

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

Stage 3: Girvan to Minigaff, 76 miles

The longest stage of the 2009 Girvan was set to explore roads never before used in the race's 40 year history, and presented a superb scenic backdrop to a competitive day of racing in near perfect conditions.

Yellow jersey wearer Tom Murray (Plowman Craven-Madison) started the day with a 10 second advantage on GC with Marcin Bialoblocki (Team E12) second and Simon Richardson (Rapha Condor) a further 5 seconds behind.

A couple of short-lived attacks immediately enlivened the action, and with the Daily hot spot sprint coming after just 4.7 miles it was Mark McNally (Team Halfords Bikehut) who captured first place, while second for Kristian House (Rapha Condor) allowed him to take the green jersey as James Millard (Plowman Craven-Madison) failed to take any sprint points during the stage.

Following the climb of Dersalloch Hill at 15 miles where Ian Bibby (Team Halfords Bikehut) took the KOM points, the peloton split into several groups on the technical descent. By 19 miles, as the race approached Dalmellington, a lead group of 8 riders had gone clear with Candi TV-Pinarelli represented by Russ Downing, Graham Briggs and Peter Williams; Simon Richardson and Darren Laphorne for Rapha Condor; Ian Wilkinson for Team Halfords Bikehut; Simon Gaywood for Team Corley Cycles and Bialoblocki for the Team E12 composite team there too. Significantly the Plowman Craven-Madison squad of yellow jersey Murray had failed to make the move and were foremost in the effort to bring the break back.

The pace remained frenetic and it was taking a toll at the back as many riders lost contact. While the leading group had gained a maximum advantage of 50 seconds by the 44 mile mark, the chase down continued and by the start of the 3rd category climb at Corriedoo Forest the front of the race came back together. There was a scare for Murray who suffered two punctures in quick succession but aided by a strong team effort he was safely back in the bunch as the race exited St Johns Town of Dalry.

Onto the final classified climb of the day at Glenlee, Bibby again gained maximum points to ensure that he would pull on the polka dot jersey of King of the Mountains leader, while on the descent a split in the highly active peloton separated the race again. The large front group contained all the jersey contenders and promised an exciting bunch sprint at the finish in Minigaff.

With riders spread gutter to gutter as the final gallop unfolded, it was Russell Downing who made up for his disappointment on the previous evening's criterium stage by taking the victory from Simon Gaywood (Team Corley Cycles) second and veteran Malcolm Elliott in third.

With both Bialoblocki and Murray finishing in the same time the overall lead was retained by the Plowman Craven-Madison rider, and his delight was clear to see as he accepted his third yellow jersey of the race.

Just one stage, but undoubtedly the toughest, awaits the riders on Easter Monday as along the route they tackle the often decisive climb of Hadyard Hill, swiftly followed by the fearsome ascent of the Nick o' the Balloch before the race finishes back at Victory Park in Girvan.