



Press Release
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Roulston claims yellow jersey

Hayden Roulston launched his quest for a fifth PowerNet Tour of Southland title in commanding fashion today.

Propelled by his Calder Stewart team-mates, Roulston secured the yellow jersey after the opening 4km team time trial at Queens Park in Invercargill with a time of 4min 38sec – nearly four seconds faster than the PowerNet team.

“The goal was to win and we did that so that’s one to tick off the list,” Roulston, of Ashburton, said.

“I wasn’t overly keen to take the jersey – I’ve had quite a few yellow jerseys down here and I wanted to let some of the boys take it but they decided ‘hey give it to me’ because I’m going to be marked anyway.

“I’ve had the X on my back for the past three years – you can’t change that.”

The pressure of defending a title he’s now won four times doesn’t faze a rider of Roulston’s capabilities.

“You definitely lift a bit mentally and this is a race I really enjoy coming to,” he said.

“It’s hard to defend and win, especially winning when people expect you to win. It’s never easy. But I am here to win and I feel like I’m in the best shape I have been for a very long time and we’ve got the team to win, there’s no hiding the fact.”

PowerNet’s Shane Archbold, of Timaru, earned the Harcourt’s Sprint Ace jersey for tomorrow’s opening stage after going “full guns blazing”. Calder Stewart’s Jason Christie, of Ashburton, will wear the Co-Operative Bank Under-23, with Pure Black Racing’s Louis Crosby, of Auckland, in the Hydralink/Jesco King of the Mountains.

“We knew they would be the team to come closest to us – they’re basically the New Zealand track team,” Roulston said of PowerNet’s effort. “They did have a good ride and it’s great to see for the future of New Zealand cycling.”

Establishing an early lead was crucial in the iconic Southland event.

“Every second counts and it’s so true in this race. You saw last year that I only won by two seconds and that came down to the last stage so to have already an eight second buffer over some of the favourites and potentially more over some others is always a good thing,” Roulston said.

But he shied away from singling out the biggest threat to his title hopes.

“You’ve got to be careful and not rule out anybody because anybody you rule out is someone you miss going up the road.”

Tomorrow’s 160km stage from Invercargill to Lumsden was the first in a raft of changes to this year’s course – a development Roulston applauded.

“They needed to do something – it’s become a bit, not stale, but you know when everybody knows every corner.

“Normally a team like ours could easily control Tour of Southland for a week. Now trying to have two or three guys control a race over 170km and then try and back it up the next day is not going to be easy. It’s going to throw a whole new dynamic into the Tour.”

Even after 25 years at the helm, the eve of the annual race sparks the same emotion for tour director Bruce Ross.

“I’m excited about what’s ahead – we’ve done the groundwork and got everything in place so now we’re looking forward to the event getting up and running,” he said.

The overhaul of this year’s race – the 55th edition – would prove “very interesting”.

“It’s been stated that some riders have known where they’re going the last few years but now it’s all changed and that’s going to add to the challenge and force teams to develop some new tactics,” Ross said.

“There are some very good teams there and plenty of chances for both individual and team classifications and, right through to the under-23 classification, there is going to be some very strong competition – I’m really looking forward to seeing the battles which eventuate.”

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