

### **Stage 3, Girvan – Minigaff, 97 miles**

With the prospect of 97 miles of racing taking in four classified climbs – including the ascent of Tairlaw ‘the hard way’ - the third (and longest) stage of ‘The Girvan’ presented a daunting challenge for the 93 survivors.

Even as the race left the neutralised section the peloton were very active with Duncan Urquart and Kevin Dawson (both Agisko/Dart ‘A’) giving an early sign of things to come. By Dailly, with just 4.5 miles gone, they had pulled out a lead of almost 20 seconds in the company of Matt Higgins (Composite A). The first Endura/TAL Hot Spot sprint of the day was contested at Straiton with the green jersey wearer Ian Wilkinson (Science In Sport.com) taking maximum points.

As the riders began the ascent to the King of the Mountains prime at Tairlaw Summit, the lead group had grown to 13 but their advantage was reduced to 27 seconds under relentless pressure from the peloton. First over the line was Duncan Urquhart (Agisko/Dart ‘A’) with Dale Appleby (Recycling.co.uk) taking second and extending his lead in the mountains classification. Onto the descent and 2005 Girvan winner Robin Sharman suffered a rear wheel puncture but quickly regained the pack. Meanwhile Urquhart went clear at the front, eventually building a maximum lead of 39 seconds before being caught by the peloton with 40 miles covered.

No sooner was Urquhart caught than Kevin Dawson and Dale Appleby launched an attack. With Dawson (stage 4 winner at the 2005 Girvan) doing the majority of the driving, Appleby moved through to collect more KOM points at Pibble Hill. As the race approached Lauriston at the 70 mile mark their lead stood at almost 3 minutes, with Appleby now the yellow jersey on the road. But there were signs that the peloton were starting to stir with the chase being led by Kristian House (Recycling.co.uk), clearly determined not to lose his grip on the leaders jersey. Soon nine riders were clear of the main field and pursuing the leaders, rapidly eating away their advantage. Also included in the chase group were Sharman, Clayton Barrows (Agisko/Dart ‘B’), Matt Stephens (Sigma Sport) and green jersey Ian Wilkinson.

Within six miles the leaders were joined by the chasers and the main field immediately began to fall further behind. With ten miles to go to the finish at Minigaff, their lead stood at 2 minutes 30 seconds. Urquhart tried to get across in the company of Martin Smith (Team Milton Keynes) but they could make no impression on the lead and soon rejoined the main field, clearly resigned to their fate.

The long straight finish afforded a great view for the large gathering of spectators as the sprint unfolded. With House powering down the right hand side of the road, Agisko/Dart launched Neil Coleman and Clayton Burrows on the left with Coleman taking the victory by a small margin from his teammate, who was destined for his third appearance on the winners podium. House secured third and with it kept his leaders jersey for another day.