

Monday 29th September, 2008

Abraham captures Tour of Tobago

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BY GREGORY TRUJILLO

Inspite getting a flat tyre, Emile Abraham showed grit and determination to win Stage Five—the gruelling Tour of Tobago—yesterday in the Tobago Cycling Classic.

In a sprint finish, Abraham proved too strong for second placed Heath Blackgrove of New Zealand and Germany's Timo Scholz.

However, the win was not good enough to earn the seven-time winner the overall title, which went to his Team Gremlin teammate Blackgrove with Scholz second. Abraham had to settle for third.

There was a small group of seven that broke away after 15 miles into the 120km race, which included Blackgrove, Jamaica's Marloe Rodman, Alex Bhogal of Canada and Germans Jonas Schmeiser, Andreas Feistel and Jens Grewe.

Between Castara and Palatuvier, Abraham, riding solo, bridged up to the front bunch.

By the time Abraham connected to the leaders, the pack was down to five riders—Germans Schmeiser and Grewe, American Daniel Holt, Rodman and Abraham.

Rodman was the rider who kept the pace high, and on at least three occasions, the group rode away from Abraham.

Each time, the Pan Am Games silver medallist last year did not panic and rode his way back to the quartet.

Just before entering Charlotteville at around the halfway point Abraham got

a flat tyre, losing about 20 to 25 seconds in changing the wheel.

Because of his never-say-die attitude, the seven-time winner of the race pedalled his way back into contention after leaving Charlotteville.

By then, Schmeiser, who was one of the riders that began the day with a good chance of winning the overall prize, started to feel the effects of the gruelling mountainous terrain and climbs.

"I knew the German was hurting, and in trouble, so I felt a little relieved," said Abraham.

Coming out of Speyside, the hometown boy picked up the pace on the climb and Schmeiser back-pedalled and dropped back.

Abraham and Blackgrove carried the pace into Scarborough, trying not to let Schmeiser get back in the race.

All the while, Scholz inched his way up to join the leaders, and approaching Low Lands near the finish, he and countryman Feistel attacked and counterattacked.

From there to the finish the battle revolved around Abraham, Scholz and Blackgrove, with anyone of the three likely to win. In the end, Abraham prevailed.

"I think I definitely felt a lot better than in previous years," said the winner. "I started the race feeling strong and I was really happy to win the hardest stage of the tour.

"Not winning the overall title did not bother me since teammate Blackgrove won it. That was still good for me.

Organiser Jeffrey Charles said he was happy with the outcome of the event.

"This being the 22nd edition of the classic, as president, I was very happy with the outcome of the event," stated Charles. "It was very successful, very competitive and everyone had lots of fun.

"We made a special effort to improve our safety measures and it work well," he added.