

Last week saw five Griffith Club riders travel to Cootamundra to contest the Haycarters Road Handicap.

This 70km event is a state open event hosted by the Cootamundra Cycle Club. There were 191 competitors facing the starter with the field split in to ten groups.

The course is a very challenging one with four challenging climbs to negotiate. The big field normally means the race is run at a very fast pace and it is the survival of the fittest in each group.

Kingsley Massey sporting a new pair of super fast wheels and Russell Webb were the first Griffith riders away in group 9 with a handicap of 17:00 minutes.

Steve Bertoldo was the next Griffith rider away in group 7 with a start of 12:00 minutes.

Peter Budd in group 6 had a start of 9:30 minute whilst Jason Minato, a former winner of this race was in group 4 on 5:00 minutes.

The first challenge in the race is to get up Stock Hill at the 9km point . This is a super tough climb at race pace and around 2km long. This climb breaks many legs and each group is usually thinned considerably by the top.

From the top of the climb it is a 70+kph descent and a blisteringly fast ride to Stockinbingal.

Minato and his group had the misfortune of getting stuck at the train crossing and being delayed for about 4:00 minutes. By the time the track was cleared the scratch group was upon them and a day's racing just became even harder.

Webb and Massey were riding well in their group and were slowly clawing back the 3 minutes to the leaders. On the third climb of the race a long 3km hill called Bonny View Webb lost contact as the pace lifted leaving Massey the lone Griffith rider in group 9.

Bertoldo was putting in a strong ride but his group 7 was down to 5 riders and pulling back the leading groups was slow and painful.

As the race was approaching the final 10 km the Griffith riders were still in the hunt for a good finish but the scratch group was about to make their move. They swept passed all the groups on the road bar group 10 who with 6 riders were still looking for the win.

With one kilometre to the line the 6 leaders looked to have it won but the back markers were coming up fast at speeds well over 50kph. Rounding the final bend the leaders could see the line in the distance and dare not look behind.

The scratch riders started their sprint a long way from home with the leaders tantalizingly close. As speeds tipped 60kph the line flashed by but it was not enough to catch the 6 from group 10. Five second separated them after 70km of hard racing. It was a rare win for the limit riders and a brilliant effort to hold off a charging peloton.

Steve Bertoldo was the first Griffith rider to finish with Kingsley Massey not far behind.

This weekend will see Griffith riders travel to Moruya on the south coast to contest the State Road and Criterium Championships.

Kingsley and Jenni Massey along with Peter Budd, Russell Webb, Jason Minato and Jeff Stoll will be out to test themselves against the best masters riders in the state.

Jenni Massey has been a medalist at this event before and is again a strong chance to bring home a medal. Competing in division 5 she will be up against some great riders and will need to produce another big ride to be in contention at the finish.

Jason Minato will be up against some very fit competitors in division 2. Looking as lean as he has for a long time the hills should not be a problem for Minato this year. Last year saw a broken spoke finish his chances and he will be out to put in a good showing.

The criterium is where he may shine though. Gifted with a great sprint he is always a strong chance of winning any race he enters if he is there at the end. Another former Griffith rider Baden Burke shall also be in the race and no doubt Minato will be looking for his wheel at the finish.

Russell Webb is up for a big challenge in division 3. There he will ride against some very classy cyclists over 92km. Webb rode a great race in the same event last year and he will be out to match or better that effort.

Jeff Stoll competes in division 4. The hilly course will suit Stoll who rides hills well, but a limited race preparation may test the legs. A no show by last year's almost unbeatable champion has opened the division 4 event and if Stoll can get in the right moves could pull off a great result.

Kingsley Massey and Peter Budd both race in division 5. Massey is coming in to some form and put in a solid ride at the Haycarters race. He finished with his bunch last year and if he can do the same this year he would have to be pleased.

Budd is riding with some good legs at the moment and is in his best form for a long time. His challenge will be getting up the hills which will depend on how fast the race is run. His best chance could also come in the criterion event where his strong sprint could see him challenge for the win.

The two days of racing are hard and painful with copious amount of lactic acid for the body to absorb. No doubt all these riders will have a story to tell of their races and with luck it will be of medal winning exploits.