

Pak'nSave PNP Summer Road Series Event 2: Ngawi Classic

The weather gods turned it for Event 2 of the Pak'nSave PNP Summer Road Series, the 'Epic' Martinborough-Ngawi Classic. Rolling out from the Village Café in Martinborough the 125 riders were greeted with bright blue skies, calm conditions and majestic scenery. The Onslow Tarbabies were well represented across both events looking to consolidate their lead in the team's event competition. Glenn Owen, Chief Onslow Tarbabies Motivator, said the short course option and team event competition was perfect to encourage those who are a bit tentative about riding in a mass participation event.

The Medio Fondo short-course 65km Event attracted 50 high calibre riders with a good mix of genders and ages ranging from 15 to 60 plus. After a brisk rollout Tony Gesto and Ric Van Weede (Onslow Tarbabies) attacked at the 20km mark and created a gap. Tom Finlay (GP Meo) was able to bridge across to create a trio that stayed together most of the way to the finish. Cracks started to appear in the following peloton just after the turnoff onto Ngawi Road with a short pinch climb spreading the bunch. It was a much reduced peloton that turned for home to chase the three breakaway riders.

A number of efforts were made to get away, especially by the junior riders, but the slight headwind and rolling course made this difficult and the bunch soon neutralised these. With Van Weede dropping out of the trio on the way home and the bunch unable to make contact this left two to fight out for the finish. It appeared that a gentleman's agreement has been reached with Finlay and Gesto rolling across the line together. Josh Turnbull took the bunch sprint for a well-earned third place after being active off the front all day. A shout out to the seven U19 riders who took on a challenging course and performed well.

75 keen riders, young and older, lined up for the 122km Grand Fondo event. They headed out on a rolling course towards the coast before dropping down a steep descent and following the coast around to the sleepy fishing village of Ngawi for the turn around and homeward journey.

The action started within 10km of the start with Antony Nalder of GP Meo taking a flyer off the front of the peloton. He wasn't to be seen again for well over 100km in a ride that would earn him the most aggressive rider award of the day. Despite a few forays off the front the rest of the peloton stayed intact until just after the 30km left hand turn for the coast. A pinch climb followed by rolling hills coupled with an increase in pace saw the bunch split into several smaller groups. A front group of 30 took on the steep technical descent down to the coast. This group stayed intact for the run along the coast to Ngawi and back to the base of the climb. A couple of threatening attacks between 60 and 70km were neutralised. Riders were given plenty of support from local surfers who were out in force.

Realising the threat of Nalder, Wheelworks riders' organised a chase that saw his lead cut to 2.5 minutes by the base of the climb. The front bunch exploded on the climb with only 10 riders cresting over the top. With his team mate out front Dave Rowlands was able to relax and have an armchair ride on back of the group chasing Nalder. The remaining nine worked well together in very hot conditions catching Nalder with 15km to go. That's when action really began!

Rowlands attacked immediately with only Brendon McGrath able to follow. Matt Webber and Steve Bale got close, but not close enough. Rowlands took the win followed by McGrath. Remarkably Nalder still had enough energy to win the "bunch" sprint of the chasing eight riders for third place. A big shout out to the Wheelworks crew for superb neutral support providing desperately needed bottles for the journey home.

The future of road cycling in Wellington is in great hands with a number of U19 riders finishing in the top ten of each event. Josh Turnbull (third in the Medio Fondo), and Boston Bright and Camden Feint both coming across the line with the same time as the front of the field in the Grand Fondo.

There are an increasing number of women taking part as well which is great to see, headlined this time by multiple Commonwealth Games athlete and Specialized Women Racing team member Kate McIlroy.

Natalie Howell, whilst bested by McIlroy on the day, managed to maintain her lead in the Women's individual series. Dave Rowlands retained his lead in the men's individual series. The Teams competition had a bit of shake up with Bayleys Team Racing, having recruited heavily, taking the lead with 446 points. Onslow Tarbabies slipped to second place with 381 points, followed by Meo GP on 343 and Rivet Racing on 151. For all the **results** [click here](#) or go to the PNP website.

We hope to see you all lining up for the iconic **Mainfreight Rice Mountain Classic on 10 March**. Don't forget to get your entries in early as it helps with planning. Registration is at Gladstone School from 8.30 to 9.30am with races starting around 10am.

The following words of one of the riders summed up the day nicely. "What an awesome course, awesome day. Thanks!"