

Ronde van Overijssel and Omloop der Kempen

Wednesday, 09 May 2012

Marco Polo Cycling-Donckers Koffie had a tough few days of UCI Pro racing in the Netherlands this weekend. In the 2-day Ronde van Overijssel as well as the Omloop der Kempen the field were challenged by wet and windy conditions.

Our team leader Chris Macic ran into bad luck during Overijssel, where he caught rain in the prologue being one of the last riders off, and then suffered a flat tire on the following day's stage. Unfortunately, the puncture came at a time when the race was being driven hard at the front; despite the teams best efforts they were unable to close the time lost for the wheel change.

The run of bad luck continued for the Omloop van der Kempen, where a big crash near the front early on in the race brought down Matthé Pronk and Chris Bartlett. Pronk landed heavily on the tarmac, he was taken to the hospital to be treated after the race where it was confirmed that he had fractured his collarbone. Bartlett only sustained cuts and bruises himself, but damage to his rear derailleur forced him to retire soon after. The race featured an 8 km cobbled stretch, and with little else in the parcours to test the riders, the pace was predictably forced through this technical, exposed section where position was key. Gaps opened and the peloton fractured into groups. Many riders were caught out by the split and were subsequently pulled after the completion of the first 100 km lap, leaving only around 90 riders left. Gebreslassie, Macic and Marc Ryan continued to represent us well up front, getting involved in the moves and going on the attack. Especially impressive from Gebreslassie, showing has the power in flat races to go up against the best despite only weighing 54 kg. The race was eventually won by Nico Eeckhout from a small group that escaped with 20 km to go.

This weekend we will be racing pro kermesses at Houthalen and Verrebroek. We wish Pronk all the best for his recovery, and we hope to see him in action again before the Tour of Serbia in June!