

2016 TOUR OF THE GREAT SOUTH COAST

August 10 – 14



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Words: Shane Goss / @licoricegallery

KIWI KERGOZOU PREVAILS AS CROME SURVIVES TO RETAIN TOUR LEAD

Twenty-year-old New Zealand rider, Nicholas Kergozou, has upstaged his rivals to take out the penultimate stage of the 2016 Lakes Oil-Fulton Hogan Tour of the Great South Coast in Cape Bridgewater today. Kergozou, part of the New Zealand track team, was in a 17 rider breakaway that formed in the final twenty kilometres of the race leaving the tour leader, Bendigo's Sam Crome, precariously placed back in the peloton.

Luckily for Crome, his Avanti Isowhey Sport teammate Joseph Cooper was there to help. Cooper rode like there was no tomorrow to get his leader back to the front of the race and eventually finish with the leaders in eighth place. Crome remains in the tour lead holding an eleven second advantage over Lakes Oil's Benjamin Hill with a further seven seconds back to Patrick Shaw (Avanti Isowhey Sport) in third place.

The win was Kergozou's first on Australian soil and came as a surprise to the full-time cyclist now living in Cambridge. "I found it pretty hard, I was struggling all day", he explained following his win. "It's actually surreal today to finish it like that; I didn't think when I crossed the line that I had it".

Kergozou was hoping to represent New Zealand at the Rio Olympics but after missing out on a place in the team decided on a trip to Australia to ride in the Lakes Oil-Fulton Hogan Tour of the Great South Coast. "I had a pretty big build up trying to get to Rio but unfortunately didn't make it". "I came here instead and for me really a stage win is just awesome for me", added Kergozou.

The peloton rolled out beside the picturesque Bridgewater Bay on four laps of a 29 kilometre circuit in overcast conditions and it wasn't long until a group of five riders rode clear from the bunch. They included Campolina Sprint Points Competition leader, Cyrus Monk from the Pat's Veg Cycling team and his nearest rival in that competition, Harry Carpenter, riding for the SASI/Callidus outfit. Together they battled any intermediate sprint point out on the course. Monk eventually winning four of the eight sprints on offer to take a 12 point lead into the final stage.

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Also in that group was another New Zealand rider, Oliver Real Food's Ryan Christensen, who had a day out, winning six of the eight KOM climbs and will take out the Scody King of the Mountains competition of the tour with no points on offer in the final stage criterium tomorrow. Along with GPM Stulz's Edward White and Ben Mavrodis of the Jayco/John West VIS team, the group got their lead out to two minutes and fifty seconds after the completion of the first lap before the peloton with Avanti Isowhey Sport working at the front in an effort to control the race.

The wind turbines around the course were powering energy thanks to the blustery conditions but it wasn't helping the peloton. The gap fluctuated around the two minute mark for the next two laps until four riders, Robbie Hucker (Avanti Isowhey Sport), Robert Stannard (Mobius Future Racing), Chris Harper (Swiss Wellness Cycling) and Angus Lyons (Jayco John West/VIS) bridged the gap around 86 kilometres into the race.

They were quickly reeled in by the peloton however and nearing the 100 kilometre mark the group of 17 riders split after the final climbs on the course. Nine of those 17 riders were in the top twelve on the general classification, including second placed Hill, just 18 seconds in arrears of Crome and it was looking dicey for the tour leader.

"It was just a brutal day, it definitely wasn't my best day out there today", said Crome. "I had a fair bit of bruising come out last night from my crash yesterday". A relieved Crome paid tribute to his teammates after the stage. "I just had the best team around me, the boys were unbelievable today, it's pretty cool when you've got a full team just dedicated to helping you defend the lead". "I was actually dropped over the climbs on the last lap and Joe Cooper was just incredible, he rode the front all day and then he just drove me on".

"Tomorrow is still going to be a hard day", added Crome. "One more day, I've really got to pay back the favour to these boys tomorrow and get over the line for them". The tour concludes tomorrow in Portland with a criterium of thirty laps around a 1.6 kilometre waterfront circuit. The 2016 Lakes Oil-Fulton Hogan Tour of the Great South Coast is part of the Subaru National Road Series.

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Stg 6 TOGSC Media Release Images-Credit Con Chronis

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/6o2rxwwlej0nl2l/AABNLu9PWG36tpvPfqpayleAa?dl=0>

Stage six video:

<https://we.tl/LJW3M4tUAF>

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