

**National Mountain Bike Series: GVC rider finishes strongly to secure sixth**

# Highest finish for Culverwell

CYCLING

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SAM CULVERWELL travelled to Forest Fields in mid-Wales recently to take part in round three of the national mountain bike series.

Once again the very best mountain bike riders in the UK had gathered to do battle in this prestigious series and with all the main contenders present in the youth category, the 41-man field was looking to provide an exciting race.

The weather in Wales was being very kind, with a period of dry weather in the lead-up to race day ensuring fast and firm conditions for the 500 riders entered across all age categories.

As expected the course was very hilly, with more than 230 metres of climbing on each of the 5km laps, with Culverwell's race to be contested over three laps.

Each lap included two major climbs, the first of which was the longest and came straight after the riders exited the start/finish arena.

Culverwell was gridded in row three due to his low finish position in round two, where he had suffered some mechanical issues, meaning a good start was essential due to the narrowness of the climb.

That climb was within 400m of the start line and included a maximum gradient of 24%, so from the gun he attacked hard to try to gain positions before the start of the 1km climb.

By the time he left the arena he had made up several places and continued to make progress as they ascended over 100m to the high point of the course.

By the time he started the ascent of the second long climb, Culverwell had settled in a group with two other riders



Guernsey Velo Club rider Sam Culverwell has been mixing with the best in his age group nationally during his races in the UK.

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fighting it out for sixth spot.

At the end of the last lap, the race and series leader Ross Harden had opened up a lead of 10sec. on Dan Tulett, the UK's leading youth rider.

Following them was a group of three at 50sec. and then a further 30sec. back was the three-man group that included Culverwell.

By the end of the second lap

Harden had extended his lead to 90sec., with Tulett being closed down by the group chasing him.

Culverwell's three-man group started the last lap together 2min. 30sec. down on the leader and 60sec. down on fifth spot.

This was looking like being a great performance by Culverwell, assuming he could stay with his group over the last 5km.

Harden continued to extend his lead over the last lap to finish a comfortable 1min.40sec. ahead of second-place Cameron Orr, who finished the race strongly to displace a tiring Tulett.

Tulett had slipped to fourth but was strong enough to out-sprint Thomas Mein, before there was then a nervous wait to see if the group of three that included Culverwell was still to-

gether. The great news for the Guernsey rider was that he had taken the initiative with about a kilometre to go and attacked the other two riders, entering the finish arena with a small lead.

He sprinted to the line in a superb sixth position and his highest finish in the series for 2015, which also moved him up to eighth in the national rankings.