

40th Girvan 3 Day Cycle Race promoted by Wallacehill Cycling Club

Stage 1: Girvan – Girvan, 62 miles

Easter weekend and the Girvan Cycle Race are inseparable in the minds of many cycling fans so it was fitting that one of the best fields ever assembled for the 40th anniversary edition. Rolling out under sunny skies, the first stage saw the riders head towards Ayr for the first time in several years.

It was action almost from the start for the 101 rider peloton and the first Endura Hot Spot Sprint of the day was contested after 4.5 miles outside the world famous Turnberry Golf Course. The points were taken by James Millard of Plowman Craven-Madison narrowly beating Ben Greenwood of Rapha Condor.

As the race headed for Electric Brae – a deceptive section of road that appears to go uphill, but is in fact a downward slope, a leading group of twelve riders had established a lead of 17 seconds and included amongst them were current National Road Race Champion (and Girvan winner from 1997) Rob Hayles of Halfords Bikehut, Simon Richardson of Rapha Condor who scored a third place overall finish twelve months ago and Andy Tennant, also from the Halfords team who took his first ever Premier Calendar victory at the Tour of the Reservoir two weeks previously.

As the break consolidated it's advantage they were joined by three further riders who escaped from the peloton, former Girvan winners Chris Newton and Kristian House of Rapha Condor and Rob Partridge (Halfords Bikehut) who finished second in the 2008 edition of the race. With veteran Malcolm Elliott already in the break the group now featured four of the five former Girvan winners who were in the 2009 starting lineup.

With the lead standing at 40 seconds with 23 miles covered the peloton were very active and rapidly reduced the deficit to only 17 seconds by the time the race reached the narrow streets of Maybole. The catch seemed inevitable and it happened just before the sprint line in Kirkmichael with Tom Barras (Plowman Craven-Madison) taking the maximum points. With constant attacks continuing, the race logged an average speed of 27.5mph for the first hour and already the pace was taking it's toll at the back as several riders struggled to stay in contact.

Gary Hand (Endura Racing) leapt forward to secure the first Carrick Gazette King of the Mountains prime at Blairquhan but was rapidly reeled back in and the race remained in one very active group for the next 20 miles. Speeding back towards Girvan for the Victory Park hotspot, an opportunist attack by 7 riders went unanswered by the main field and they soon had a lead of 27 seconds. Tennant and Richardson were there again, along with Peter Williams (Candi-TV Pinarello), Darren Barclay (Arctic Premier), Plowman Craven-Madison duo Tom Murray and James Millard and Marcin Bialoblocki (Team E12 composite).

With Millard securing his second sprint of the day he would be destined to wear the Green points jersey on the podium, and with Murray taking the final KOM at Byne Hill Plowman Craven-Madison were enjoying a good first stage.

As the finish got ever closer the lead group continued to build their advantage to in excess of one minute. With the race swinging onto the roads around the finishing circuit at Victory Park, former team-mates Murray and Williams put in a big attack and opened a small but ultimately decisive lead. Murray edged Williams out in the sprint for the line, whilst Bialoblocki got the best of the rest to secure third.

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Whilst the riders assembled for the jersey presentations, a special commemorative shield was presented by Winifred Sloan the Provost of South Ayrshire to Ian Sinclair - representing the organising club Wallacehill CC – to mark the race's 40th edition.

With Tom Murray receiving the yellow jersey of overall race leader from Martin Mathers of main sponsor Scottish Power Renewables, the polka dot will be worn by second placed Gary Hand for the evening stage, a brisk 16.5 miles around the Victory Park circuit.