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Sent: 3/17/2014 2:19:45 PM
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Cc:
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Subject: Race Report

FYI

ZAMORA, CA

Two Sentence Summary:

Race: PASS – no real problems in the bunch, active in last 20 miles, made the split, botched the sprint.

Post-Race Meal(s): AWESOME – cold beers & Mexican buffalo meat tacos minus the tortilla from my Tupperware + chocolate soy milk.

As it happened

This was probably the most fun and put together Cat 3 road race I've ever done. I often find Cat 3 races to be incredibly negative, with everything chased down for no reason, which leads to pretty low average speeds. Not this time. As I rolled up to the start line, I reminded myself this was my first proper road race in who knows how long (Leesville in 2012?) and I was racing Pass/Fail, so no silly stuff! Sean W. and Mark D. were with me representing the EBVC.

The Race started in the early morning light for 70 miles (five laps) on the flat to moderately rolling terrain north of woodland by the 505. I was happy to see that the wind was moderate, and the forecast was for a warm day. Although I started out with my teeth chattering, that stopped as soon as we made the left turn onto the course with a cross tailwind and some riders started to attack. After the initial flurries, four riders with the right mix got away, and then their teammates started to set false tempo on the front. I think our field was about 30% squadra, and they were pretty effective at neutralizing efforts by others to escape.

One the second to last lap, the group reeled in the Alto Velo rider from the break, as we entered the cross-tailwind section (and also the finish line drag). I thought the race might split, so I stayed near the front and jumped on a few attacks that looked like they had a chance, but squadra did a good job of reeling them all back. I was a little nervous about burning matches, so I went back into back third of the pack to stay out of the wind, only moving up to the top 10 for the three technical corners over rough pavement and gravel so I wouldn't have to sprint hard to stay with the group.

At the start of the last lap, we caught another breakaway rider, and I moved up to the front expecting more attacks. Three riders went off before the turn into the finishing straight, and they seemed to be working pretty well together. They had a Sacramento Wheelmen rider it, and three Sac Wheelmen in the main bunch tried to block on the front. I rolled off the front a few hundred meters after the turn onto the tailwind section, got a bit of a gap, and then started to put my head down. One other rider bridged up to me, and then we worked in earnest, and caught the group in front of us to make a group of five. I looked back and we had a decent gap on the field, and worked well together – we put our heads down and hoped to catch the two up the road. But there was a reaction from the peloton and I could see it was stretching out. At this point, although I was having fun, technically, this would be a “fail” as I was not where most of the riders were in my race.

After my next pull when I went to the back I was surprised to see our group had swelled from five to about 18 – and they all were pretty motivated, with a decent rotation. A few folks were starting to open gaps, but nobody was dropped, and my right calf was starting to cramp. But with such a decent sized group, at least I was more comfortably in the “pass” category again.

To wind up this long-winded saga, we turned into the final straight, the two escapees were maybe 100 yards up the road, and the cooperation fell apart. I pulled through my turn at the beginning of the straight, and when I pulled off, nobody came around. I put myself in the left gutter (the cross-tailwind was from the right) and waited for somebody to come around, but I was still pulling a reasonable tempo and I was starting to get nervous. There were multiple attacks, swirling across the road, and I was able to keep jump and get on to them, although I was using up my matches quickly. I totally screwed up though, when the group seemed pretty tired from their accelerations and was slowing on the righthand side of the road. I thought we were 500 meters out (turns out we were about 1300), and I attacked hard from the back, all the way on the left hand side of the road. There was a hesitation and I did get a bit of a gap, but I totally crapped out, and when the group caught me, they kept on going. I took another dig and tried to stay on, and failed. Riders started to crack though, and I passed a few in the final few hundred meters ... for a “Passing” 18th place. I think if I wasn't a dummy I could have pulled out something more, but hey, I had a great day on the bike and managed to stay out of an

ambulance.

Post Ride – a true race highlight, though, was rolling back to the van to find Dean and Andrew sitting in folding chairs under the shade of the tailgate, enjoying frosty brews that Dean had brought. After sucking down my chocolate milk and having a few bites of avocado, I sank into my folding chair with a good microbrew and enjoyed hearing everyone’s stories. Sean, Lucas, and Mark enjoyed pizzas made on site by some artisanal truck thing, and they looked pretty damn tasty.

Next Race: Lake Sonoma XC on Saturday. Time for some laid back local dirt (keg chilled and tapped on the finish line!)