

## **39<sup>th</sup> Girvan 3 Day Cycle Race promoted by Wallacehill Cycling Club**

### **Stage 1: Girvan – Girvan, 65.5 miles**

With the weather forecast promising arctic conditions for the Easter weekend, the first stage of the Girvan defied the predictions and was run off under largely sunny skies – though the strong winds would make it hard for any significant breaks to stay away.

The first classified climb came after just 2.7 miles and it was Gary Hand (Pedalpower RT) who took maximum points as the Plowman Craven squad drove the peloton and propelled Tom Barras up the road in the company of Dan Smith (Team Lacuna) and Ross Creber (Science in Sport-Trek). A swift reaction from behind doomed the break to failure and they were soon back in the main field.

After 16 miles as the race approached Straiton for the first of two passages, an 11 man group had established a lead which gained a maximum advantage of 23 seconds. Included were 4 of the Plowman Craven team (Simon Gaywood, James Millard, Simon Richardson and Alex Higham) along with Russ Downing (Pinarello RT) and last year's Girvan winner Ian Richardson (ScienceinSport – Trek). Not having such a good day was Matt Stephens (Sigmaspport) who was forced to abandon inside the first 20 miles.

With the peloton regrouping by the 25 mile point Tom Barras again went clear this time with Peter Williams (Pinarello RT) and Kit Gilham (Kinesis RT). They stayed away long enough to contest the first hot spot sprint of the day in Crosshill, with Williams taking the honours. Again the leaders were quickly caught and this was the signal for James McCallum (Plowman Craven) to go clear – now fully recovered from a crash in the season opening Eddie Soens Memorial race at Aintree.

McCallum claimed the second hot spot in Kirkmichael but was being pursued by a chasing group of 20 and was caught as the race crossed the River Girvan. Arriving in Dailly with 44 miles gone, a new attack saw Plowman Craven team mates Richardson and Gaywood gain an advantage along with Halfords Bikehut rider Tom Southam (riding in a composite team). Within three miles their advantage had increased to 48 seconds.

The second ascent of Byne Hill saw Southam dropped and the two Plowman Craven riders continue on their own. With the now split peloton more than 48 seconds down it looked like they had forced the winning move. But with Rapha Condor – Recycling and Pinarello RT animating the chase their advantage was slowly being eaten away. With just two miles to the finish in Girvan's Victory Park the lead was less than 10 seconds and their fate was sealed.

As the final sprint unfolded, it was former Girvan winner Malcolm Elliott (Pinarello RT) who provided the perfect lead out for Russ Downing to claim the victory, with his brother Dean – winner of the recent Bikeline Two Day - making it a Downing one-two in second place. There was some consolation for Plowman Craven as Evan Oliphant secured third.

With just a brief respite before the riders contest the 16.5 mile Stage 2 criterium around Victory Park, the Carrick Gazette King of the Mountains jersey is held by Gary Hand and the Endura Hot Spot Sprint leader is Peter Williams.