

## Mud Sweat & Gears Rd7 - 07 September 2014 – James Murphy KL MTB

MSG round 7 and home race for the Kings Lynn mtb club at Shouldham Warren. I've ridden many, many laps of this course so there was definitely a home advantage to be had. This also brought a little bit of pressure to add to the usual race day nerves!!

I got down to the course early to meet the rest of the club, perfect weather for racing, dry but not too warm. I had been down to ride the course on the Saturday just to check the layout of where the tape was and get an idea of where there would be space on the opening lap. This also meant I didn't need to do a pre-ride lap so could just warm up gently. Unfortunately with these races even when you're gridded you still end up in the start line for fifteen minutes while the other classes get going.

I had a plan of what to do at the start, the course began on a grass straight which went into a gentle climb before turning right, missing out a section of single track on the first lap, then down into some downhill single track and around into a short sharp climb back out again. The plan was to keep in the top six off the start and save energy to hit the climb hard and get to the front.

Plan didn't last long...

I took up my grid slot on the front and waited for the whistle. We were off. I managed to keep at the front up the hill, thankfully this slowed everybody down and I found myself turning the corner in second place. We pushed on towards the downhill but it seemed like it was a "you first, no, you first" situation so I thought sod it and just went for it into the singletrack. This probably made my race as I just rode as I had many times before while others took a more cautious approach, the noise of the other riders went quieter behind as I carried on.

Coming round at the bottom of the hill I was lucky to get away with hitting a drop and jump too fast and nose-diving over them. I carried on up the hill and pressed on as if it was just another training ride, concentrating on catching the junior riders where I could pass them.

On the grid I had checked out the other riders and felt I had a good chance of a strong result, with the exception of one rider who I had struggled to keep with at a previous round. I managed to get three quarters of the first lap down before I heard another rider behind and knew who it would be. He passed me going into the climb and I didn't really have an answer to it at that time so I just concentrated on my race and not getting caught again.

At the end of the first lap I was ten seconds down on the leader but he was still in sight so I tried to keep with him and close the gap a little but unfortunately the second lap was a very difficult one with trying to get by other riders. There were a lot of battles going on with some of the riders in the other classes and I seemed to catch them in all the wrong places, I just hoped the people behind had the same problem. Going into the final lap I had lost sight of the leader so just concentrated on keeping that second place. With the help of an energy gel I pushed hard for the last lap, catching sight of some of the riders behind occasionally I felt I had a reasonable gap. The finish had a straight that was perfect for a sprint finish and I certainly didn't feel

like doing that so I gave it everything in the singletrack leading up to that point, I couldn't hear anyone behind so allowed myself a look behind half way down the straight, thankfully no one there so I was able to tidy myself up a bit ready to cross the line in second place, my best result so far and on home turf too!!

It was a good day for the club with several riders having some good rides, the course rode really well and everyone seemed to enjoy the event.

In the end I finished 56 seconds down on the leader but 2 1/2 minutes ahead of third so looking back on it going for it at the start probably bought me some of that gap. Something to keep in mind for the future?!

There is one more round of the series to go, at Langdon hill in Essex which I hope I will be able to attend. Your best 6 races contribute to the championship so thanks to my injury I will only manage 5, if I do the last one but I should still make the top ten which was my goal at the start of the year. That race is at the end of September. I may have also agreed to be part of a team to do a 12 hour night race at Thetford the following week so there are interesting times ahead!!

