

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

Stage 2: Victory Park Criterium 16.5 miles

Race leader Tom Murray (Plowman Craven-Madison) carried a 10 second lead into the second stage – the always competitive 16.5 mile criterium around Victory Park in the heart of Girvan.

All 102 finishers from the earlier road stage took the start as a large crowd lined the barriers. Along with Murray in the yellow jersey, the other classification leaders took up their positions on the front row as the race was flagged away.

The pace was fast from the start and Kristian House (Rapha Condor), Rob Partridge (Halfords Bikehut) and Dale Appleby (Candi TV-Pinarello) were noticeable at the constantly changing head of the race. House took the first Hot Spot Sprint with ten laps to go but the relentless pace continued and various attacking groups were rapidly caught back.

Winner of the stage (and the race overall) twelve months ago, Russell Downing (Candi TV-Pinarello), launched a solo attack and gained a maximum advantage of 9 seconds, securing the second hot spot sprint of the night in the process. Meanwhile Rob Hayles (Halfords Bikehut) was suffering at the back, seriously off the pace.

Further pressure brought Downing's breakaway to an end and he too found himself ejected from the back of the fast moving bunch.

At the bell the win was still within the grasp of what was left of the main field and at the line Graham Briggs (Candi-TV Pinarello), victor in the British Cycling Elite Circuit Series in 2008, just edged out former Girvan winner Ian Wilkinson (Halfords Bikehut) and Kristian House.

With Murray finishing safely in the bunch, the time bonuses on the line were not sufficient to displace him from the lead and his team-mate James Millard retained the green jersey of points leader.

Stage 3 will get underway from Girvan at 11am on Easter Sunday with the longest leg of the race, 76 miles to the finish in Minigaff, with four classified climbs to be tackled along the route.