

Archbold encore

Kelford – Reiker Cycling Team rider Shane Archbold impressively won Sunday's round six of the Benchmark Homes Tour after soloing to his second win in consecutive rounds of the eight-round road cycling series. Archbold survived best through the rain and nine sections of unsealed Selwyn District roads to win the 158km Revolution Properties Open.

Nearly 90 starters, including twelve sponsored teams started clean and dry ahead of the virtual tour of the Selwyn District. Around four hours later just over half the field returned to Ladbroke caked in mud such was the effect of the combined rain and unsealed roads.

As usual, the main field was up to speed following the neutral start as a number of riders chanced their arm with disregard for the distance that lay ahead. Numerous attacks were repelled by a peloton keen to remain intact as it negotiated the twists and turns that punctuated the series' longest round since its 2005 inception.

Apart from Archbold's solo effort that would win him the race, the best break of the day came on the approach to Southbridge at kilometre 60. The eight escapees of Brett Dawber (Bikeright Cycling Team), Gordon McCauley and Jason Allen (Benchmark Homes Cycling Team), Ashley Whitehead (Delmaine Fine Foods), Tom Findlay (Subway Cycling Team), Jeremy Inglis (Lowe & Associates), Alan Bush (Kelford Development Team), and Craig Lawn (Scott – Penny Sport) appeared to work well together as the team of Star & Garter – Tasman drove the main field to close the 25 seconds gap in defense of the Masters classification lead of Chris Nicholson that Lawn threatened.

With the breakaway re-captured, the largely intact peloton tackled the first unsealed section after two hours of racing. The metal road immediately lined the field causing it to fragment. This was the scenario that would repeat itself over the remaining unsealed sectors totaling 13.5km.

Exiting the penultimate sector, Archbold applied pressure to ride clear of the 30-odd strong peloton. Without any hint of a serious chase being mounted, Archbold safely negotiated the final unsealed sector and entered the 5.8km finishing circuit with just over a minute in hand. With three laps to complete, the lone leader increased his lead to one 25 seconds which he held until the bell lap.

A chase group had formed containing Shane Melrose (Cycling Otago), Jeremy Yates (Subway Cycling Team), Eliot Crowther (Lowe & Associates), Michael Vink (Delmaine Fine Foods), and Leon Hextall (Benchmark Homes Cycling Team), however the quintet left its chase too late to reel in the leader as Archbold crossed the finish line with 28 seconds to spare from Melrose and his fellow chasers. At one minute 03 seconds Brent Allnut (Cycle Surgery – Dunedin) led home the remnants of the peloton which was reduced to 24 riders.

Katri Laike completed the double for Kelford – Reiker Cycling Team by finishing first woman narrowly ahead of Star & Garter – Tasman pair of Karen Fulton and Jeannie Kuhajek.

Unfortunate to puncture on the finishing circuit thereby failing to score points for the second round-running, McCauley retained his series lead from the absent Paul Odlin (Trek). Archbold's win moved him ahead of Sam Horgan (Benchmark Homes Cycling Team) in the Under 23 classification, whilst both Nicholson and Nimesha Smith (Bikeright Cycling Team) retained their respective leads in the Masters and Women's classifications despite Smith being a non-starter due to a crash in training.

The penultimate round of the Benchmark Homes Tour is Saturday, September 20th at Rangiora featuring the 3rd Lowe & Associates Accountants Trophy over 145km.

Results;

1. Shane Archbold (Kelford – Reiker Cycling Team) 158km in 3hrs 51mins 51secs
2. Shane Melrose (Cycling Otago) at 28secs
3. Jeremy Yates (Subway Cycling Team) same time
4. Eliot Crowther (Lowe & Associates) st
5. Michael Vink (Delmaine Fine Foods) st
6. Leon Hextall (Benchmark Homes Cycling Team) st
7. Brent Allnut (Cycle Surgery – Dunedin) at 1min 03secs
8. Brian Fowler (Kelford – Reiker Cycling Team) st
9. Chris Nicholson (Star & Garter – Tasman) st
10. Brendan Neylon (Cuddon Marlborough) st

First Women;

1. Katri Laike (Kelford – Reiker Cycling Team)
2. Karen Fulton (Star & Garter – Tasman)
3. Jeannie Kuhajek (Star & Garter – Tasman)

Points Standing after Round Six (Provisional);

1. Gordon McCauley (Benchmark Homes Cycling Team) 64 points
2. Paul Odlin (Trek) 63pts
3. Shane Archbold (Kelford – Reiker Cycling Team/U23) 50pts
4. Chris Nicholson (Star & Garter – Tasman/Master) 50pts
5. Sam Horgan (Benchmark Homes Cycling Team/U23) 46pts
6. Jeremy Yates (Subway Cycling Team) 44pts
7. Shane Melrose (Cycling Otago) 41pts
8. Craig Lawn (Scott – Penny Sport/Master) 38pts
9. Tom Findlay (Subway Cycling Team/U23) 37pts
10. Leon Hextall (Benchmark Homes Cycling Team/U23) 28pts

Women;

1. Nimesha Smith (Bikeright Cycling Team) 35 points
2. Karen Fulton (Star & Garter – Tasman) 34pts
3. Katri Laike (Kelford – Reiker Cycling Team) 25pts
4. Jeannie Kuhajek (Star & Garter – Tasman) 13pts
5. Sara MacDonald (Cycling Otago) 13pts

Greg Hume
Series Manager
Papanui Cycling Club
021 599921