

Grey skies and light drizzle greeted the 50 participants of the 24th of January 2016, Australia Day Handicap. Dave Robinson was taking a well deserved break from handicapping and registration, Paul Bird ably stepping into the breach and Richard Buckwell for volunteering time keeping duties

The race today consisted of 3 laps with a dash up Nobles Lane before a downhill finish eastbound on Larcombe's Rd just past the Forrest Road turnoff.

Racing got away on time with Brian Long, Ken Mansfield and Don Stuart setting off from limit giving 15:30 to the next group of Dennis Sonogan, Ross West, Doug Wilson, Terry Robinson, Mal Cole and Ian Sumner. The next 6 groups were regularly spaced from then down to the scratch group at 36 mins of Nathan Ashton, Brad Haskett, Anthony Seipolt, Paul Beretta, Andrew Baker and Dave Warren.

I cant speak for all the other groups, but the scratch group took off with intent, averaging 42.9km/h for the first lap and only marginally slower on the second lap. Nathan Ashton Paul Beretta and Andrew Baker putting in some massive turns on the front. By early in the second lap the 2nd Scratch group of Nick Brown (Colac) Harvey Lang, Craig Hannah, Barrie Howden and new club member Daniel Cavell were getting close and Scratch had picked up the unwanted Shane Korth from 3rd Scratch. The catch was made up Hendy Main Road, with Nathan driving on the front at a respectable 62k.

A formidable group was starting to form and the speed showed no sign of slacking. Nick, Harvey and Craig from 2nd scratch joined in and put in some good turns. Heading up misery lane for the last time most of the field were in our sights, but still no lead car in sight. The cross winds up Hendy and Larcombe's Road were taking their toll and most of 3rd Scratch and 4th scratch were unable to tag on the the back of the group as we went past. Turning up Noble it appeared to all of us that we had caught the field, a subject that was briefly discussed but quickly discredited.

Nathan Ashton and Brad Haskett attacked the group heading up the last rise southbound on Noble's. It was bad timing for Paul Beretta and Andy Baker who had been working hard on the front, both being gapped slightly, Paul perhaps paying the price for his hard riding at thursdays crit and his ride with Mark Cavendish earlier in the week. They tried valiantly but when Nathan got on the front again the gap started to widen. By now we had spotted our quarry, Brian Long on his own heading south on Nobles Road with about a 3 min gap and 5 k to ride. The lead chase group was now down to Nick Brown, Harvey Lang from 2nd Scratch and Rob Southern from 3rd Scratch with the scratch group less Andy and Paul. We knew we still had work to do Anthony Seipolt and Nathan continued to put the hammer down, with the reward that when we turned up Larcombes Road we could see Brian just starting the rising section about a kilometer from the finish.

It was starting to get a little cagey behind Nathan, Nick Brown is known for his finish and Harvey has been riding very strongly of late. Anthony has the best sprint of all of us but is not in prime condition and Dave Warren is as cunning as a fox and will be there at the end. We caught Brian just before the top of the rise, and shortly after knowing i would struggle to beat Dave and Anthony in an all out sprint I attacked hoping to catch everyone unaware. As I crested the hill a quick glance revealed I had surprised everyone and had a nice gap to Dave who was chasing hard. The next 400m were the longest in history, initially I couldnt even see the finish line and I thought i had blown it. Dave Warren had now got on my wheel and I hugged the leeward side of the road waiting for him to go past. I think Dave got caught out by my speed decay and got stuck between my wheel and the dirt, and by the time he adjusted his line it was just too late. We were quickly followed over the line by the fast finishing Anthony Seipolt, Nathan Ashton, Nick Brown Robbie Southern and Harvey Lang. Brian Long went over the line in 8th place after riding on his own for an eternity, and only being caught just before the line, well done. Andy Baker and Paul Beretta rounded out the top ten.

Another great day at the GSCC. Thanks to referee Rodney Lambeth, and marshalls John Bell, Grant Edmonds, Rick Buckwell, Frank Gasperic and Kane Airey for giving up his ride to step in and marshal for a marshal no show.

1st: Brad Haskett (fastest time)

2nd: Dave Warren  
3rd: Anthony Seipolt  
4th: Nathan Ashton  
5th: Nick Brown  
6th: Robbie Southern  
7th: Harvey Lang  
8th: Brian Long  
9th: Andrew Baker  
10th: Paul Beretta