

## The Metro Volkswagen Cycling Team sweeps the race weekend in Denton

The Metro Volkswagen Cycling Team kicked off the final month of racing with four wins this weekend at the Downtown Denton Criterium and the Redondo Denton Criterium. The Elite Men's Team was able to win the Pro 1/2 race both days, while Will Rader won the Cat 3 race on Saturday. Lauren Robertson came in first in the Womens Open race on Sunday. The win on Saturday's Denton Downtown Criterium was that much sweeter as it was the final race of the Texas Premier Cup Series which encompasses 5 of Texas' most prestigious races.

Saturday's course was a technical 0.7 mile loop with an uphill finish right at downtown Denton. The Men's Pro 1/2 field featured some of Texas' best, including Stefan Roth and Dave Wenger among others. The Metro Volkswagen Cycling Team started with four guys, Austin Robison, Phillip Snodgrass, Mat Stephens and Christian Helmig.

It was a fast and aggressive race right from the gun. From the first lap on, riders tried to get away from the pack. One attack followed another but not one established a lasting break. Mat tried to break the pack up multiple times and rode solo in front of the field for a couple of laps but was eventually brought back. After nearly 80 minutes of racing, it looked as if it would come to a field sprint as the peloton entered the final lap. But that was not in the team's best interest, as there were some fast finishers in the pack. Christian found himself in a perfect position for one last attack and gave it a try. He got a slight separation and the rest of the pack hesitated just a second too long. By the time the field got organized and started the chase, Christian had established a gap that was just barely enough to stay away. At the end he even had time to sit up a couple of feet in front of the line to celebrate the team's second victory in a Premier Cup event this year.

Earlier the same day Will Rader had won the Cat 3 race in an impressive manner. He spent most of the race off the front by himself, riding a steady high pace and forcing the peloton to chase. While the field wore itself out as individual riders tried to bridge up to him, Will was able to ride his own pace and conserve his energy. It turned out to be a good thing as he finally got caught towards the end of the race. Nevertheless, he had been able to save enough for the final sprint to cross the line in first place.

The Redondo Denton Criterium on Sunday was held at the CH Collins Stadium, just north of Denton. This course was much more exposed to the wind and less technical which made racing it much different from the previous day. The Pro 1/2/3 race started at 9:00 am and lasted for 90 minutes. For the Metro Volkswagen Cycling Team the same four were at the start and the open course and windy conditions took their toll on the pack and a nine-man group got away. The rest of the peloton was content with letting them go as every team had at least one rider in the break. Mat Stephens managed to get in the group for Metro Volkswagen. The break away kept pushing the pace while the field eased up considerably which led to the group of nine lapping the field within a couple of laps. Once it was back together, the race started from anew. Unfortunately Metro Volkswagen had lost Austin Robertson to an early race crash and it was up to Phillip and Christian to get Mat to the line in a good position. With one lap to go the team had positioned Mat within the top 10. Phillip was trying to "sweep" Mat's wheel while Christian made sure the pace wouldn't drop and Mat would get swarmed. Just before the last long left-hand corner, the team had gotten Mat in second position and in a perfect spot to start his sprint. Once the pack hit the finishing stretch, Mat unleashed his sprint. His initial acceleration was strong enough to carry him to the line in front of the other guys that had been in the break and – even though he came across the line in second – he did win the race.

The Women's Open race was combined with the Master's 50+ which made for an interesting race, as Metro Volkswagen also had two strong riders in the Master's race, Stuart Harbottle and Terry Parish. The relatively small field shattered into multiple groups shortly after the start with a four man group leading the race and two girls chasing. Both Stuart and Terry were in the front group and Lauren and another girl were chasing. Even though the girls were only two, they managed to keep the gap steady for a few laps but couldn't gain anything. Then Lauren attacked and Terry and Stuart slowed the lead group down a little to wait for her. Lauren made it up to them shortly thereafter. All she would have had to do from thereon out was to hang tight and finish with this group to win her race. She contributed to the group's effort though and helped to get Stuart in position for the sprint for the line. Unfortunately, the tactics didn't work out perfectly and Stuart got beaten by a tire-width and finished second.

Overall, it was a very successful weekend for the Metro Volkswagen Cycling Team. The team had a great showing and everyone who came out had a fun time. Everyone is now looking forward to the final race of the season, the State Road Race Championships in Copperas Cove on October 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. This weekend in Denton has given the team a lot of confidence and can't wait to finish up the season with another great weekend of racing.