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## TOUR DOWN UNDER, PORTE VINCE LA TAPPA REGINA

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A cura di Matt Poyner, corrispondente dall’Australia per InBici Magazine

La tappa di oggi è quella che potrebbe decidere definitivamente la classifica del Tour Down Under. Abbiamo sentito il pensiero di Mike Turtur, campione olimpico del 1984 e direttore del Tour Down Under. Questa è la terza volta che Paracombe si presenta in gara per un traguardo e sarà una giornata a modellare la classifica generale.

“Se guardi indietro alla storia, gli ultimi due vincitori sono stati Rohan Dennis e Richie Porte. La differenza tra quegli anni e la gara di quest’anno è che il finale non sarà a Willunga Hill. Sebbene questa fase arrivi nel mezzo dell’evento, sarà una giornata significativa per il GC e penso che i primi 10 saranno stabiliti alla fine della gara di oggi. Paracombe ha un valore storico per la comunità ciclistica in quanto è il luogo in cui si svolgono sempre i campionati australiani e statali su strada. Avere la gara attorno allo stesso circuito che usavamo quando avevo 14 anni sarà un bel tocco per me nella mia ultima gara”.

La gara è iniziata sotto un cielo nuvoloso dopo una notte di clima molto umido ad Adelaide e il vento è stato molto forte quando i corridori si sono allontanati da Unley. Tre corridori, Miles Scotson (GFC), Geoffrey Bouchard (ALM) e Guillaume Boivan (ISN) hanno attaccato all’inizio della prima salita e il gruppo (conoscendo la difficoltà degli ultimi chilometri) era un po’ disinteressato a inseguire, così il gap è arrivato a 4 minuti dopo soli 7 km.

Il meteo è ancora in totale contrasto con gli anni precedenti al Tour Down Under: ci sono solo 10 gradi Celsius registrati sul traguardo all’inizio della tappa. Una strana sensazione mentre il gruppo e la fuga correvano attraverso la regione devastata dal fuoco delle Adelaide Hills, che solo ora sta cercando di ricostruire dopo i recenti incendi boschivi.

Boivan (ISN) ha avuto difficoltà con 90 km da percorrere e ha dovuto cambiare bici dopo che il suo sedile si è allentato mentre il gruppo era sotto il controllo di Mitchelton – Scott e di Richie Porte (Trek – Segafredo).

La pioggia stava salutandoli i corridori a 80 dall’arrivo da percorrere e c’era un vento estremamente forte al traguardo a Paracombe.

La salita finale di 1,2 chilometri presenta una pendenza del 9,9%.

Al via della tappa si sono presentati sia Simon Yates (MTS) che Elia Viviani (COF), entrambi caduti ieri.

Trek – Segafredo e Mitchelton – Scott hanno iniziato a lavorare in testa al gruppo. A 2 chilometri dall'arrivo è stato Cameron Meyer (MTS) a stabilire il ritmo per tutti gli altri mentre tenta di aiutare Yates e Impey nella salita finale.

All'inizio della salita, un attacco di Marco Marcato (Emirati Arabi Uniti) ha decimato il gruppo. A 1 chilometro dall'arrivo, Porte va via e apre un gap di 10 secondi. Tutti gli altri stavano cercando di impostare un ritmo in modo da non esplodere mentre Porte cercava di mantenere il suo vantaggio iniziale.

A 500 metri dalla fine Simon Yates, con il corpo pieno di bende, ha guidato l'inseguimento, ma non c'era più nulla da fare. Porte si aggiudica una magnifica vittoria e la maglia di leader del Tour Down Under.

## English Version

Today's stage is one that can decide the Tour Down Under! We hear the thoughts of 1984 Olympic Champion and Tour Down Under Race Director in his last tour in that position before that start today.

This is the third time Paracombe has featured in the race for a finish and it will be a day that shapes the overall classification.

“If you look back through the history, the last two winners were Rohan Dennis and Richie Porte, who both went on to win the race. The difference being from those years to this year's race is that the final stage was not Willunga Hill,” he said.

“Although this stage comes in the middle of the event, it's going to be a significant day for the GC and I think the top 10 will be established at the finish of today's race.

“Paracombe has a historical value for the cycling community as it's the place that Australian and state Road Championships are always held. To have the race go around the same circuit that we used when I was 14 years old will be a nice touch for me in my last race.”

Nice words from Mike Turtur.

The race got underway under cloudy skies after a night of very wet weather in Adelaide and the wind was very strong as the riders rolled away from Unley.

Three riders, Miles Scotson (GFC), Geoffrey Bouchard (ALM) & Guillaume Boivan (ISN) attacked at the base of the first major climb of the day and the peloton (knowing the severity of the final kilometres) were somewhat disinterested in chasing or adding riders to this early move and after just 7 kilometres had some 4 minutes advantage.

The weather is still a total contrast to previous years at Tour Down Under with only 10 degrees Celsius being recorded at the finish line early in during the stage. A bizarre feeling as the peloton and breakaway raced through the fire ravaged region of the Adelaide Hills which is only just now trying to rebuild after recent bushfires.

Boivan (ISN) ran into difficulty with 90 km to go and had to change bikes after his seat became loose whilst the peloton was under the control of Mitchellton – Scott & Ritchie Porte's (Trek – Segafredo).

Rain (drizzle) was greeting the riders with 80 kilometres to go and there was an extremely strong headwind at the finish in Paracombe still to come.

The regular Subaru KOM sprints and time bonus sprints were on offer again today but there was little to no interest shown in competing against each other for them from the trio in the break as they shared the spoils.

Two minutes was the time gap at 70 kilometres to go and it was clear the breakaway was only interested in getting to the finish for a stage win.

The stage is a great one for spectators who made their way to Paracombe as the race takes in 4 laps of an 11 kilometre circuit. The race passes the finish in the “opposite” direction to how the stage will finish before the peloton changes direction and heads back up the finish climb of 1.2 kilometres at a gradient of 9.9%.

Previous winners of this stage as we heard from Race Director Mike Turtur include Rohan Dennis (INEOS) & Ritchie Porte and they are to the forefront for overall victory again this year.

Another climber to watch out for is Simon Yates (MTS) who crashed heavily yesterday along with Elia Viviani (COF) luckily both riders have started today.

44 kilometres to race and Boivan (ISN) leads the trio across the 2nd intermediate sprint but we see once again no challenge for the top spot, the stage win is all they are thinking about here today.

The started to close quickly and was only 1min 30sec with 35 kilometres left.

The time gap stabilised for some time but around 20 km to go Miles Scotsman was starting to hurt the trio as he was not happy with being caught today.

Trek- Segafredo and Mitchellton – Scott were applying he pressure to the peloton as Boivan was dropped from the break. 17km to go and it was only 30 seconds to Scotson & Bouchard but it was Scotson doing all of the hard pacemaking.

Scotson went alone with 13km to go and held a 12 second lead before the fast relatively downhill run to the final climb.

A crash at more than 70 kilometres an hour saw Jay McCarthy (BOH) hit the deck on the edge of the road and with 8 km to go Scotson is caught by the peloton.

Another crash at 6.5km with Ben Gaustauer (AG2R) & Jay Lindorff (AUS) the youngest rider in the race as Mitchellton- Scott lead the pace making.

2 kilometres to race and it was Cameron Meyer (MTS) setting the pace for everyone else to follow as he tries to set up Yates and Impey on the final climb.

The climb started and straight away an attack from Marco Marcato (UAE) decimated the peloton.

1 kilometre to go and Ritchie Porte goes and opens up a 10 second gap. All the others were trying to set a tempo so they wouldn't explode as Porte tried to hang on to his initial lead.

Inside 500 metres to go and the heavily bandaged Simon Yates led the charge, the crash seemingly not to have slowed him down yet.

Into the final 300 metres and Porte hangs on for a magnificent win but Team Sunweb's Robert Power gets the photo finish decision in front of Simon Yates for the minor placing's.

*Matt Poyner for InBici Magazine*

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