

National Cyclocross 7 October

by Sulli Berry

I went to the first round of the national trophy cross at Derby on Saturday to practice the course.

We got there just after the vet women's race started so we went for a walk around the course to get a feel for the conditions, it was slightly different from last year and I quite liked the more technical type of course with less long straights.

I watched the Vet50 men's race with one of my friends after that I went to go and get changed and get my bike. We did a lap with and practiced bunny hopping the planks which were in a tricky place just after a corner and 40 cm high. The first time I did it I did the first one but didn't have enough speed to do the second one so I upped the speed a little after that and I did it fine and I was one of only 8 people who did it over the whole weekend. It was actually quite a bit quicker than running because you had to slow down for the corner before them. I then did a few more easy laps practicing the hard sections and then I did a fast race pace lap. Then we went back home.

On Sunday I did a few laps in the morning and practiced the hurdles again, it was slippier than Saturday so I practiced a few of the corners and decided to change tyres on both my bikes to get more grip. I knew I would have to sacrifice a bit of speed on the flats but love to overtake on the corners it suits my style more.

Then I went back to the van but to watch the junior boys race to see if the course was drying up and to support my friends who were racing. Only 2 people bunny hopped the hurdles which was surprising. I watch the junior world champion win the race then joined the queue for sign on which took about 1/2 an hour as I was about a third of the way down the queue.

Then I just relaxed until I started my warm up on my rollers. I use my rollers because it really helps me after the initial fast start to maintain the intensity. It was nice to see my friends from club who had come to watch after their track session at the velodrome.



I got gridded in 20th which I knew because they put the griddings up at sign on.

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I had a terrible start because the person in front of me couldn't start properly so I was back in about 40th, then when I was in the woods another rider went round shouting move and swearing at people who mostly moved out of his way but I didn't so he started shouting at me and then he rammed me into the tape so I fell off into a load of stingers and got a bit tangled so I had to run out of the woods, then on a camber a rider took a wierd line which I wasn't expecting so I crashed into him and my chain fell off. Half a lap in and I was in dead last in 107th.

I really tried my hardest to overtake as many people as I could and after about another 1/2 lap I was up in about 70th at the back of a group of 5 or 6 and I had successfully hopped the hurdles. On the second lap I did the first hurdle and then crashed on the second one. However i still remained with the group.

I knew it was going to be difficult to get any higher so I stuck with the group I was in and we were catching individuals in front of us but I was running out of laps and my fast half lap was catching up on me a bit. We dropped two of the group. On the last lap after the hurdles I made a break which I held till the finish I had planned to do that and it worked meaning I didn't get caught up in any sprinting for places at the line.

The result wasn't what i was hoping for however my tactics off making an attack over the hurdles on the last lap worked well and I was happy that my practice at bunny hopping had worked and I was one of only 8 riders over the whole weekend to use this skill.

