

Katie Quinn's Beanpot Report

Written by John Romanishin
Wednesday, 06 April 2011 02:09 -

This is my first race report for the season and I'm writing it because I've looked forward to the Beanpot crit all season: I knew it'd be the first time that I'd get to race with all six MIT A/B women riders at once ... and it didn't disappoint!

I'd hate to get sentimental about it, but watching Martha, Yuri and Laura race last year is what made me want to train all year so that I could race with (and maybe race like) them! I've also enjoyed sharing the experience of improving over the last year with Christina and Shaena. So it was a great feeling to stand at the start line with the entire women's a/b team for our home race!

I'm also writing about this crit because (in my opinion) it was a really tactically cool race! I probably spent more time with a smile than pain on my face, and it may have appeared to spectators that MIT just TTT'd off the front of the race, but it sure felt like we did a lot of work to orchestrate it and I want to share the story.

Our plan before the race was to get the pace high to string out the field, then to attack and bridge in succession to (hopefully) get an MIT TTT up the road. That is pretty much what we did ...

Step 1: For the first time this season, I was not the last to clip in (thanks to Nick Loomis for lubing my cleats!). I worked my way to the front of the pack and then pulled hard, hoping to string out and tire the pack. After a couple of laps I was tiring and getting slow, so I tried to give up the lead at the top of the hill but no one would pull through and the pace suddenly got very slow. This was contrary to our plans to keep the pace high and bad because the pack was recovering, wasting my efforts of the previous laps! But I figured it could be a good sign that our plan was working and people were tiring. So I did something that is usually very stupid but perhaps necessary in this situation and "attacked" right off the front ;-) At the end of that straight, Kim Zubris from BU attacked and, because I was already at the front and moving fairly fast, I was able to get on her wheel. We gapped the field and worked together for a lap or two. I knew that this wouldn't last, but hoped that it was breaking up the pack behind us.

Luckily, I was pulling when the bell rang for the first prime, so I kept 1st wheel until the bottom of the hill, meaning that Kim would have to (or at least feel obliged to?) pull for the finish straight. At some random point, I loudly switched into a heavier gear (oops!) and "sprinted" (I don't think anything I do on a bike is technically sprinting!!) past Kim for the prime. The good thing about being a bad sprinter is that my "sprinting" doesn't make me tired, so I maintained my pace after the prime and built a gap for myself off the front, picking up the 2nd prime while I was there. After only 10-15 minutes of racing, I had put in a lot of work and I definitely couldn't have maintained it for 50 minutes, but I figured that if I was tiring then others must be too and I was pretty sure we were setting up the race in our favor :-)

Step 2: After a few laps alone, a group of chasers approached me at the bottom stretch of the course. Laura attacked them perfectly when they were about 5 bike lengths away so that I could get on her wheel and, by the time we got to the top of the climb, we were clear of the rest and could set off on our break, which took us through the 3rd prime lap together.

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Step 3: Soon after, I looked back and saw Martha pulling off a beautiful bridge, with nothing but clear road behind her :-). This was the clincher because with three of us now off the front and working together, we were confident that we could build or at least maintain our gap. We worked hard for a couple of laps and then eased into a threshold pace for the rest of the race. Laura and Martha were too kind and let me go through the 4th prime first, since I was in contention for the green sprint jersey. For the umpteenth time that weekend, I was so grateful for my powertap - it told me when my pulls at the front were fading so that I should pull off, and sometimes it would reassure me that my pulls were actually worthwhile, even though I felt like I was going really slow in the headwind!

I regret the final lap ... I always lose my head at the end of races and somehow I let the others convince me that, since I am ahead in the women's leader rankings (only because I've been to more races than them), I should attack them and finish first. My attack was terrible but they let me get away with it and take the win anyway ;-)

Afterwards, I was really happy to hear that Yuri finished with a group of 3 behind us, Christina had almost bridged to that group to finish 8th, and Shaena had placed 3rd in a strong B field!

One other cool thing that came out of the race is that I took the lead in the "sprinter's" jersey competition :-). I don't think I should be allowed to wear it because I've actually only sprinted for a couple of my points, but it does lend credence to the idea that strategy can help convert a race to suit your strengths. Most importantly though, it's definitely the MIT women's jersey and not mine! As you can tell from this and previous race reports, it's the other MIT women who have helped me to get away and stay off the front to win my sprint points, and it is primarily only MIT riders who are displacing competitors in the points rankings to give me the lead. Coincidentally, when I wear it this Saturday, it'll be exactly one year since I finally gave in to Martha's insistence (backed up by Spencer and Matt Blackburn) and tried my first bike race, and therefore exactly one year since I've been hooked on bike racing!

I also want to give a shout-out to Juls' awesome spirit: After crashing and having to withdraw early into the women's C race due to bike failure, she disappeared for an hour or two before returning with her bike freshly repaired at the local bike store and promptly registered for the women's open category, just so she could race on the tricky Tufts course! Awesome.

Thanks everyone for a great season so far and I'll look forward to seeing you out there for the last few all-important weeks of ECCC racing!!