

Report on the London Junior Squad Training Session

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Venue: Herne Hill Velodrome

Herne Hill Velodrome was the venue for the latest London squad session. The bike is my strongest discipline so I've always enjoyed the squad sessions here. I knew that as well as working hard I would have fun catching up with my friends on the squad so I was really looking forward to it.

The weather was great and 18 athletes were present. Before we started riding, squad member and newly qualified level 1 triathlon coach Dan took us through a quick bike check just to make sure our bikes wouldn't fall apart halfway around the track.

Coaches Jon and Ed told us all to do some easy warm up laps to calm our initial excitement. After the warm up Jon split us into groups in which we would then do anywhere between 10 and 20 laps depending on age and ability. The idea was to work as a team, keeping the pace steady and the group together, and getting used to riding in close formation. In my group this turned out to be harder than we thought because of course we immediately forgot the "steady pace" instruction and spent loads of energy winding each other up as much as possible and trying to prove who was the strongest rider, culminating in a flat out sprint for the line on the last lap which Jon had specifically told us not to do. As usual, Harry got the blame.



We were then split into three groups for a higher-intensity session. Starting with an equal gap between us, each group rode slowly around the track whilst the front rider of each group sprinted ahead to catch the next group. As soon as he made the catch the next front rider sprinted off, and so on until our legs were burning from all the sprints and we had completely forgotten whose group we started with.

After this came a much needed break. We were supposed to be resting but instead we used even more energy attempting to steal Reef's food, and proving that Isaac knows nothing about science.

After the break we split into two groups which rotated between transition practice, and a 15 minute high intensity bike session. My group started on transitions with Ed where we worked on perfecting

our transition skills and anyone who missed the dismount line had to spend 10 seconds in the improvised penalty box (aka the naughty chair). We then moved back onto the track with Jon where we worked as 2-man teams. The emphasis was on good communication, rotating the lead to keep the pace high, and using the draft to take a rest.

And then came the most important part of the whole session, an “Italian pursuit” race. We split into two teams of 9 riders and lined up on opposite sides of the track. We rode round as a team in a single line and the end of every lap the front rider pulled off until only one rider per team is left to race head to head in the final lap. Jon had seeded the teams perfectly and in the early stages the lead swung one way then the other as the pace steadily increased, it was nail-biting stuff! About half way through the other team had pulled out a big lead and it looked like our chances were gone but using the group riding skills we had practiced earlier my team began to claw its way back into contention until we launched Dan into the final lap against Isaac just 3 seconds down. Dan rode hard to close the gap but fell agonisingly short and we lost by half a bike length.

I hope that everyone enjoyed the session as much as I did. Thank you to Sheila for organising everything behind the scenes, and to the coaches for putting us through our paces.