

Rider Diary: Dig in at the Dock Cyclocross Race



5 January dawned, and it was time for the battle of Bo'ness, with 150 riders battling for bragging rights to being King and Queen of the Dock, at Scotland's most popular cycle race – Dig in at the Dock cyclocross race.

My race was a story of two slow parts. By design, cyclocross races are devilishly fast – an hour flat out race to the finish, so the trick is to bury yourself, there are not many tactics to be deployed. The first slow part was the start: with 150 riders pushing and shoving to get on the front line it's easy to imagine the difficulty of actually getting there. I held back and was about 6 lines back, with all the pre-race favourites, David Lines of Starley Primal Pro-Cycling, Rab Wardell of Orange Monkey Mountain Bike Team and Gareth Montgomerie of Pedal Power among others at the front. I was not expecting much having been off the bike over the festive period with man-flu. So that made for a slow start picking my way through the masses; however in retrospect it may have been a good thing as during the cyclocross season I had made a bit of a habit of starting rapidly and firing to the front of the race before 'blowing a gasket' (most spectacularly at the Strathclyde park where I actually led the race in the first lap, only to later chuck all the toys out of the pram and quit the race vowing never to ride cyclocross again).

After a few laps I was settled into a small group of riders, containing a few of the riders I'd had a few battles with in prior cyclocross events, like Addy Pope of VC Moulin, Dougie Shearer of Innerleithen CC and my arch nemesis Ruari Yeoman of East Kilbride RC, and was pretty comfortable. Unlike other cyclocross venues the harbour at Bo'ness is that flat and

exposed that there is actually an



Me in my first group with 'arch nemesis' Ruari Yeoman of EKRC in the background

advantage by sitting in a group and getting a bit of drafting, so that was the way the race was panned out, with the leaders group containing the likes of Montgomerie, Wardell and Lines and other riders such as Gary MacRae the out and out dominating Veteran cyclocross racer of the season, with small groups all the way back to where I was.



Reigning King Rab Wardell (right) does battle with eventual winner Gareth Montgomerie (left)

After sitting in the group for a while, however, I felt that I was perhaps too comfortable for a cyclocross race, and coming through the start/finish area decide to put in an attack and see if I could bridge to some other higher placed riders. Luckily it worked and eventually I caught Graeme Warren of VC Moulin and we quickly worked into a rhythm of taking spells at the front eventually swallowing Kevin Barclay of Bicycleworks into our group. Meanwhile at the front of the race disaster struck for reigning king of the Dock Rab Wardell as he punctured requiring a bike change and putting himself out of the running for the overall prize.

As the race neared its end I was again feeling comfortable in my new group so in the last lap coming out of the portage (for the uninitiated; forced running section) I went on the attack

to bid for 14th place. I managed to get a gap (good) but suddenly heard a loud crack (bad) and looked down to see my rear derailleur was sheared off the frame rendering the bike un-rideable which meant I had to run the last quarter lap. Up ahead Gareth Montgomerie took the sprint finish to win from David Lines, who has dominated Scottish Cyclocross all season, with veteran, and rider of the day in my opinion Gary MacRae of Leslie Bike Shop who rounded off the male senior podium. My team-mate, at Team Thomson's Cycles, Harry Johnston took the junior prize whilst Isla Short, also a team-mate, was first female to round off an excellent cyclocross season.

I eventually finished in 20th place, running instead of riding over the line.



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Photos by John Preece // <http://www.photoboxgallery.com/jlp-photography>