

### **Stage 1, Girvan – Girvan, 76 miles**

The 37<sup>th</sup> edition of the Girvan 3 Day, third counting event in the season long Premier Calendar Competition and the only one contested north of the border, got underway with almost 100 riders spread across 27 teams. Whilst few would doubt that Recycling.co.uk would be the team to beat, it would come as something of a surprise as to which member of the squad would wear the first yellow jersey of race leader.

Following the ceremonial start in the centre of Girvan, the riders were faced almost immediately with the first Carrick Gazette King of the Mountains climb of the day at Byne Hill. It was American Clayton Burrows – riding for Agisko/Dart/Cycling.tv who crossed the line first, whilst further back the service vehicles were kept busy as several riders succumbed to early punctures.

As the race reached Barrhill with 11 miles covered the first of two hot spot sprints were contested, with Ian Wilkinson (Science in Sport.com) taking the honours which would later earn him the green jersey of leader in the classification. The pace was brisk during the early part of the stage but it wasn't until the ascent of the long climb to Tairlaw summit that the first significant moves were made. Recycling's Ben Greenwood, winner of the recent Tour of the Reservoir, forced a small gap in the company of GB Mountain Bike's Nick Craig and Matt Bottrill of the De Rosa Racing team. They were swiftly joined by 2005 Girvan winner Robin Sharman (Recycling.co.uk) and Clayton Burrows. As more riders joined the lead group on the rapid descent they soon numbered 45 and held almost half a minute's advantage as they reached Straiton with 41 miles gone.

The next climb at Dersalloch Hill, proposed location for new race sponsor Scottish Power Renewables latest on-shore wind farm, saw Sharman and Greenwood working hard at the head of affairs. Under their relentless pressure the lead group had been reduced to just 18 by the time the race turned onto the A713. Dale Appleby (Recycling.co.uk) added the KOM win to his second place at Byne Hill and thus secured the polka dot jersey.

With the climbing over, the leaders continued to be very active as the race sped through Waterside and Patna, with Ian Wilkinson again taking maximum points at the Patna Hot Spot. With Greenwood and former National Road Race Champion Matt Stephens (Sigma Sport) working well, the leading group included all of Recycling.co.uk's A team with the exception of Evan Oliphant. By now the rear of the peloton were more than 3 minutes behind but a chase group of 25 were not so easy to shake off and the leaders advantage yo-yoed between 30 and 50 seconds as the race passed through Straiton and Dailly on the fast run in back to Girvan.

The 18 leaders were still all together as they made the left turn at the landmark 'White Cottage' just 2 miles from the finish, and shortly after this an opportunist attack by one of the younger Recycling riders, Robert Patridge, gained him a slender advantage at the front. Despite a frantic sprint for the line he maintained his lead and took the stage victory and with it the first yellow jersey of the race. His team mate Kristian House placed second, followed by Burrows and Sharman.