

CCCA Virtual Race Series Weekend I: The Magic Roads of Home

by CM Jacobs

This past weekend the UCI World Tour road season was kicking into gear over in Europe. Across the Pond and north a bit, the schools of the Canadian Collegiate Cycling Association were starting our own, virtual, race season—trading in the white roads of Strade Bianche for the magic roads of RGT.

It was a return to home roads for the current and former members of McGill cycling that participated last weekend with the courses being based off of some of the Montreal scene's greatest hits. Saturday saw the racers tackle the National Criterium Championships course doing circuits of Avenue du Parc between Avenue des Pins and Avenue du Mont-Royal. Not to be upstaged, Sunday took the racers over a place every Montreal cyclist loves to haunt, the Camillien-Houde climb and around on the Pro Tour loop used by the World Tour in GP Montreal every year.

The criterium saw everyone race up to 25 laps of the course, producing some hard racing and early season lessons as the riders acclimated to the RGT platform after a hard winter of training. Sunday's Road Race saw the McGill representatives put what they'd learned into action for up to six laps, and come away feeling positive about their outlook for the races to come.

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MONTREAL GRAND PRIX: CRITERIUM

SATURDAY, MARCH 6 AT 11AM EST

MCT MEN'S CAT 1: 39KM, 550M, 25 LAPS
MEN'S CAT 2: 31KM, 440M, 20 LAPS
WOMEN'S OPEN: 31KM, 440M, 20 LAPS

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MONTREAL GRAND PRIX: ROAD RACE

SUNDAY, MARCH 7 AT 11AM EST

MCT MEN'S CAT 1: 57KM, 1254M, 6 LAPS
MEN'S CAT 2: 47KM, 1045M, 5 LAPS
WOMEN'S OPEN: 47KM, 1045M, 5 LAPS

When asked about his strong ride on Saturday, alumni Oliver Wockner put it best when he said:

[Saturday] I was holding my own much better in the lead group, the thing that got me was when we started lapping bigger bunches of people who would jump into our group. By the time I realized I was drafting the wrong people, the bunch I thought I was in was 150 m up the road and that was that. It happened very quickly. I'll be paying a lot more attention to that next week!

The virtual nature of the race added some wrinkles that wouldn't exist out on the road, and the weekend definitely was an adjustment period for everyone to learn the intricacies of racing on the RGT platform. Outside of everyone's early season legs and technical difficulties, the general mood was that it was an incredible experience for the racers to be able to hit out on roads that would be impossible for MCT to host an in-person race on. On the actual feeling of virtually racing somewhere so familiar, Ryan Schmedding "I liked that the turns on the RGT course actually match the ones IRL and not just the elevation; I could actually kind of feel and anticipate them like I was actually riding the GP course which was cool." That touch of home certainly made for the ideal stepping stone into the world of RGT racing, and just got the team more fired up for what's to come.

Pete Watson was also complimentary of the field put together for this first stop on the CCCA Virtual Championship Series, calling it a "high level of talent compared with most Zwift races, but that makes sense as most of the guys racing would be men's A and B."

Overall, this past weekend was a positive experience for all the racers who took part in it. As the standings sit now, Queen's University leads the Team Omnium competition, followed by the Universities of Toronto and Ottawa with McGill in striking distance of the podium in 5th. In the individual categories, a big shout out to Ryan Schmedding for being 10th in Men's Cat 1 and Craig Knobovitch in fourth for Men's Cat 2. Next week the series is headed to Toronto and if you're a member of the club or an alumni, feel free to come and rock the McGill colours with us!