



—Staff photo by Eliot Kamenitz

Tom Finklea raises his arms as he wins Sunday's criterium on UNO campus

Tour de Louisiana winner Casebeer worried in vain

By BOB MARSHALL

When he woke up to face Sunday's final leg of the 1983 Tour de Louisiana, Dan Casebeer had a seven-second lead on his nearest opponent, which is roughly analogous to the Saints being 21 points up on their opposition with two minutes to play. Even the Saints couldn't blow that.

Or could they?

"I was a little paranoid," Casebeer admitted. "I kept thinking about what happened a year ago."

A year ago he woke up to the final leg with a 25-second lead on the opposition, which meant he was racing in another zip code.

"Then I blew a tire, crushed a wheel and had assorted other mechanical problems."

He finished second.

"So, you can see why I was worried."

He worried in vain. Under clear blue skies, and with perfect mechanical cooperation, Casebeer turned Sunday's 30-mile criterium into a textbook example of smart bike racing, maintained his seven-second lead and took the Seniors 1&2 title he has been chas-

ing the best performance by a local racer with a 3:14:43 for fourth overall.

The veterans class was a strictly local affair, with NOBC taking the first five places. Club president Stan Truxillo swept each stage for the overall title with a 2:51:29, followed by Denis Carrroll at 2:52:16; Jim Bergin at 2:52:34; Jim Davis at 2:52:51, and Carl McAllister fifth at 2:52:57.

Texas' women proved to be the toughest in their class, with the Texas Metros Racing Team sweeping the top five spots. Susan Ehlers 3:08:54, took first, followed by Laura Peycke 3:08:54 (Ehlers won on the basis of his finish in the criterium); Mary Reoch 3:12:41, Sydne Ludvigson 3:13:55 and Ursula Sandefur 3:19:29.

Winners split the purse of \$3,400, composed of cash and merchandise. No one got rich, but many — like Casebeer — took another step toward a cycling goal.

"I'm pointing for the Olympic team ... again," Casebeer grinned. "I made it to the trails in 1980, but didn't do anything."

"Hopefully this time around it will be different."

laughed. "But as it turned out, it was actually an easier race than last year."

It became "easy" for Casebeer when he grabbed the lead in the time trail, rolling off a 9:05 to Doughty's 9:12. His job in the second stage, the 56-mile road race, was to protect or increase his seven-second lead. It's a job made more interesting because bonus deductions of 10, 7 and 5 seconds are given to the first-, second- and third-place finishers in the road race and criterium.

But, once again, Casebeer got some help. Lonnie Kennedy, a St. Louis racer unknown to most local competitors, made an early move and was allowed to slowly pull away from the pack. "No one really knew who he was," said Doughty. "Some people thought he was a 3 or 4 racer, and figured he would be burning out. But, when he began to get out of sight, they got concerned."

Not Casebeer. "I knew who Lonnie was, and I knew how far back he was in the time trail (15th place, 51 seconds behind). As long as I kept him within 20 seconds, he would be no threat, and he'd be eating up the bonus points on a racer who might be close enough to me to pose a threat (Doughty, for example).

tained his seven-second lead and took the Seniors 1&2 title he has been chasing for three years back home to Carbondale, Ill.

Tom Doughty, a former national time-trial champion, finished second at 3:34:17. Tom Finklea, of Baton Rouge, and Michael King, Casebeer's teammate, were tied for third at 3:34:20.

The Seniors 3&4 class was dominated by two New Mexico racers. Joel Thompson, a former 2:21 marathoner, and Todd Gogulski, both of the Rio Grande Racing Team of Albuquerque, N.M., ran away from the field and in the time trials and were never threatened. Thompson finished with a 3:10:09 overall followed by Gogulski at 3:10:34. Stephen Katchner of Houston was third

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Things certainly seem to be rolling his way. A member of the Yellow Jerseys racing team — a Madison-based club with a national racing schedule — Casebeer's performances in New Orleans the last three years have been building blocks to the championship.

The 22-year-old graduate of Southern Illinois finished third in 1981, and second in last year's breakdown-plagued finish. Coming into 1983's tour, he had confidence, as well as concern.

"I was a little paranoid because of what happened last year," Casebeer

to pose a threat (Doughty, for example).

"So, I was glad to see him go out."

It was smart racing. Kennedy won the road race with a 2:11:44 and moved into the top five going into Sunday's final stage, but Casebeer easily maintained his seven-second lead on Doughty, and was still 21 seconds in front of Kennedy.

It gave Casebeer a tremendous advantage going into Sunday's final stage held around the UNO Assembly Center. He didn't have to win the criterium, only finish close to Doughty to cinch the overall win.

