

Viljoen completes comeback with sprint victory

Conrad Viljoen (Mecer-NMMU) beat the sprinters at their own game in only his second outing after fracturing his collarbone to win the sixth leg of the Beachfront Lodges Premier Cycling League over 82 kilometres in Port Elizabeth on Saturday.



He beat two breakaway companions - former Bok sprinter Mario Nell (Friendly City Cycles) and the in-form Antal Meiswinkel (Toyota-Cycle Lab) - in a sprint finish to stop the clock on 2:05:25.

The 25-year-old, who is better known for his climbing ability, was not going to be denied in his first bunch race in six weeks, even if it was against two of the fastest finishers in the province.

Meiswinkel led in the approach to the line, with an attentive Viljoen and Nell on his wheel. Viljoen was first to kick and neither Nell, second, nor Meiswinkel, third, had an answer.

The victory was just reward for Viljoen, who initiated the break into a headwind with eight kilometres remaining. He was immediately joined by Meiswinkel with Nell - one of the pre-race favourites - bridging the gap a few moments later.

Two kilometres out, Viljoen put in a serious attack on the final rise in an effort to rid himself of his opponen but they were equal to the task.

“I was worried about Mario (Nell) in the sprint and tried to drop him on the final climb, but he was too strong I’m ecstatic that I managed to beat him in a sprint.”

Ronnie Scheffer (Mecer-NMMU) won his third bunch sprint in-a-row to finish best of the rest in fourth, 41 seconds down.

Wesley Augustyn (Mecer-NMMU), Phillip Erasmus (Friendly City Cycles), Reghardt Koen (Mecer-NMMU), Kevin Cremer (Volkswagen), Doug Shadwell (Toyota-Cycle Lab) and Terry Syphus (Volkswagen) complet the top ten.

After a nervous start that was marked by several small attacks, Augustyn and Luthando Fatyi (Friendly City Cycles) were responsible for the first serious move when they got away at the start of the second of five 16km laps.

Toyota-Cycle Lab, who clearly wanted the race to stay together for their sprinters, took over control of the

bunch and made sure that the two leaders never built up a lead of more than 45 seconds. Their hard work paid off when the escapees were brought back halfway around the third lap.

Walmer Club's hopes of a victory on a course that suited their strengths were dashed when team captain and another of the pre-race favourites, Wayne Pheiffer, missed the start.

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