

Round 1 of the National Cyclocross Trophy Series: Derby

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The first round of a race series is always daunting; how am I feeling? How is everyone else feeling? Have I prepared enough? How much has everyone else prepared? All of these questions were buzzing through my mind on the 7th October 2018 at the first round of the National Trophy Series in Derby.

Unfortunately for me I was gridded near the back in 100th position, this meant that a quick start was near impossible. The nerves built up rapidly as the commissaire announced one minute until the race started. When the whistle blew, all that could be heard was the riders clipping into their pedals and the loud yells, of encouragement, from parents and friends on the side. The first part of the lap was difficult because all of the riders were jostling for position and for the best lines



around corners. Once into the forest things became really congested because the course narrowed and riders were forced to brake around the corners. On the other side of the forest, there were three tight hairpin bends going down a slope that were caked in mud and very slippery. A set of steps was next and the best line up them was tightly contested by the riders around me.



Soon after this was the first of the two bridges, these were daunting things that were steep and high. After the second bridge, there were planks that were not only difficult by themselves, but there was a sharp corner and a steep incline immediately after them. Next there were three more tight hairpins, but instead of being downhill like the first three, they were uphill which made them incredibly difficult because I had to find the right line and then get around the slippery corner with that line. After that there was the kerb, which wasn't technically challenging, but always caused me to have a doubting thought in the back of my mind asking if I might puncture after bumping down it.

After the next couple of tight corners, I was back on the home straight and was powering along behind another rider trying to keep up as I went past the pits for a second time, fortunately for me, the rider slowed down just before the forest and I was able to get ahead of them and take the best line through the forest and around the three hairpins just before the steps. The rider nearly caught me on the steps because they were a very quick runner, but I beat them to the dismount and got going again before they had the chance to slipstream me. After I had been up and over the first bridge, the rider came past me, trying to get the better line up the bridge and then over the planks, but then slipped slightly on the corner just before the planks and I overtook them again and took the best line over the planks and up the incline. Up the next three hairpins, I

pulled away from the rider behind me and caught up with another two riders in front of me. I stayed with them along the finishing straight and past the pits, and then going into the forest, I attacked them and took one with me while dropping the other one. On the far side of the forest I found that I had a couple of seconds over the rider behind me and took a couple of risks going around the three hairpins and up the steps, gaining a further few seconds. When I got to the planks I encountered another rider who I had caught, and I stayed with them over the planks and around to the finish line to the sound of the bell ringing.

I attacked as soon as we were near the forest and gained time on the two riders in front of me. Once I had exited the forest and was up the steps, I was passed by a rider who had had a problem on the first lap and was forced to run carrying his bike. I had caught one of the riders from the pair in front of me, but the other was still about six seconds ahead. Me and the rider I had caught had a few battles to see who was the strongest out of the two of us



and who could still sprint for the line if needs be. At the planks, I attacked him and gained two or three second and kept pushing all the way through the three hairpins and onto the finishing straight. I ended up finishing the very technically challenging course in 92nd place having made up quite a few places from the start.