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Attention Sports Editors

Crucial break brings new leader to PowerNet Tour of Southland

A crucial break in fierce crosswinds has produced a new leader after stage five of the PowerNet Tour of Southland today.

National road champion Gordon McCauley (Auckland, Subway Avanti) took out this afternoon's fifth stage from Tuatapere to Winton after yellow jersey holder Heath Blackgrove (Zookeepers-Cycle Surgery) missed the break when a select group split in strong crosswinds 25kms from the finish.

Nelson's Jack Bauer (Share The Road) got among the super six in the break, finishing third behind McCauley and Tom Findlay (Palmerston North, Bici Vida) to claim the tour leader's yellow jersey.

He has a 14 second advantage over Olympic medallist Marc Ryan (Timaru, ColourPlus) who had to settle for fifth today just behind the winner after riding with a slow flat over the final few kilometres.

US-based kiwi Jeremy Vennell (Bissell Pro Cycling) moved to third 19 seconds back after a strong day with Blackgrove now fourth at 26 seconds. McCauley's win promotes him to fifth inside the minute mark down on the leader.

Earlier in the day BikeNZ junior representative Patrick Bevin (Taupo, Ascot Park Hotel) took out the fourth stage from Invercargill to Tuatapere in a bunch sprint from Subway Avanti rider Josh England (Auckland) and Mathew Gorter (Hamilton, PowerNet).

After recovering from broken bodies and bikes on the first day, the Subway Avanti team made their move in this afternoon's 102km stage to Winton after a group of 20 rode clear after 20kms. The group, reaching speeds of 60kph with a mix of tail and cross winds, peeled back to an elite pack of 11 riders until they turned into strong crosswinds at the 75km mark.

Joe Cooper (Wellington, Subway Avanti) made his attack when five riders were caught out including Blackgrove, and six edged clear comprising Cooper, Ryan, McCauley, Bauer, Findlay and Vennell.

At 5km to go they built a safety buffer of 30 seconds with Cooper attacking again with 1km to go, setting things up superbly for his team captain McCauley to sprint home from Findlay and Bauer.

“The tour didn’t start well for us with four of us crashing on that first day and finishing with sore bodies and bikes held together with hose clips,” McCauley said.

“Today was great for our Subway Avanti team with Josh second in the morning and then my win today, which was set-up really well by Jo Cooper. My teammates were fantastic today.

“I’ve won this stage five times and know it like the back of my hand. Our manager made the perfect call to attack and it worked. With Marc Ryan riding on spongy tyres, I knew I was the fastest in the sprint.”

McCauley, runner-up in the Tour last year, believes he is now a genuine contender for overall victory and he is set to handle tomorrow’s key climb up to the top of the Crown Range.

“Jack Bauer is riding so well on the flat and up the hills. But he and his team will get attacks from four or five different teams tomorrow. It will be like a machine gun going off at him as we all have a go. I’m just going to keep attacking.”

It was an impressive day for the young riders with Bevin’s morning stage win moving him to top in sprint points, while Australian Ben King (Calder Stewart) retains his lead in the king of the mountains.

Despite the mis-adventure this afternoon, Blackgrove’s Zookeepers-Cycle Surgery team remain on top of the team honours from Subway-Avanti and Bissell Pro Cycling.

Tomorrow’s sixth stage is a 134km from Lumsden to the Crown Range.

Full information: www.tourofsouthland.com

For further information contact:

Rachael Neutze

BikeNZ

Tel 021 599103

Who is PowerNet?

For nearly 100 years the owners of the PowerNet managed networks have provided a safe, efficient and reliable electricity distribution network to the people of the lower South Island. PowerNet was established in 1994 by network owners Electricity Invercargill Limited and The Power Company Limited to develop, manage and maintain their electricity network assets in Invercargill and Southland.

PowerNet provides the same services in North, South and East Otago on behalf of OtagoNet Joint Venture; in Stewart Island on behalf of the Southland District Council; and in the Frankton area of

Queenstown on behalf of Electricity Southland Limited. PowerNet is the equivalent of the fourth largest network company in New Zealand, delivering electricity to around 65,000 consumers.