



Press Release
(For immediate release)
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Atkins takes yellow as Roulston withdraws

The PowerNet Tour of Southland was blown wide open today following the withdrawal of leading contender Hayden Roulston.

Suffering from kidney stones, the Ashburton rider was forced to relinquish the coveted yellow jersey just 30km into the 179km stage from Te Anau to the Crown Range.

His father, Brian, said Roulston was “devastated”.

“He’s a bit dejected at the moment but he’ll live to fight another battle,” he said.

“He was devastated because he thought he had the legs and everything like that to achieve winning it five times. But there’s another year next year.”

After recently signing with pro team Radio Shack Nissan Trek, protecting Roulston’s international career was a priority.

“It’s more than just the Tour, his health is more important than anything else.” Brian Roulston said.

As Roulston was transported by ambulance to Southland Hospital for tests, news the race lead was up for grabs filtered quickly through the peloton and teams scrambled to adjust their tactics.

Ultimately, a commanding performance saw PowerNet’s 19-year-old weapon Josh Atkins ride his way into the race’s history books as one of the youngest to claim a stage victory.

Atkins, who rides internationally for Lance Armstrong’s powerful Trek-LIVESTRONG team, surged into the lead at the start of the daunting Crown Range climb and muscled his way to the finish line to claim the PowerNet team’s inaugural stage win.

“It’s good to finally get a stage win for PowerNet ... that’s all we wanted so we got that and I got the yellow,” he said.

“I didn’t really come into the Tour with too many goals. It was a last minute decision and for a while I was regretting coming down.

The climb wasn’t without its unexpected challenges.

“I got ridden into the back of the wheel so my derailleur was pretty banged up so I was riding the whole climb with my gears chopping and changing. The Tour is never without drama.”

He now boasts a 1min 9sec lead over Ascot Park Hotel’s Patrick Bevan, of Rotorua, with Kia Motors’ George Bennett, of Nelson, a further 16sec back. The trio also hold the top three placings in the battle for the Co-Operative Bank Under-23 jersey.

Auckland’s Gordon McCauley extended his dominance of the Harcourts Sprint Ace jersey to 63 points over Share the Road’s Chris Macic, while Dunedin’s Joe Chapman retains the Hydralink-Jesco King of the Mountain jersey for a fourth consecutive day with a 32 point advantage over Brendon Sharratt, of Wanganui.

Share the Road earned a slim 21sec buffer over Pure Black Racing to take over the teams' classification.

Despite rain and blustery winds delivering miserable riding conditions, the field set a decent pace of throughout the stage.

Atkins did not feature in the day's early breakaway of 10 riders which, propelled by Subway's Nick Lovegrove who was understandably motivated by his new status as the Leader on the Road, struck out to a 4min 30sec advantage by the halfway mark.

A relentless effort on the front of the peloton from Atkins' PowerNet team-mates – New Zealand elite track stars Tom Scully, Myron Simpson, Shane Archbold and Cam Karwowski along with Alex Frame – thrust the talented youngster into contention as the breakaway was finally engulfed with just over 10km remaining.

"The boys' did an awesome job. They're track endurance riders so 180km is a bit different for them," Atkins said.

"The attacks started going really early and the pace was really on. Some guys were showing their hand a bit early. I had Tom Scully who just rode himself inside out for me and I barely touched the wind the whole way."

While Sharratt hit the hill first, Atkins ability to attack on the gradient was already proven earlier in the week when he narrowly finished second to Roulston on Bluff Hill. The Crown Range proved no hurdle to his quest for the yellow jersey.

Archbold said the stage win was extra special for PowerNet who are riding in memory of Tess Van Dijk who lost her battle with cancer just a few months ago.

"I think Tess was definitely pushing Josh up that hill today," he said.

Atkins was confident the PowerNet team could successfully defend the yellow on tomorrow's 167km stage from Invercargill to Gore.

"My legs are getting better and better each day so I'm not feeling too worried about tomorrow. If the winds blowing, I know the guys will have me at the front and I know I can ride there all day," he said. He predicted Saturday's penultimate stage featuring the individual time trial at Winton could define the race.

"I've won numerous national (time trial) titles so I think I'll go alright."

Results from Stage 5 of the PowerNet Tour of Southland.

Te Anau - Five Rivers - Kingston - Frankton - Crown Range

1. Josh Atkins (PNT) 4h22m06s; 2. Patrick Bevin (APH) at 29s; 3. Jeremy Yates (STR) at 29s; 4. George Bennett (KMT) at 35s; 5. Andi Bajc (STH) at 39s; 6. Taylor Gunman (OWA) at 51s; 7. Mike Olheiser (JPW) at 55s; 8. Brendan Sharratt (CSL) at 01m01s; 9. Scott Lyttle (PBR) at 01m06s; 10. Brett Tivers (STR) at 01m10s; 11. Tim Gudsell (PBR) at 01m16s; 12. Chris Macic (STR) at 01m20s; 13. Aaron Strong (APH) at 01m22s; 14. Eric Drower (PTL) at 01m33s; 15. Alexander Ray (OWA) at 01m41s; 16. Dion Smith (OWA) at 01m41s; 17. Joseph Cooper (MCP) at 01m46s; 18. Shem Rodger (PBR) at 01m55s; 19. Paul Odlin (SUB) at 01m55s; 20. Westley Gough (SUB) at 01m59s; 21. Danny Pulbrook (RDS) at 02m07s; 22. Marc Ryan (CST) at 02m30s; 23. Clinton Avery (APH) at 02m30s; 24. Simon Binney (SIT) at 02m35s; 25. Tom Scully (PNT) at 02m38s;

Overall Standings

1. Josh Atkins (PNT) 15h35m17s; 2. Patrick Bevin (APH) at 01m09s; 3. George Bennett (KMT) at 01m25s; 4. Chris Macic (STR) at 01m26s; 5. Jeremy Yates (STR) at 01m28s; 6. Scott Lyttle (PBR) at 01m30s; 7. Andi Bajc (STH) at 01m38s; 8. Mike Olheiser (JPW) at 02m19s; 9. Tim Gudsell (PBR) at 02m21s; 10. Paul Odlin (SUB) at 02m22s; 11. Taylor Gunman (OWA) at 02m32s; 12. Shem Rodger (PBR) at 02m35s; 13. Brett Tivers (STR) at 03m00s; 14. Dion Smith (OWA) at 03m15s; 15. Joseph

Cooper (MCP) at 03m27s; 16. Westley Gough (SUB) at 03m44s; 17. Marc Ryan (CST) at 03m45s; 18. Nick Lovegrove (SUB) at 04m00s; 19. Clinton Avery (APH) at 04m09s; 20. Danny Pulbrook (RDS) at 04m15s; 21. Tom Scully (PNT) at 04m40s; 22. Peter Latham (SUB) at 05m06s; 23. Simon Binney (SIT) at 05m45s; 24. Ryan Obst (RDS) at 07m39s; 25. Greg Taylor (UHM) at 08m19s;

Team Overall

1. Share The Road 46h51m46s; 2. Pure Black Racing at 21s; 3. Ascot Park Hotel at 02m08s; 4. H&J's Outdoor World-Avanti Plus at 02m47s; 5. Subway Pro Cycling at 04m18s; 6. PowerNet at 12m11s; 7. Kia Motors at 15m47s; 8. Calder Stewart at 19m01s; 9. Ultimo-HGM at 31m41s; 10. Creation Signs - L&M Group Racing at 33m18s;

Sprints

1. Gordon McCauley (BSB) 102; 2. Chris Macic (STR) 39; 3. Oliver Harding-Sheath (PTL) 28; 4. Clinton Avery (APH) 18; 5. Tom Scully (PNT) 12; 6. Brad Evans (OCL) 12; 7. Cameron Karwowski (PNT) 12; 8. Brett Tivers (STR) 11; 9. Alex Meenhorst (KMT) 11; 10. James McCoy (HCL) 11;

King of Mountains

1. Joe Chapman (CSL) 48; 2. Brendan Sharratt (CSL) 16; 3. Patrick Bevin (APH) 14; 4. Tom Hubbard (HCL) 12; 5. Josh Atkins (PNT) 10; 6. Aaron Strong (APH) 10; 7. Brett Tivers (STR) 8; 8. Michael Vink (MCP) 8; 9. Cameron Karwowski (PNT) 6; 10. Aaron Gate (CSL) 6;