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British Cycling National Mountain Bike Series round three: Dalby Forest, Yorkshire

Culverwell just misses National win by a wheel

MOUNTAIN BIKING

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HOT on the heels of another victory in the second round of the Southern Regional series at Reading the previous weekend, Sam Culverwell rode a storming race in Yorkshire and just missed out on a National win by a wheel length in an exciting three-man sprint for the line.

The 6km Dalby Forest course was hilly and technical with many rocky features and descents through narrow gullies and twisty climbs.

Guernsey had two Island Games squad riders in the youth category, Culverwell and Bradley Vaudin, who raced three laps of the course, a total of 18km, which started in the usual frantic sprint for prime position into the single track.

Early on in the first lap the first four riders established a gap on the rest of the field, exchanging places for the lead as they negotiated the testing terrain.

'Sam is one of four stand-out riders who dominate in this category and any one of them is capable of winning, it just depends on who has the better race on the day, but this round was particularly close,' said Guernsey Velo Club president Gary Wallbridge.

On the second lap, Scottish rider Sean Flynn, Certini rider Harry Birchall and Culverwell had broken away from Ben Tulett on one of the steep forest climbs and these three were riding comfortably out in front watching each other to anticipate a break on the last lap.

Ultimately it came down to a final manic sprint into the arena where Flynn got ahead by leading over a bank at the entry to the finish arena.

Culverwell hammered after him, closing the gap, while Birchall did not quite have the legs



Above: Sam Culverwell, left, on the podium with youth race winner Sean Flynn (14997850) and third-place Harry Birchall.

Right: Brad Vaudin broke into the top 20 despite having his chain come off on more than one occasion. (14997848)



at the end, but for the GVC rider the finish came a metre too soon.

Meanwhile, an ever-improving Vaudin had got off to a good start, his previous two National results having moved him up to 15th place on the starting grid for this race.

Riding hard over the first lap, he entered the start/finish arena in a superb ninth place, but unfortunately his chain came off on more than one occasion on the rocky descents during lap two and he lost some ground.

Despite that, he still finished in a very creditable 14th place, 5min. back, and breaking into the top 20 finishers which is his best National result in this category so far and showing there should be more to come.

Wallbridge was very pleased with the results, particularly looking forward to next year's Island Games as Culverwell's lap times compared favourably against the Jersey riders in the senior men's race.