

## **ISLE OF MAN TEAM**

### **40km Cycling Time Trial**

The 40km Time Trial took place this afternoon on a 20km stretch of the Noida Expressway – a dual carriageway to the east of Delhi.

The afternoon temperature was topping 34C, but the strong wind blowing down the course was the cause of most of the pre-race discussion. The route consisted of a straight 20km with the wind at your back, followed by a headwind for the 20km return leg.

First away for the Isle of Man was young Tom Black, who was set off in the first wave. Disaster struck in the first mile for Tom, when due to the heat his rear disc wheel ‘pulled’ slightly on leaving the start ramp. With frame clearances at a minimum on the time trial frames, the wheel has to run perfectly true and Tom had to stop when the problem became apparent. With Mike Doyle on hand in the following car, it was completed quickly. However, a few hundred yards further on the problem reappeared and he had to stop again. It was a terrible start for Tom, but he composed himself and taking advantage of the following wind, reached the turn in a time of 25.30 (40<sup>th</sup> fastest).

Graeme Hatcher left the start ramp among the early numbers in the second wave. Again buoyed by the following wind, Graeme was hitting speeds of 65kmh on the way to the turn, which he reached in 23.43 (21<sup>st</sup> fastest).

As Graeme began his difficult return 20km, Andrew Roche was starting the final Commonwealth event of his six-Games career. Having finished 11<sup>th</sup> in the equivalent event in Melbourne, he was one of the seeded riders here and started strongly with a fast time to the turn of 22.36 (15<sup>th</sup> fastest). Behind him on the road, favourite David Millar was predictably the fastest to the turn in 21.00!

The race was clearly going to be won and lost on the return leg, such were the difficult conditions. Tom Black really dug deep to finish his first Commonwealth Time Trial in a time of 58.39, having taken 33.09 for the return leg, picking up ten places from his position at the turn. Obviously disappointed with his early problems, Tom was in philosophical mood afterwards,

“It’s just one of those things. The wheel was checked before we started and it was fine. Apparently the heat may have affected the skewer. I must have lost a fair bit of time but I finished strongly.”

Behind Tom, Graeme was grinding his way to the line, having overhauled a couple of riders who started ahead of him.

“It was so hard on the way back. All the way out I was thinking ‘don’t overcook it’, but I felt good.”

He took 32.30 for the return leg, 9.30 slower than the outward leg, to finish in 21<sup>st</sup> place. His final time of 56.13 completed a memorable Games for the 36 year-old.

After a storming return leg that took just 29.55 (7.19 slower than the opening 20km) which pulled him up three places from his position at the turn, Andrew Roche finished in a wonderful 12<sup>th</sup> place. His time of 52.31 put him ahead of riders from South Africa and New Zealand.

“It was the worst possible course for me today – it suits the real power riders. The headwind was just hideous. 12<sup>th</sup> is good, but I was hoping for a top ten finish. It was the total opposite of the Melbourne time trial – no crowds and no atmosphere at all. You really miss the lift that a noisy crowd can give you.”

### **Atmosphere**

The route was lined totally with 2m high security fencing and, in keeping with the other road events, there were armed guards every 100m or so. There were only two ‘spectator areas’ which consisted of yellow metal cages about 60m x 10m. They were sited behind the security fence and near areas of housing. Both were packed with children and adults, all with their fingers through the wire and straining to see the riders pass.

### **Drivers**

There was a real issue with the availability of cars to follow the riders. Each rider had been guaranteed a following car and driver. The team would then provide a mechanic to sit in the passenger seat, ready to jump out if the rider punctured or needed mechanical assistance. There were only enough cars to cover half the field, and none of the first wave had finished by the time the second wave started.

There were some ‘heated words’ among the team officials and the organisers, before the cars started to return. There weren’t enough drivers either, so Steve Partington drove the car that followed Graeme and none other than Mark Cavendish drove the car that followed Andrew.