

# Winner's Circle ~ Cole Parker

## HH100 Cat 3 Road Race

by TRP Staff

**TRP: Give us the usual information, you know, name, team, event, date.**

Cole Parker, Jack & Adam's Racing Team, Hottern' Hell 100 Road Race, 8/25/2012

**TRP: Why did you go to the event?**

CP: I love long and grueling events. I also love the Texas Heat, and I figured this event would play into my advantage in that I could "outsuffer" the field.

**TRP: What had you heard about the event?**

CP: That it was hottern' hell, windy, and usually had a very deep field.

**TRP: How did you prepare?**

CP: I started getting coached by Stefan Rothe about a month ago, and so he put his special touch on my build up for the race.

**TRP: Tell me about getting to the start line ...**

CP: Oh wow, race morning was less than ideal. I came from doing triathlons the last few years, so I figured the race traffic would be pretty similar given the large quantity of people there for the ride. I gave myself plenty of time to get to the venue. I pump up my tubular in the garage of our host house, and proceeded to place my bike on my roof rack. I secured the fork in place, but decided against harnessing my rear wheel, mainly because of a false sense that it may squeeze that extra bit of pressure out of the tire. I back up and immediately I hear my bike crash onto my windshield on the drivetrain side. I freeze. I get out and a power line had caught my seat post and flipped my bike over, with the fork staying secured. I knew that my race was done, as I had broken something. I flipped it over and sped to the race site, rushing to get to the support. I beat the crowd to the Shimano tent, and the dude really hooked me up. It was a very minor fix, and he gave my bike a once-over. I was starting to get short on time and still hadn't "relieved myself". Luckily the porta-potty was staged next to the Cat 3 wheel truck! Awesome, I thought, maybe I am supposed to race after all.

**TRP: Who did you watch for?**

CP: I knew there was guy there from Cycle Progressions who beat me at Ft. Davis earlier this year. He was very strong and very aggressive.

**TRP: What were the early miles like?**

CP: They were absolutely brutal! I remember thinking at mile 10, "my legs just don't have it today." I asked a friend, Stewart Ericson (TBi), in the race if it felt super hard for him, and he agreed. If the race would have ended at mile 50, it would have been one of the hardest 50 mile road races that I've done.

**TRP: What led up to the successful break?**

CP: There were non-stop attacks, with the peloton countering and chasing them all down ~ eventually. This whittled the field down till, by mile 60, I was in the lead break of about 10-14 riders.

My coach, Stefan Rothe, advised me to stay patient at least until mile 60, and don't do too much work early. I had done just that and at mile 65, we reached a false flat. I noticed the pace immediate-

ly lighten up. I decisively went up to the front, and I heard a guy yell "Work together!!!" I glanced back, and I already knew what this meant. A gap of about 10 meters was between me and the pack. I suddenly felt great, glancing down at my power-meter, I decided to ride at a pace I thought I could sustain for 20 minutes and if nothing else, put some hurt on the chase. [The way I kind of "rolled off the front" rather than making a hard attack, had actually worked one other time for me, and it was also in a 105 mile race earlier this year called Rouge Roubaix in Louisiana.] However, I was in a Cat 4/5 race, and I had teammates helping me out. I knew this would be much more difficult, and I honestly thought that there was no way that I could stay away for roughly 40 miles.

I kept glancing back, and soon I reached the second feed. I snagged a water, and got a split....."10 seconds" yelled Andy Hollinger from the Comm2 truck. Wow, I thought, I've been 5 miles and I'm 10 seconds up. I decided to keep the hammer down though. I had no clue what the course was. I really didn't care, I figured I'd be gobbled up soon enough, hopefully have some time to sit in, and maybe make another late attempt. As I approached a right turn, I got another split, this time it was 30 seconds. As I turn, I notice I'm turning onto an awesomely paved highway, with a stout tailwind.

Coming from a triathlon background, one of my strengths was riding fast down hills or with tailwinds. I suddenly got really excited, and I felt great! I rode for the next 20-30 minutes with the tail wind and by the time I reached the end, I will never forget the words I received. "2 minutes, you are officially cookin'!" came from the Comm2 truck.

Then I made a turn into the head wind. I totally had no idea that was in store. I saw the "Wichita 17 miles" sign, and negative thoughts were trying to stream into my mind. I had recently gotten a power meter, and I had been watching it the entire time I was off the front. I figured I would keep my power as close to the same as I held it, and see what happened with my splits. I thought for sure that the pack would start to catch me, but that wasn't the case. At one point, the motorcycle ref sped up to me and gave me a split that was 20 seconds off, but I didn't care. By this point, I was running on pure adrenaline. I was out of food, water, and I was getting chills. When my garmin showed 100 miles, I was in a world of hurt but I knew the end was near. I'll never forget at mile 101, Andy Hollinger rolls up next to me and says good job, only a few miles left. I almost had a cow! Now, after being in the hurt locker for so long may not sound like much, but I wasn't having it. Luckily, he was off a bit, and when I reached the bridge coming into town, all I could think about was "anything can still happen....it's not over until it's over....I could flat....I could pass out from dehydration..."and then I came down the ramp. I vaguely remember two hard turns, and I was so mentally wrecked that I thought I may crash on the first one. When I finally crossed the line, it was awesome!!! There was no tape, or huge crowd, just a few people, and a volunteer with water. It took quite a while before I got my bearings, and I received a lot of love from everyone. It was great, and it was definitely something I will remember forever!

**TRP: Where there any moments of real risk or questions of your survival?**

CP: When I turned back into the head wind, and the first thing I saw was a sign that read "Wichita Falls 17", I thought to myself, "Oh no." I was starting to get really dehydrated, and I was asking my body to ride another hour into a demoralizing head wind. Andy Hollinger kept giving me time splits as well as words of encouragement from the Comm2 truck, but I knew the clock was ticking. I was starting to get chills. I knew there was one feed zone left, and when I reached it, I was torn between the notion of stocking up with 2-3 bottles or just getting one and saving time. I played it safe, grabbed one bottle, and wasted no time. I knew it wasn't the healthiest move, but I had suffered for too long already, and I figured I could tough it out. The race started feeling like I was doing an Ironman again, and I had a deep confidence after hearing that I had 3 minutes that I was going to win.

**TRP: Who seemed the strongest in the break?**

CP: There were so many strong riders, Midwestern State had a guy who won the crit the next day who was strong, Cycle Progressions had a strong rider, as well as many others.

**TRP: How did you get away?**

CP: I waited until everyone was starting to wear down, and I attacked in the cross wind. When I turned into the tail wind, I kept the throttle down and put in some good time.

**TRP: How did the finish go down?**

CP: A police car with a siren, a couple of familiar faces cheering, a duct tape line, and a volunteer with a bottle of water, and a very happy cyclist!

**TRP: Words of wisdom?**

CP: If you are willing to suffer more than everyone else, then eventually you will find a race that will suit you.

**TRP: Anybody you'd like to thank?**

CP: Andy Hollinger, for the encouragement, support, his stoke for the sport of cycling. and everything else he does for cycling in the state of Texas. Stefan Rothe, my coach, who is making me rest and recover. All the guys on my team, Jack & Adam's Racing Team, who are super cool and great resources. My Mom and Dad, for being super supportive. My mechanics at Jack & Adam's, James Balentine and Bryan Jacobs, for taking care of my equipment. Joseph Lafico at State Wheels, for supplying me with an awesome race wheel setup. All the employees at Jack & Adam's, for working extra hard while I race my bike.



Photo by Dave McLaughlin

