



TOUR OF THE GREAT SOUTH COAST 2017

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Malaysian adds International flavour to Tour start

MALAYSIAN sprinter Harrif Saleh upstaged the dominant Scott Sunderland and Anthony Giacoppo to win the opening criterium to add an international touch to start the 2017 Port of Portland-Fulton Hogan Tour of the Great South Coast.

Saleh rocketed down the outside over the final 50m to pip the big-name cyclists to take the honours in the 36km trip at Mount Gambier.

His finishing bust stunned the Isowhey Sports Swiss Wellness team, which nonetheless enjoyed a super start to this campaign.

Saleh, 28, is one of five Malaysian cyclists in the Terengganu team who have ventured to this tour under manager, dual British road cycling champion Jeremy Hunt, to gain experience in preparation for the South East-Asian Games in Kuala Lumpur next month.

A delighted Saleh said he was confident of victory with 100m to ride on the 30 lap circuit. "I followed Scott Sunderland who is an excellent sprinter. It is a dream start to this tour," he said. "The only problem is that it is so cold here!" he joked.

Hunt could not have been happier.

"We wanted to race against top sprinters such as Sunderland and get some good, hard racing before the Games. We couldn't have asked for a better start," he said.





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Sunderland said he was delighted with his effort, perhaps hindered a bit by jet lag.

"We have just returned from Europe and it may take a little time to get back to full speed, but this is one of my favourite tours on the national circuit and we couldn't be happier as a team," he said.

Giacoppo said that apart from winning the race "all the team objectives have been fulfilled." Teammate Robbie Hucker took the Leader's Guernsey as well as the Campolina Sprint Championship Guernsey to add to the team's second and third podium place.

The young Bendigo rider said the team already was in a good position to "play plenty of cards" during this five day event over 509km.

"We have just come back from six weeks in Europe so we are fit and ready to go. With so many sprints in this opening criterium we knew we needed a good start and we got it.

"We were not greatly surprised by the sprint of Saleh because we know how fast he is, but overall it was a big first-up effort from our boys."

The Most Aggressive Rider award went to Jesse Coyle from Mobius Future Racing. He won a couple of the 11 intermediate sprints and regularly broke away to fully test the field.

The CFMEU Rising Star award, being contested by 28 Under-21 cyclists, was won by Thomas McFarlane from InForm Tineli. The prolific Victorian under 15 and under 17 champion put himself in contention throughout the criterium and is a major candidate for the award.





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