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for immediate release

Rogers claims elusive time trial win

Canberra's, 29, Michael Rogers (Team Columbia) today finally added the elite Australian title to his resume with victory in the Mars Australia Elite Men's time trial crown at the 2009 Scody Australian Open Road Championships in Buninyong, Victoria.

Rogers last claimed an Australian time trial win in 1996 when he won the U19 event but since then has forged a spectacular career in professional cycling which had included three times winning the time trial at the World Championships (2003, 2004, 2005)

But it was a close run victory as 20-year-old West Australian Cameron Meyer (Garmin-Chipotle) posted a sensational performance to finish just six seconds behind to claim the silver medal in his first race as an elite professional.

Competitors battled high winds on the challenging 39km course, with Rogers averaging 47.76km/hour to finish in a time of 48:59.69, ahead of Meyer (49:05.56), with Tasmanian Richie Porte (Praties) in third place (50:50.45).

"I have never won these Championships before so it's a very proud moment for me and to have the chance to wear the green and gold all around the world is a proud thing... to have on my shoulders," said Rogers.

After spending Christmas with his wife and young twin daughters in Italy, he arrived in Australia just four days ago. Rogers held a five second lead on Meyer at the half way point and reached speeds close to 100km/hour aided by a tailwind on the descent in the last few kilometres to hold on to his advantage.

"The conditions were really tough out there, it was quite cool and there seemed to be a head wind most of the way around," the Beijing Olympian

said. "I had a good gap at the halfway distance and knew I just had to hold it together.

"I have come from a winter in Italy and have done all my training over there, so it is certainly great to be back as I miss coming out to Australia and racing here," said Rogers who in 2007, whilst virtual leader on the road, suffered a crash that forced him out of the Tour de France. Then last year he was struck down with Epstein Barr virus and only returned to racing mid-season. Despite this he posted two top ten performances in Beijing with sixth in the road race and eighth in the time trial at the Olympic Games.

"To come back after two years of misfortunes and sicknesses I am just really happy to be back to top condition and back on the top of the podium."

Rogers also paid tribute to young Meyer.

"He is a classy rider and to already be riding well in his first event as a senior (means) if he keeps everything together he will be a class act for years to come," said Rogers.

Rogers will now concentrate on a possible double gold as he prepares for Sunday's 163km elite men's road race.

"By winning today I think I have confirmed I have condition at a top level," he said.

Meyer, who recently signed a professional contract with Garmin-Chipotle, immediately made his mark in the elite ranks with an outstanding ride over the elite distance. In September last year he claimed the bronze medal in the U23 time trial at the road World Championships in Italy raced over a distance of 33.5km.

"It's all a bit surreal, I really didn't know what to expect being only 20 so to be on the podium and be only six seconds off the win, I have to be happy," said Meyer. "Part of me is like you just missed it, but when you have the three time world champion standing next to you, you just have to be happy.

"It's all happening very quickly," said Meyer. "This is my first week racing the big boys and to start with a silver medal gives me great hope for the rest of the year."

Meanwhile Porte who was fifth in the event last year was happy to step up onto the podium. In January last year after finishing ninth overall in the 2008 Tour Down Under Porte's year was interrupted by an accident that resulted in a fractured hip. However he returned to form in September to win the Tour of Tasmania.

"I am pretty happy really, I didn't really expect it as I haven't been doing any specific time trial training so it's nice to get up on the podium," said Porte.

Defending champion Adam Hansen, who has been training in Cairns in hot, tropical conditions to prepare for today struggled in the cool Ballarat conditions and did not have a good ride. He finished well off the pace finishing more than three minutes behind Rogers in 11th (52:37.64).

“I went really well for the first few kilometres but then I just couldn’t get going,” said a disappointed Hansen. “My heart rate was at 160 beats per minute most of the way and I kept telling myself I needed to go faster but I just couldn’t do it.”

Two-time medallist, Rory Sutherland, (Healthnet) withdrew prior to the race due to illness.

The Championships are being staged at Buninyong, near Ballarat in Victoria, from 7 to 11 January. Further information about the race routes and to download entry lists please go to the event website aorcc.com