

Team Swift Race Reports

April 2012

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Rider Race Reports

1. Copperopolis Road Race 4/7/12 Copperopolis, CA

Tommy Lucas

1st Place Copperopolis Road Race Juniors 15-16

They don't refer to this race as the Paris Roubaix of California for nothing. The roads at this race are bumpy everywhere. Uphill/downhill, you name it and it's bumpy. That's what makes the race interesting and I was very pleased with the way everything turned out. My race was to do two laps of 42 miles.

The race started off at a good pace, but once we hit the first mountain there was one rider that I knew could just ride up mountains like a beast. I did not let him get more than a foot in front of me and he put in a pretty good pace, which popped a few

riders. As soon as we made it over the top and were riding along on the straight roads we were switching off taking pace at the front. No real attacks got away and it stayed pretty mellow until I put in a pretty blistering attack on the bumpy downhill and only one guy could make it with me. We lasted through the finishing hill and were almost to the parking lot, when he makes a wrong turn and then I decided to just sit up and let the others catch up.

And again we were on the mountain part and again that one rider was going hard. He put in great attacks but I was always there to chase. We made it over all together and rode as we did the lap until the next hill before the downhill. It was on that hill which wasn't too long, that the rider attacked again and I was there on his wheel immediately. After few attempts he gave up and we all just rode up and over. As soon as we made it over the hill, I laid in a pretty hard attack and got two other riders including a teammate of mine and a specialized rider. I knew the specialized rider could sprint so we just pace lined it into the final hill and right before it started to go up, I played a little game of cat and mouse and then went as hard as I could around the right corner bend and sprinted it into victory.

Overall I am very happy with the way the race went and I would also like to send the best of luck to my teammate Ryan on a fast recovery!!

-Tommy

Emily Abraham

15 years old, Junior category 15-16

1st Place Copperopolis Road Race Junior Women Category 15-16

I was very excited to be racing in the Copperopolis Road Race on April 7th, 2012. Of course, I was also quite nervous, but I knew that the Junior women wouldn't be a very big field. I was right; I ended up being the only one in junior women 15-16. Luckily there were two other girls in the 17-18 category that I got to race against. Since there were only three of us, we started with the Women 3 category. It made me very nervous to be starting with the Women 3, since I knew I wouldn't be able to keep up. I was able to stay with them for about 2-3 miles in to the race, then the real climbing began and I was dropped. I was determined not to ride alone for the whole 42 miles, so when I saw another junior struggling to keep up as well I pushed myself to keep up. The other junior was from the Los Gatos racing team. We rode the whole race together and were both very happy to have someone else to talk to. Since this is only my first year racing, I'm still learning so right now I'm just racing for fun, but I hope to keep training and get better in the upcoming years.

-Emily

Ryan Clarke

16 Years Old, Senior Category 4

10th Place Copperopolis Road Race Senior Category 4

I didn't feel too good the day before my race. I left school a little early and I wasn't sure if I was going to be able to race, so I made sure I went to sleep early. I woke up, got in the car, and felt like throwing up the whole car ride to the event. I pulled out my trainer and did a short warm-up. I specifically didn't do any hard efforts so I wouldn't make myself feel sicker. After spinning lightly for a half hour I went to the staging area where my sick feeling was gone. I'd just gotten new Smith glasses, so I was super stoked about finally riding with them. They fit my face nicely and were really relaxing, so I could tell I was going to like them. The race started and instantly I got a taste of the extremely bumpy roads. I prayed the bumps would go away on the climb, but unfortunately they only got worse. I stayed near the front during the climb not pushing too hard, but trying not to get stuck behind the slower climbers. The flat of the course was quite windy, so I put myself around 15th. I also told myself not to go with any attacks because the wind would kill anyone who tried. A few people attacked on the first lap, but nobody cared. On the descent I dropped a full bottle. I tried not to worry about it, but it wasn't far to the feed zone. A few miles into the second lap we caught one of the two groups in front. Most of the riders we caught were too tired to stay with us so they fell off the back really fast. On the third lap we finally caught a group that had stayed away from us for most of the race and they too fell off the back. I heard the official saying there was a lead rider 40 seconds ahead, but nobody wanted

to chase him down. The gap kept widening, so I gave up the idea of catching him. It was just a race for second. At this point my legs still felt fresh. I really didn't feel any fatigue plus I was relaxed from the tinted lenses of my glasses so I prepared my plan to win second place. I hovered around the front so I could go with anyone who wanted to attack, but nothing happened. Every time I'd get to the front I'd slightly increase the pace to see if I could get away solo, but the group was just strong enough to keep me from getting away. I tried to stay near the front right before the descent so I would have a fair chance staying with the non junior geared adults. At one point I almost got dropped, but I managed to stay with them. On the second to last corner I sprinted to the front so the sprint was strung out instead of a field sprint. I slowed off letting two people pass me then tried to grab the third place wheel so I could rest for 50m then sprint around the two people in front of me. Unfortunately the lead rider bumped into a slower rider from a different group causing the slower rider to fall. I could see the yellow line on the ground, but I hadn't quite gotten into position when I ran into the crashed rider at full speed and flew over my handlebars. I rolled for what seemed like forever and finally stopped 30m away from the finish line. I looked at him dazed and confused until he started cussing at me. I remembered I still had a race to finish. I picked up my bike and tried to ride it, but the bars were too bent from crashing. I grabbed bike by the stem and ran as fast as I possibly could to the yellow line on the ground.

-Ryan C

Remy CantoAdams

18 years old – Senior Category 3

17th place – Copperopolis Road Race 17-18Jr

The Paris Roubaix of California and rightfully so. The Copperopolis road race is a brutal course that has most riders leaving before they even cross the finish line. I wasn't going to let that be my faith again after my multitude of mechanical issues and chain breaking I had to face last year. I was determined to finish no matter what to prove myself against the brutality of the cross. The race began quickly from the start as teams were scoping out who was going to be working at the front of the pack. Once we got on the climb, everything went smoothly for the first mile then the worse happened. My rear derailleur didn't want to shift properly and was skipping gears. My heart sank as a realized that once again, I was facing mechanical issues that could threaten my chance of crossing the finish line. I slowly dropped to the back of pack and analyzed my derailleur. I immediately noticed the small stick stuck within it so I dismounted my bike and pulled it out and readjusted it to shift properly. By the time I got back on my bike to chase down the pack, at least 3 minutes had passed so I had a lot of ground to make up. As a result, I then spent the next lap chasing down the pack and picking up a few riders that had been dropped from the pack that was always just around the next bend. Closing the gap wasn't easy solo as riders off the back didn't have the energy to help me catch the main group. My solo chase back always just seemed out of reach and as I approached the main climb a third time, I hadn't seen the main group for the last

couple of miles so I pushed up the climb as fast as I could with burning out in the hope I could bring the time gap down. Unfortunately, I crested the climb and looked out across the plateau; I didn't see the pack anywhere. Not knowing my time gap, I spent the remainder of my last two laps pushing a consistent pace in the hope I might pick up some more riders dropped from the lead pack. Coming down the final decent, I just took things nice and easy. Slightly disappointed that mechanical issues caused my race to be a solo race of chasing the leaders that I could never seem to catch, but I was also very happy I was going to finish the race, a much better result in comparison to last year.

-Remy

Ethan Frankel

13 years old, Category 5/Jr. 13-14

9th Place Copperopolis Road Race Juniors 13-14

The race was on a bright, sunny late afternoon. It was fairly warm out, much warmer than the past few races. I quickly registered and set up the trainer. I was only on for fifteen minutes before going out for a 15-mile, one-hour warm-up ride. The road was pretty smooth, but I was warned that the road would be very bumpy. After warm-ups and a quick rollout, I was up at the starting line. The race official also warned all of the racers that it was going to be a very bumpy 22-mile course. Then the whistle blew.

It started off at a pretty high pace. We turned off onto a super bumpy road. I suddenly realized what the official meant by we were going to know exactly what "hurt wrists" were. The road had hundreds of gaping potholes and large bumps. Just about a quarter-mile on the road, my seat slammed down. It fell to the lowest height. When I pedaled, my quads nearly came up to my chest, and the pack slowly pulled away. Lesson learned: tighten bolts before races!

Then the grueling four-mile hill started. I got out of the saddle and climbed as hard as I could, knowing that afterwards were just some rollers. I passed two fellow racers by the time I was halfway up. I kept pushing and pushing until I finally crested, not far behind the rest. But the lowered seat did me no good, no good at all. I tried standing out of the saddle and riding standing up the rest of the race. I was stinging and burning all over after five miles. I sat in the saddle for ten minutes, and then stood for fifteen. I repeated that over and over until the rickety downhill at mile 20. I was constantly looking over my shoulder to see if the three guys that I'd passed had gained on me. Not a chance.

I was spent by the time the downhill came, but to the heck with being tired. For the last couple minutes, I sprinted down the very bumpy road, and then kept sprinting up the sort incline into the final two rollers. Then I gave a final push up the road to the finish.

Ethan F

2. Sea Otter Classic

4/19-21/12

Monterey, CA

Drew Gonzales

Sea Otter Men's Criterium
Category 3

1st Place Sea Otter Criterium Senior Category 3

I knew that the weekend I spent in the Laguna Seca raceway would be spent racing for our Captain Tyler Williams, so I thought that getting a race for myself would be good experience. I went a day early and rolled from the parking lot to the start of the criterium course, which was a segment of the circuit race that looped back on itself. The course, in my mind, was dangerous. After going straight for a mile, a sharp switchback surprised all the riders. Then after another mile of straight road, another switchback. The corners were so tight that the field always went into single file.

During the race, I could tell that everyone knew what they were doing as far as strategy. I also noticed that there were not any real teams present. During the race, a few breaks tried to form, but nothing stayed away because I always chased them down. I was feeling great in the race despite my long drive to Monterey that morning. I could tell from the behavior of the pack, that no one would chase, because I was just doing all the work. This in mind, I attacked on what I thought was the last lap. I accelerated on a slight uphill and turned around to see that no one was chasing. I had it in the bag! I came through the finish line hand up in celebration, but when I crossed the line, I saw a man waving his arms in a windmill like direction telling me that I had one lap to go. I was so embarrassed that my heart skipped four beats. I grabbed my drops and started to torque my bike, putting serious stress on my new Mavic Cosmic SLRs. I kept my effort going for the rest of the lap, and crossed the line in first place with a gap of around eight seconds.

I would have been so embarrassed if I hadn't won that race because I lost track of the lap count. But I received a lot of attention from spectators who saw my mistake. I think that I won the race based on my wheel choice. The Cosmic's are so aero that I was able to keep my gap on the field and win the race on the right lap.

-Drew

Tyler Williams

2nd Place Sea Otter Classic Circuit Race Junior 17-18

The Sea Otter Classic was my first big race of the year. I had done 3 days of racing prior to this weekend, but this was the first one that was important to me. The circuit race at Sea Otter is a very cool race. It is on the Laguna Seca Raceway which is very hilly. The main difficulty of the race is an around 800 meter climb that ramps up to 14% near the top. This makes the course very selective because you are doing this

climb repeatedly for the whole race. Our race was 90 minutes and started at 8:30AM which was lucky as it was supposed to be a warm day. Our race had around 60 juniors in it with very capable competitors. The race had an attack on the climb nearly every lap. I was thankful to have Ian, Joey and Drew all in the race. Drew especially did a great job in the first half of the race keeping me at the front and riding tempo. When the race blew apart with about 45 minutes left Ian and I were able to make it into the front group of about 8 or 9 riders. I had been feeling better and better all race and was gaining confidence. Nearly all but maybe one lap had at least a surge on the climb but I was comfortable. I knew who to watch and with Ian there with me we made a strong duo. With three laps left Geoffrey Curran made a huge attack on the steep slope of the climb. He was a few guys behind me and got a big jump. I hoped someone would respond but no one did so I was forced to go after him. I closed the gap near the top of the hill but not all the way down, and for the remainder of the lap would be chasing about 10-15 seconds back on my own. When we got back around to the climb I knew I wasn't going to get him back without help. Once I crested the climb I sat up to let a group of 4 catch me. Ian was in the group and I was confident in my legs to be able to finish better than anyone else in the group. I sat in and recovered before we went up the final climb where one rider attacked. I countered over the top and Ian and I were alone with one Hammer CMG rider. Ian then drilled the final half of the lap in order to lead me out and not let anyone else get to our group. We ended up settling for second and fourth. Overall it was a good team effort and a decent result. But there is always that desire to win which we had not done.

-Tyler W

Ian Moore

Senior Category 2

4th Place Sea Otter Classic Circuit Race Junior 17-18

I had just flown back on Monday night from racing in Belgium, so I was still a little jet lagged, and getting over being sick when I was at Sea Otter. Other members from the USA European trip, Alex and Colby, were in the same boat and were not able to finish the circuit race or compete in the road race; it is tough to race that soon after hard racing in Europe and the 9-hour time difference. About halfway into the circuit race, the field started to split up, down to about 8 riders, and then Geoffrey Curran attacked, Tyler went after him, and for about a lap it was Tyler chasing Geoffrey off the front with me just sitting on Kyle Torres and Alistair Ekman wheels behind them. For a moment I thought we had it perfect for the win. My group caught Tyler though, and Geoffrey was still off the front. On the last Climb we dropped Kyle and another rider who had managed to scrape back on; I drilled it to the finish so Kyle and no one else would catch us, and I could lead out Tyler. Tyler got second, and I rolled across for fourth.

Drew Gonzales

15th Place Sea Otter Circuit Race Juniors 17-18

This race wasn't going to be mine based on the amount of talent in the field. We as a team put our efforts into ensuring that captain Tyler Williams won or placed. I rode tucked in the field during this race, knowing that it would be a total sufferfest, however I did a little work for Tyler before the race shattered into pieces. Tyler had me just ride at the front to slow the race down, so I wouldn't call it my act of glory. In the first third of the race, the field split on the descent and I was caught in the second group behind a group of nine. The group of nine had Ian Moore, who had just returned from Europe, and Tyler Williams, who was preparing for Europe, so I felt confident that with their strength and experience, they would win as a team. In my group, I remained inactive to ensure that the gap ahead of us stayed. By doing this, Tyler and Ian would have better chances of winning the race. I rolled the rest of the race with my group and finished 15th.

-Drew

Tommy Lucas

20th Place Sea Otter Circuit Race Juniors 15-16

My race was at 4:00 in the afternoon and despite it being cooler at the ocean, it felt at least 20 degrees warmer at the race track. Despite the warmth my race was still hard. I wasn't 100% either because of mistakes I had made in my training plan earlier in the week. However, I persevered and boy was that race hard. It started off fast and every time we went up that hill I felt like I was going to fall over and die. I made it all the way to 3 laps to go until when I stood up to climb what felt like the Cat's Hill Criterium climb times 50-- I just couldn't keep up. We were also passing one of the masters groups and I got caught in with them descending the corkscrew and lost it from there. I ended up going one more lap before calling it quits and ending my day of racing.

Overall it was a hard and fast race and it taught me how to prepare for races like these and I am looking forward to nationals with all the things I am learning. I would also like to congratulate my other teammates on their outstanding performances!!

-Tommy

Tyler Williams

2nd Place Sea Otter Classic Road Race Junior 17-18

After the day before we knew the Road race would play out in a similar way, we knew who the players would be and roughly when things would blow apart. The road course is less selective than the circuit race but favors a breakaway. The race started early at 7AM and once again saved everyone from the heat of the rest of the day. The

race has a long neutral section which can be dangerous so I got in the front and sat behind the motorcycle in order to stay safe and save energy. As soon as we were released there was a huge attack that started the splintering of the race. Unfortunately we were a man down as Drew had crashed in the neutral pretty heavily from what I was told after. Ian and I stayed in the top 10 of the race the whole time I spent a majority of the race of Geoffrey Curran's wheel as to not have a repeat of the day before and get caught off guard. One guy went solo for about a lap and a half on the course and Ian and I were lucky enough to have Joey there to help chase it down to keep it close. With 1 and a half laps left Geoff attacked and Ian, myself and a Hammer CMG rider broke away. However we were caught at the base of the hardest climb of the lap with 1 to go. A Specialized rider countered at the bottom just as we were caught. Geoff followed the move then surged past. I stuck to his wheel till the top of the climb and when I looked back we had at least 5 or 10 seconds as we went over the top of the hill. From there we worked together stretching our lead out to about a minute before hitting the final climb. We rode a good tempo but kept working together up the climb. When we got into the final 1000 meters the rode ramped up and we started playing games trying to get the jump on the other. Unfortunately he was able to get a good jump on me with 250 meters left and I couldn't close it back. All in all it was a solid weekend with good results even though two seconds was rough. Our team worked great together and I was glad to be back to racing with the guys.

-Tyler W

Ian Moore

Senior Category 2

9th place Sea Otter Road Race Juniors 17-18

My fourth Sea Otter road race! I did not feel that great in the road race, but Tyler and I worked great together, and Tyler was able to get another second place. The race stayed together, with just some small breaks until the second to last lap, where Tyler and I got in a break; I thought for sure this was the winning move, Geoffrey was there, and a few others. We were caught right before the last time up the climb however. Right after being caught, Tyler and Geoffrey got off the front. I sat in the main group, and went with attacks. The whole weekend Tyler and I were in a lot of breaks together, and complementing each other really well. Unfortunately Drew crashed early in the race; Joey attacked some and worked for me and Tyler. Great racing Team Swift! I enjoyed seeing all of our sponsors at the big Expo!

-Ian

Tommy Lucas

16th Place Sea Otter Road Race Juniors 15-16

Again I wasn't feeling my best but I said what the heck and decided to do my best and see what happens. The race started off and we descended the finishing hill and scoping it out, it looks like a tough one. As the race progressed the specialized kids

were just throwing down attacks after attacks and after a while some of them got away with some Byrds riders as well. After realizing I had missed the break and probably wouldn't catch them I decided to sit in and save as much energy as I could for the final hill. I had no problem sitting in as I got situated and rolling into the final hill a group got away and I knew I would just have to ride my own pace to the top. It was hard and tough but I was glad I finished and surprised at how I did thinking I would have done much worse.

Overall it was a great weekend and it was great hanging out with the team and I can't wait for future races and nationals!

-Tommy

3. Wente Road Race

4/28/12

Livermore, CA

Remy CantoAdams

18 years old – Senior Category 3

4th Place Wente Road Race Juniors 17-18

One of my favorite road races as it's a great course with varied hilly and flat sections through hills covered in wind turbines. The race began in 78 degree heat which was hotter than I was used to racing in but I had plenty of water so I wasn't worried. It began all calm and steady but the moment the pack hit the climb, the fireworks went off. Unfortunately I was at the front of the pack as we began the climb. I countered the first few attacks the came from behind but after about 30 seconds of no attacks, Jack for Specialized juniors put in a big attack that I attempted to follow but realized if I tried to, I'd burn out very quickly so I sat back and kept a steady tempo up the climb as I only let 3 riders go up the road from me. At the top of the climb I was able to see two of the riders in front of me so I wasn't worried about the time gap since I had another 40+ miles to catch them. Unfortunately, catching them wasn't as easy as planned. It took me a whole lap to catch the third rider in our group on the road and as I asked him if he had seen the two riders in front of us and he replied, "no". Slightly disheartened, I wasn't going to let this stop me, so I kept the pace up and allowed the rider I had caught to follow me as I continued my pursuit of Jack and the second rider. On my third time up the hill my dad was able to tell me the time gap to Jack was only 3 minutes. In my head, that was a very long 3 minute gap as I had been basically been chasing solely on my own since the rider I had caught didn't have the energy to pull for any amount of time at the front to give me a slight break. But I wasn't going to give in; I had a whole lap left to try to close the gap. Unfortunately, as I headed into the closing miles of the race, I hadn't yet spotted the first two riders in our group so I basically was left with sprinting for third up the climb against rider who had spent a majority of the race loving my draft. Not my ideal race finish but it's what I had to work with. As we rolled on to the climb, we looked at each other for a moment and then he made slightly increased his tempo then made a small attack and as I attempted to

catch and counter his attack, I realized I didn't have the energy left to put in a big attack after dragging the rider, who now was riding away from me, around the course for over 2 laps as he sat in my draft probably loving life. As he rode up the road to capture third, I checked over my shoulder to ensure none of the other riders in our group that had been dropped had come back, and once I was sure they hadn't, I sat back and enjoyed the closing mile of the race up the climb to capture 4th place.
-Remy

Tommy Lucas

3rd Place Wente Road Race Juniors 15-16

The race started off pretty mellow until we hit the finishing climb that we would hit 2 more times after. A Tieni Duro rider was setting a good pace and dropped some riders until it was just me and four others. After we had crested the hill we rode smoothly and worked together. I threw in one attack on the back side of the course just to see how I felt but for the most part we stayed together. That was the case for the next lap as well except for that I was saving everything for the uphill sprint. We pretty much paced the whole second lap and no attacks were put in and coming into the finishing climb it felt like we were going snail pace seeing who would go first. Going up the hill I was in my big chain ring knowing the sprint was going to call for it and when the first rider attacked, the Tieni Duro rider and I jumped on his wheel and the Tieni rider jumped and I did too. We were racing neck and neck to the finish but as we came up there were two women cyclists that were in the way and I was forced to let up because I didn't want to push the Tieni rider over the yellow line. I was pretty disappointed with having to let up and get around them and as I did another rider passed me and then just sprinted it in for third.

Overall I would have liked to have seen what would have happen if the two riders didn't conflict with my sprint, but there are some things you just can't control.
-Tommy

4. Wente Criterium 4/29/12 Livermore, CA

Tommy Lucas

3rd Place Wente Criterium Senior Category 3

Coming into this race I really wanted that trophy and if someone was going to win it besides me, they were really going to have to work for it. The race started off really fast with many attacks and I decided I would just sit in and hope for a field sprint. About half way through the race I was sitting behind a guy who overlapped another rider's wheel and went down, taking a lot of other riders with him. For dodging that I was really happy but coming around again the officials gave us a neutral lap to clear fallen riders off the road. However, two riders decided to attack on the neutral lap

and that made it for a start over. So the field all came together and we started again. The rest of the race was pretty smooth without any crashes and I was feeling great moving up the pack getting ready for the sprint. Coming around for the last lap, there was a break up the road with about 7 seconds. We ended up catching the break on the last corner and then I followed a rider who I thought was attacking for the finish but just sat up and I had to latch onto someone else's wheel and then it was an all out sprint. I was sprinting with all I had and I was spinning out because of how long the finish was and I had to give an amazing bike through for third. The race was so close that if I probably attacked and sprinted earlier I could have gotten a bigger gap and won, but lesson learned. Overall it was a great weekend of race training.
-Tommy

5. Europe Race Report by Ian Moore Belgium

Devo Wrap: Week of racing nets one jersey

<http://www.usacycling.org/devo-wrap-week-of-racing-nets-one-jersey.htm>

Juniors

Ster van Zuid-Limburg

The juniors riders in USA Cycling's National Development program started its International campaign with Ster van Zuid-Limburg, a four-day road race across the flat plains of the Limburg region of Belgium.

Logan Owen (Bremerton, Wash./Lake Washington Velo) earned the King of the Mountain jersey after the first road stage and he and his American comrades refused to relinquish control. His fellow Americans, **Christopher Calder** (Greenville, S.C./Les Amis), **Alex Darville** (Santa Barbara, Calif./Hammer Nutrition-CMG Racing Team), **T.J. Eisenhart** (Lehi, Utah/Velosport Racing), **Colby Wait-Molyneux** (Vancouver, Wash./Hammer Nutrition-CMG Racing Team) and **Ian Moore** (San Luis Obispo, Calif./Team Swift) contributed to the teamwork by taking valuable points away from other racers and setting Owen up for the KOM sprints as well as protecting Eisenhart's spot in the overall results throughout the weekend.

Despite four of the six riders combatting the flu, the final stage saw major attrition and only 28 riders were able to finish on the lead lap. Gusting winds and rain reduced the pack to small groups and the Americans were hit hard. Owen finished 31st and Eisenhart 35th on the stage and 23rd and 30th, respectively in the general classification.

Ian Moore Europe Reports

Kermesse #1 4/1/12

I flew to Belgium on Friday, and our first kermesse race was Sunday, so we were all still jet lagged. Kermesses are usually 80-120 km races for the Juniors on a circuit. The morning of the race we walked down the street from the team house in Izegem to watch the Tour of Flanders go by which was super cool. The kermesse course was pretty flat, with a couple bridges being the biggest climbs. There was some trouble at registration, so we got our numbers towards the end of everyone, and started at the back of the 180 riders. And off we go, first kermesse, WOW! The first lap was pretty crazy. We started off fast right away, which I expected. I moved up a little in the beginning, and then saw my teammate Tj Eisenhart going backwards through the pack, unfortunately he had a mechanical and had to abandon. In Belgium the Juniors do not take the corners as fast, for one, the roads are bad, they don't sweep them, and you never know what will be around or on the next bend, and the field is so big that if the riders at the front slam on their brakes and then sprint out of the corner, then it creates an accordion effect, and the riders at the back have to really suffer, which tires people out, and could split the field. So going into the first corner on the circuit everyone slammed on their brakes, a rider crashed to the left of me, I rounded the right turn, dodged an island in the middle of the road and sprinted. The first lap was pretty hard since we had to start at the back. Alex Darville got into the winning break.

Ster van Zuid-Limburg

4/6/12-4/8/12

In the week between our first race and second I got sick, unfortunately. That is one of the drawbacks of having 3 roommates. I rarely get sick at home. The first stage of the stage race was a Prologue of about 5K with twisty turns through town and some undulations. The stage race was a four day race with the prologue and then three 120K stages. We rode the course a few times and then got our bikes checked. After I warmed up, Viggo, our great soigneur, accompanied me to the start house. I took off hard, right in the first corner my wheel slipped a little, but I recovered. I went as hard as I could go whole time taking the corners with the best line possible; I finished 39th out of the about 180 rider field. I didn't feel at my best and was beginning to feel sicker.

Second day was a hard day- very cold, windy, and some rain. I came into town strong, but a crash in the final town laps near the end split the field substantially. Four of our USA guys, including me, got caught behind the crash so we lost some time- maybe 2-3 minutes. One teammate crashed and didn't finish (Chris Calder) but because it was in town laps he got to start tomorrow.

I was beginning to feel sicker throughout the race, and by the last day, was feeling horrible, but despite the cold and wet conditions, I was able to help my teammates. On the third day, I broke a spoke earlier in the race, and chased back on through the caravan. At the start of the small circuits of the race, TJ, who was up in GC broke a lot of spokes on one wheel. Colby and I waited up for him, and I went hard to pull him back quickly, then I pulled off and Colby did the same. We got TJ up to the group pretty quick, so he didn't miss anything. We drove the World Championship course the day after our race (we were going to ride it but 4 of us were sick).

Kermesse #2 4/14/12

I got a little better the week after the stage race, and was feeling a little better for the last kermesse. The race was a pretty short circuit with some narrow roads. I was sitting well in the bunch, But then I got caught behind a crash, tried to chase back up to the now small group, but ended up finishing it a another small group behind the pack.

G.P. Bati Matallo 4/15/12

The Kermesse was kind of a warm up for the big race the next day, G.P. Bati Matallo, in the southern part of Belgium. Bati Matallo has some hills, and cobbles, including cobbled climbs and descents, over the about 130K race. I was feeling better than last weekend at Limburg, but I still had a cough. There were crosswinds not too far into the race, and the race was getting strung out. I stayed in the front group. Going into the last cobbled climb, I was a little further back than I would have liked, I went hard up the cobbles, and the group was splitting up. I was just at the end of the front group when I saw my teammate Logan Owen pulling to the side of the road. Logan needed a wheel. I gave him mine, and then I waited for our team car. We were car 20 something unfortunately. I got a wheel, and then took off chasing through the caravan. One of the things I got a lot better at on this trip was riding in the caravan. I did not catch back up, and finished behind the pack. The trip was a great experience overall, that I can't begin to describe in a race report, or it would be a book! I also cooked a lot for myself and learned about the culture of Flanders. The people are very friendly in Flanders. I look forward to going back again to further my development.

-Ian
