

Culverwell stars in a strong Sarnian showing

Guernsey Press - 20 March 2015

CYCLING

by Rob Batiste

rbatiste@guernseypress.com

FIVE of the Guernsey Velo Club Academy riders travelled to Black Park by Slough to take part in the first round of the 2015 Southern Mountain Bike Cross-Country Series.

The course was a very flat but technical one with the course winding through the pine trees of the Park with the occasional drop off into 5ft-deep 'bomb' holes.

Sam Culverwell, Alex Van Katwyk and Bradley Vaudin raced first in the youth category covering three laps of the 6km course.

They were followed 2min. later by the Juveniles, a two-lap race, which included Louis Le Cheminard and there was a further 2min. delay before the start of the under-13 boys race, which included Louis' brother Joe, covering one lap.

At the end of the first lap of the youth race, Culverwell was in second place riding closely with two other riders, but leading the race and ahead by about 1min. was Dan Tulett, a rider who is considered virtually invincible in the UK and among the best in Europe in his age category.

Van Katwyk came through in sixth place shortly after, about 30 seconds back on Culverwell, with



Left: Sam Culverwell on his way to a second-place finish in Black Park near Slough. Right: Taking his place on the podium next to winner Dan Tulett. (7542531 and 7542535)

Vaudin riding strongly in ninth spot a further minute back.

By the end of the second lap, Culverwell had dropped to third having been overtaken by Solihull rider Ben Healy, who is also on the Olympic Development programme



with him. Further down the field the other Guernsey riders were both riding strongly in sixth and 10th spots.

Predictably, Tulett won the race but there was only a surprisingly short gap between him and the

next two riders. When they appeared through the trees, Culverwell was ahead once more and led the sprint out into the finishing arena, taking second place from Healy by just over a bike length.

'I knew I had to get into the last

single track first to get the advantage coming out to the finishing straight,' Culverwell said.

'Luckily I got the best line and managed to outsprint Ben to the end.'

Considering the pedigree of Tulett, who is one year senior to Culverwell, this was an excellent performance, particularly as the Sarnian's lap times were quicker than the winning rider in the age category above and, based on average lap time, would have placed him third in the expert men's and seventh in the elite men's categories.

The strength of Guernsey's youth riders was underlined when Van Katwyk finished sixth, just three minutes behind his teammate, a superb result for him.

Vaudin was a further 3min. back after he had settled into a consistent race pace and held on to 10th spot.

The GVC were very pleased to have all three youth riders in the top 10, and it was a shame there was not a team award in this competition.

In the juvenile race, Louis Le Cheminard rode consistently and finished in 13th, with the flat, technical course more suited to the stronger riders. His younger brother Joe rode well and came sixth in his category, both riders gaining good race experience at this level of competition.