

39th Girvan 3 Day Cycle Race promoted by Wallacehill Cycling Club

Stage 3: Newton Stewart - Girvan, 89.1miles

Although overnight snowfall blanketed the surrounding hills, the roads on Sunday's third and longest stage were unaffected - in fact sunshine and blue skies were the order of the day as the riders set out from Newton Stewart.

The Carrick Gazette King of the Mountains jersey was on the shoulders of Gary Hand (Pedalpower.org.uk) and placings of first and fourth on the first two classified climbs of the day ensured that he retained it at the finish.

The picturesque roads around the Galloway Forest saw numerous attacks but none were destined to ever gain more than a handful of seconds. The teams of Pinarello RT – defending the yellow jersey of Russell Downing - Plowman Craven RT and Rapha Condor-Recycling.co.uk were all very active at the front of the peloton. As the race returned to Newton Stewart, and the hot spot sprint at Minigaff, a 21 man leading group opened up an advantage which was soon up to nearly one minute with 52 miles gone.

The breakaway contained all the main challengers for the race lead: second placed Dean Downing (Rapha Condor Recycling.co.uk) was there along with his team mates Graham Briggs, Kristian House, Rob Partridge and Dale Appleby; yellow jersey Russell Downing had Malcolm Elliott for support whilst Plowman Craven were represented by Tony Gibb, Simon Gaywood, Simon Richardson and Evan Oliphant (lying third overall). ScienceinSport had former Girvan winner Ian Wilkinson in the company of Dave Collins and Ian Bibby.

By the final Endura-Tal hot spot sprint at Barrhill with 70 miles covered, the leaders advantage was approaching 4 minutes as Kit Gilham (Team Kinesis) attacked the group. However the yellow jersey of Downing was quick to bring it back together, only to see another effort by Wilkinson, Elliott, Briggs and Gibb gain an eleven second advantage. Gibb was soon on his own as the rest of the lead group reformed, and he stayed clear for several miles - enjoying a maximum lead of 21 seconds. Meanwhile the remains of the main field were timed at more than five minutes behind the lead group.

Gibb's effort proved to be in vain as he was reeled in as the race turned right at Pinmore, and almost immediately was dropped as the speed really picked up on the run back in to Girvan. Roy Chamberlain (Team Corley Cycles) was next to try his hand and when caught his team mate Matthew Higgins made an effort.

Approaching the final corner, five riders had gained a slender lead over the rest of the group, but a touch of wheels within sight of the line felled Higgins and Dale Appleby, leaving the Rapha Condor rider with a suspected broken shoulder. However his team mate Rob Partridge secured the stage victory with Simon Richardson second and Matt Cronshaw (Team Kinesis UK) third.

With Russell Downing finishing in the group 11 seconds behind the winner, he retains his yellow jersey with Partridge moving to second overall, 15 seconds in arrears. Peter Williams did enough to hold on to the green jersey by taking maximum points in the Gatehouse of Fleet hot spot sprint.

The fourth and final stage of the race departs from Girvan on Easter Monday, covering 72.2 miles and taking in the climbs of Hadyard Hill and the fearsome Nick o' the Balloch.