

Last Saturday saw a near record field of 77 brave atrocious conditions to compete in the 60km Dean Carter Memorial Road Race.

The Dean Carter was the fourth round of the Tour de Riverina pointscore series with riders travelling from other Riverina clubs together with Canberra.

It was a big day for the Canberra riders posting six of the top ten places. Race winner Joel Stewart once again used a blistering sprint to win his second race of the series.

Joel also took out the second round in Stockinbingal with a withering burst of speed.

The handicapper split the field in to eight groups of riders. The weather held off until just after the race start when the skies opened.

This didn't slow down the Canberra dominated scratch bunch however and they had picked up the chopping block group after 5km. At the 7km mark they also rounded up the second block group and suddenly there were close to 30 riders all taking rolling through and pulling turns.

The dynamic group was making the headwind look like a tailwind as the speed rarely dropped below 45kph and regularly over 50kph.

By the half way turn the scratch group had already ridden 6 minutes faster to the turn than any other group in the history of the race. Such was the speed that they had the leaders well within their grasp and still with 30km to race.

The back markers still with a group 20 riders strong hit the lead with 25km to the line and they continued their unrelenting pace all the way to the finish where the Canberra crew showed perfect lead out style to get their rider Joel Stewart the win.

The winning time of 1:16.27 was a race record by an incredible eight minutes and this despite torrential rain for the 30km journey home.

The Dean Carter race saw a recent record of 20 Griffith Club riders competing in the 60km event. With the club now having racing approvals for 2010 it is going from strength to strength with several new riders joining the club in recent weeks.

There were Griffith riders spread throughout the field and hopes were high that one of the 20 could pull off a great result. The dominance of the Canberra train put paid to those hopes however there were many solid rides.

Nathan Wood put in a brilliant ride in just his second outing with the club. Wood was part of a six man chase group that formed trying to catch the leaders. Despite riding at a speed of 44-47kph for the journey home the chase group couldn't get back to the leaders.

Wood had fellow club rider Peter Budd in the chase group who was also showing some good form. These two riders fought out for the honour of first local to finish.

Budd used his experience and considerable sprint speed to lead the chase group home and to wrap up the prize for first local to finish. Wood had to settle for his second local prize after his great ride.

Unfortunately there were a few local riders that got caught up in falls in the horrid conditions. Matt Nugan went down early in the race but fortunately wasn't badly hurt and rejoined the race.

At the 37km mark there was a bigger fall where 8 riders came down or speared off the road onto the muddy verge. There were three Griffith riders caught up in the fall with Russell Webb, Nigel Kennedy and Steve Bertoldo being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Fortunately the riders weren't seriously injured although there may have been a broken pinky finger looking at the swelling on one rider. Otherwise it was just skin left on the road.

Despite the one sided result the race was a big success for the Griffith Club with a big rider turnout in both total numbers and Griffith riders competing. The race was run like clockwork thanks to the race director Tony Harris who did wonders given the difficult conditions.

This week sees four Griffith riders travelling to Rutherglen to compete in the Rutherglen 100km handicap event. This is an open event where a big field is expected.

Jason Minato, Kingsley Massey, Russell Webb and Peter Budd have all been building their form at recent races and a good result will not be a surprise. These riders have a big month ahead of them culminating in the State Masters Titles to be held in Moruya in the middle of May.