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VON HOFF TRIUMPHS INTO NEW NORFOLK

Steele Von Hoff stamped himself as the genuine rising star of Australian cycling with a stunning victory in the gruelling Elgas Launceston to New Norfolk Classic today (Sunday).

The former Melbourne boilermaker trounced the highly-rated Russian duo of Alexander Serov and Olympic triple medallist Alexi Markov in a thrilling sprint finish at the end of 208kms.

Von Hoff, 23, a member of the powerful Genesys Wealth Advisers team, clocked 5 hours 22 mins 09 secs for the splendidly beautiful wilderness journey which included a 12km climb up the 1000 metre-high Poatina mountain, from the 60km mark.

He struggled grimly to remain in touch with the peleton on the mountain, but was urged on by his Genesys team-mates, including last year's winner Patrick Shaw.

Von Hoff, a full-time cyclist for only the past six months, has blitzed Australian road cycling this year, winning five stages of the Lakes Oil Tour of Gippsland in late July, two stages of the Eastern Oak Tour of Geelong in mid-August, and another five in the Tifosi Eyewear Tour of the Murray River last month.

His domination was so emphatic that he danced to an unprecedented unassailable lead in the four-event Scody Cup series, which concludes with the six-day Caterpillar Underground Mining Tour of Tasmania, starting in Hobart on Tuesday.

Von Hoff, who has a 102-point Scody Cup lead, will sit out the Tassie Tour, watching the action from the Genesys team vehicle with manager Andrew Christie-Johnson, before accepting his Scody Cup prizes and accolades at the grand finale conclusion in Devonport next Sunday.

He will then contest the five-day Herald Sun Tour, starting on October 12.

Von Hoff described his Launceston-New Norfolk victory as the biggest and most important of his career.



ELGAS Launceston to New Norfolk

cycling classic

Media Release

The ELGAS logo features the word 'ELGAS' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letter 'G' is stylized with a purple and white circular graphic element.

"I had never raced so far before and the course, boy it was hard," he said.

"My team-mates pulled themselves inside out for me. I needed to win a long, tough race."

Von Hoff has been the target of speculation that he will receive an attractive contract with an international trade team in Europe next year.

His victory today, in which the race was conducted in idyllic sunshine, will certainly help, especially with the seven-man Russian national team so prominent.

Markov and Serov looked to have the spoils safely in their keeping as the remains of the 73-strong peleton sped into the short home straight at the Derwent Valley Council information centre in New Norfolk.

But Von Hoff mastered incredible speed and determination over the final 50 metres to pip them on the line.

The unsung hero of the race, being held for the third time, was Launceston bike shop proprietor Ben Mather (Lawson Homes).

The specialist mountain-biker, back home after a ninth placing in the Tour of Timor, was first over Poatina and also collected the event's sprint and king of the mountains titles along the way, courtesy of an adventurous 61km solo breakaway which petered out 20kms from the finish.

The classic incorporated a 143km race from Launceston to Bothwell for women and Under 23 men.

Grace Sulzberger took the women's title. Her older brother Bernard (V Australia) finished 10th in the main event.

West Australia's Trent Derecourt (John West) won the men's section after six riders crashed on a bridge 500 metres from the sprint finish in Bothwell.

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