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## **Cyclists battle the elements: Wallake wins top division at Smith Dairy Milk Race**

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ORRVILLE -- Cyclists from all over the Midwest had to factor in the wind, heat and a herd of competitors vying for the top spot in their respective categories at the annual Smith Dairy Milk Race on Sunday morning.

Over 165 men and women -- the most in the event's 21-year history -- suited up to take on a 10-mile circuit just north of Orrville, and rode up to 50 miles, depending on which USA Cycling category they competed in.

For USA Cycling, the lower the category number, the more experienced the riders are -- with Category I being the cycling equivalent as the minor leagues for professional baseball.

Each of the five different levels competing were escorted to the starting line by State Highway Patrolmen, and were notified of their final lap by the sound of a bell and a lap counter.

On Sunday, the highest level to compete were Category II and III, who were grouped together and launched from the front parking lot entrance of The University of Akron Wayne College at 10 a.m. to begin their 50-mile journey.

Columbus native Isaiah Wallake was the first to sprint over the finish line for Category II and III, doing so in a time of 2:04:54.

Brent Martin of Stark County came in second for the

group, followed by Justin Kanter of Pittsburgh, David Chernoskyh of Panther/RGF Cycling and Matt Weeks of Lake Effect Cycling.

Wallake, who competed in the Milk Race last year and took 15th place, said one of the keys to his success was knowing the course a little bit better this time around.

Plus, this year the 26-year-old had teammates who helped back the race off when Wallake broke away.

"It really helps to have a strong team around you," Wallake said.

That same sentiment was shared by Mike Gorman of the Orrville Cycling Club, who finished third in the Masters Category of adults 35-and-over.

"Whenever you have a teammate ahead of you, you draft," Wallake said. "Which is what John (Lorson) was doing for me. I was already in third going into the sprint, but if he came after me then other people would have been chasing me down, too and I would have had that much more competition."

Gorman's third-place finish in his category's 40-mile race was the best performance of the day for the local club -- which had six members compete and another 30 work the intersections to make sure the race was as safe as possible.

"Our primary concern in the whole event is the safety of the participants, and we go to great lengths and take a lot of pride in the safety of our race," said coordinator Rich Corfman. "When all is said and done, that is the most important thing."

Of course, winning isn't so bad, either.

For the women's category, which consisted of level II, III and IV competitors, Samantha House of Green was virtually unstoppable.

The 40-year-old, who began racing 5-years ago, said she knew the 30-mile race would all come down to a sprint in the end.

Which is where wind became a huge factor.

"The finishing and starting stretch winds were just brutal," said House, who clocked a 1:27:50. "If you

wanted to break away you had to really fight that. So in the end I just put it all in the pedals."

Following House in the Women Category were Gray Patton, Jillian Behm, Margorie Parr and Sharon Slovenec.

Taking the title in the Master's Division was Thomas Frueh (1:43:08) of the Carbon Racing team. Nate Loman was second, followed by Gorman, Ray Russell of Allegheny, Pa., and Lorson of Orrville.

In Category IV, the gold medal winner was John Colter, who finished his 30 miles in 1:22:53. Colter was trailed by Michael Carimer, Stephen Drake, Jacob Meyer and William Slutz.

Kevin Owens took the blue ribbon in Category V, followed by Aaron Stevenson, Bill Buckwalter, Louis Palmer and Trevor Miller.

Officiating the race was 30-year veteran Gary Bywaters of Pittsburgh -- who has been at the helm of over 740 cycling events in his lifetime.

The race was sponsored by the Smithy Dairy Products Company and by National City Bank.

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