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Teenage sensation and Townsville mother score in Buninyong - Scody Australian Open Road Cycling Championships

Queenslanders Ruth Corset and Michael Hepburn today overcame soaring temperatures to claim victory at the Scody Australian Open Road Championships in Buninyong, south of Ballarat.

Both the women's and under 23 men's events were raced in searing heat and gusting winds which took their toll on the riders.

32 year old Corset, the 2009 Australian Elite Road Cyclist of the Year, broke away on the tenth and final lap of the 102 kilometre women's race to take the green and gold jersey, crossing the line in 3hours 10minutes 9seconds, eighteen seconds ahead of Victorian Bridie O'Donnell. Germany's Judith Arndt was third.

"I wanted it more than anything," said Corset, adding, "This has been my goal for a while now and I am just glad that I got it finally."

Arndt signalled her intention early in the race by launching a solo attack after two laps to lead by almost three minutes at the halfway point.

As the temperature approached 40 degrees, the remainder of the field of 71 worked slowly to bridge the gap.

A lone effort by South Australia's Rachel Neylan saw her catch Arndt, a four-time Olympian, in the final 30 kilometres, with aggressive attacks shortly after by Corset and O'Donnell making it a race of four at the bell lap.

However the significant moment came on the final climb up Mt Buninyong where Corset rode clear of the trio and setting an unrelenting pace in the final stages to take the title.

"We didn't really panic, and towards the end, no one was chasing at all, and Emma (Mackie) attacked so I counter attacked and it worked perfectly," said Corset, who finished twelfth in the womens road race at the 2009 Road World Championships in Switzerland. She admits the conditions were oppressive.

"It was very hard, the last few laps I was throwing up and couldn't hold anything down," said Corset. "That last lap was just so hard and my legs were cramping but I just gritted my teeth and just went for it."

After claiming silver in Wednesday's time trial, O'Donnell was pleased with her second medal of the week.

"My biggest job was to let the race unfold, I had no teammates here so I just wanted to see who would do the work and hold my nerve and surprise people as they wouldn't expect me to attack on a climb," said O'Donnell. "After a challenging year, it is really good to see the rewards for hard work, sacrifice and discipline.

New South Wales' Megan Dunn claimed the under 23 classification crossing in seventh, 1 minute and 57 seconds behind Corset. South Australia's Tiffany Cromwel was tenth across the line for the U23 division silver medal and Loren Roney of New South Wales was awarded the U23 division bronze medal.

In the U23 men's event earlier in the day Queensland's reigning 3km individual pursuit junior World Champion and world record holder, Michael Hepburn, added a green and gold road jersey to his collection with an impressive win.

It was the second Team Jayco Skins trifecta of the Scody Australian Open Road Championships as Hepburn edged teammate Malcolm Rudolph in a sprint for the finish of the 122.4km race which was race in windy conditions with the temperatures in the high 30's. Canberra's Michael Mathews claimed bronze.

"It is pretty special being my first race out of the junior ranks and it will be very special to wear the Australian jersey in the under 23 races in Italy," said eighteen year old Hepburn.

West Australia's Ben King set the tone early, maintaining a solo break away for over five laps of the 10.2km course.

However as the temperature soared a chasing group of a dozen riders, lead by five Jayco Skins team members including the placegetters, caught and passed King with three of the 12 laps remaining.

Hepburn and Rudolph made the decisive break inside the last lap and were left to fight it out on the final straight with Hepburn triumphant in a time of 3hours20.07minutes, three seconds ahead of Rudolph. Mathews pipped New South Wale's Joseph Lewis of Drapac-Porsche for third place.

"We had a really strong team with ten starters and at the business end we had the numbers in the race," said Hepburn. "When (Malcolm) Rudolph came across, we worked together for the majority of the last lap.

"The main goal was for just one of us to get up, so we worked pretty well on the back, he lead out with about a kilometre to go at the top of the hill and then laid off a bit till our run into the final."

Hepburn last year set a World Record in the 3km pursuit on the track at the Australian Championships and lowered that mark twice more at the Junior World Championships in Moscow in July to claim the gold medal in the individual pursuit.

“A world title, it is hard to compare something to that, and a world record, but an under 23 Australian title is pretty special.”

Fellow Queenslander Rudolph, the 2009 Grafton to Inverell champion, was happy with his silver medal.

“It was good to get me and Mick up the road at the end, and as we were in control, we just had to ride to the finish and sort it out between us,” said the 20-year-old.

“(It was) a dominant display by us today which is what we wanted to do after being beaten in Thursday’s criterium. We were very disappointed in that so it’s great to come out today on top,” said Rudolph who placed third in the criterium event.

The heat took its toll on the rest of the field with just 30 of the 106 starters completing the race.

The Championships are being staged at Buninyong and the Ballarat CBD in Victoria, from 6 to 10 January. Further information about the race routes and to download entry lists please visit cycling.org.au or aorcc.com

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