

Despite the weather, Milk Race numbers reach 163

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One of the largest swarms of cyclists in the Smith Dairy Milk Race's 22-year history hit the country roads outside Orrville on Sunday.

Over 163 racers from as far away as Pennsylvania geared up for a hot, muggy morning of biking sponsored by Smith Dairy and organized by the Orrville Cycling Club.

"Many thanks go out to the sponsor of the race, Smith's Dairy Products," said race organizer Rich Corfman. "The race also couldn't happen without the great effort of the Orrville Cycling Club members who organize the race, register riders and marshal the course. Several of these club members sacrifice their chance for a good, competitive race in order to offer a first-class event."

The challenging circuit race, which normally starts and ends at the entrance of Wayne College, kicked off in front of the Old Blatter Airport on Crown Hill Road due to construction. The rest of the course remained the same.

Even that small tweak changed the nature of the course, cyclists said.

Orrville cyclist John Lorson said the Milk Race usually is won by a breakaway group, or racers who are able to separate themselves from the rest of the pack on hills and when there is a headwind.

Because of the new starting location, and a tailwind on the biggest hill of the race, there was a large group of cyclists who all finished the race together in a "bunch sprint."

There were five USA Cycling categories in this year's race. For USA Cycling, the lower the category number, the more experienced the riders are, with Category I being the cycling equivalent of the minor leagues for professional baseball. The highest category on Sunday was Category II/III.

The women's division was won by Samantha Brode (House of Carbon Racing). Lorena Brown of Orrville Cycling Club placed eighth.

Category II/III, a 50-miler which included the most experienced racers in the event, was won by Mark Brown (Ohio Orthopedic).

Category IV, a 30-mile circuit, was won by Todd Howman of Wooster. Bill Buckwalter, also of Wooster, took seventh in the same division.

Category V was dominated by local riders. Wooster's Jake Buckwalter came in second, his brother Seth Buckwalter was fourth and Duane Eberhart of Wooster took seventh in the 20-mile race.

The Master's division, consisting of riders aged 35 and up, was won by Mike Quigley. Lorson, of Orrville, came in third.

"We have a really strong cycling/bike racing culture in this area, and the Orrville Cycling Club has enjoyed a reputation as a very good racing club for a long, long time," Lorson said. "We're all friends who push each other all the time in training and in racing."

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