so it was a sweet place to catch back up to the

front. After I got up there, I would stay there about a half a lap till other people found out the trick, and then I would get blocked in again. 50 minutes of that. I pop in a cliff shot 10 minutes before the final sprint, and then start getting aggressive with my position. No racer was going to push me around. I was on a mission, and I was going to fulfill it. Last lap bell rings, and the whole pack basically starts their sprint right their. I was good till about just under a half a lap. Then a guy comes right beside me, and just holds his position. He was the only guy that was blocking me from freedom. Other racers start passing us on the left side. I was getting kind of agitated that the guy was just sitting there. I was saying to myself, "I didn't wake up at 5:45 this morning just to get blocked in on the last lap." So I thought I would give a little bit of intimidation. So I start making noises, the type of sounds that say, get out of my way, I'm coming through. The guy finally slowed down, and I got through a little pocket between him and the guy in front of me. Hey, whatever works I guess. We round the last corner before the long bend, and the long sprint. We all sprint out of the corner like we had been doing the last 50 minutes. The pace settles somewhat. I noticed that there wasn't anyone going for it, so I decided to make my move from the front third of the pack to basically the front of the pack, using my little gutter trick. I move up, get behind the 5th guy, and start to get ready for the sprint. We were already going 30 mph. Just after I had fallen into the pace line, I heard blowing tires, frames breaking, people hitting the ground, and a lot of equipment thrashing together. It happened right where I had just moved from. I glance back to just see what the damage was. The best way to explain this crash? 1st stage Tour de France of 2003. That's it. Right in the middle of the front third of the pack. I think I heard that about 30 guys went down. A guy hit his head so hard on the ground that his helmet split into 4 pieces. I was so glad that I wasn't in that crash, it could have been the end of my season on my first race. So the bunch of us that were in the front of the crash were the ones that went for the sprint. I don't know how the winner just disappeared without me seeing him. But I ended up 3rd. The guy beat me by a half of a bike length. I was pretty shocked at my performance. It was a lot better than I thought it would be.