

Race 1 – Newport

MATTHEW Morris used his experience to sprint to a victory in the first round of the Shropshire & South Staffs Road Race League. The 42-year-old from Codsall won a close uphill sprint after a fast 38 miles of racing around the Shropshire countryside near Newport. The handicap format led to an exciting finish with the majority of the 72 riders finally merging with just three miles remaining on narrow country lanes. Morris was the fastest finisher and held off his rivals to clinch the Coaching Revolutions sponsored leader's yellow jersey.

Chris Pook (Rhino Velo RT) led the charge behind for second finishing inches ahead of Ben Joughin (Pro Vision RT) for third. Junior rider Alfie Mortimer (Mid Shropshire Whls) managed to mix it with the fastest riders at the finish and sprinted to a strong 6th position to take the fastest junior (white) jersey.

Fastest woman on the night was Leah Dixon (Wolverhampton Whls) and she will start in the leader's pink jersey next week. With Morris taking the overall leaders jersey Rob Childs (Stourbridge Velo) will ride in the veteran's leader red jersey next week.

"I thought it was a tough race and we did well to catch the front group with about three miles to go," said Morris.

"At the finish it was just eyeballs out really trying to keep towards the front, when a gap opened in front of me on the left hand side I just kept going with my head down and luckily managed to get the win. Because the finish was so fast it was all lined out for the top six places and managed to creep past them for the win."

"I can't believe it, I'm 43 in two weeks time so I'm absolutely chuffed, it's my third year back racing so it has taken three years to get here. I finished second here last year so went one better this year. I'm delighted."

Organised by Newport Shropshire Cycling riders completed six laps of a six-mile circuit around an undulating circuit finishing in Knighton.

The handicap format saw the 72 starters split into four ability group with the first group starting over nine minutes ahead of the last group (scratch) which featured some of the fastest riders in the region. The 23 riders in the scratch group worked hard together and gradually reeled in the groups ahead of them. However, with six miles to go the first starters still had over a minute advantage over the chasers leading to an exciting finish.

Their hopes were dashed in the final miles as the scratch group came powering past and took the first five places'. Morris who won the over-40 age category overall in the series last year will line-up in the yellow jersey in round two next Thursday on a flat course around Charlton.

He added: "I doubt I will be able to keep the yellow jersey but I will have a go, it will be more about the veteran's jersey. The scratch group was working well and they were probably doing more work than me in all honesty I was missing a few turns. I found it quite quick constantly and I was just trying to keep going."