

11 November 2009

Attention Sports Editors

Oceania Cycling Championships – Day 1 Wrap

World champion Alison Shanks and fellow pursuiter Jesse Sergent announced they are ready for next week's World Cup after claiming titles on the opening night of the Oceania Track Cycling Championships in Invercargill tonight.

Shanks (Dunedin) was untroubled catching world championship medal winning team-mate Lauren Ellis (Tinwald) in the final of the women's 3000m individual pursuit at the ILT Velodrome.

Sergent (Feilding) proved too strong for his Beijing Olympic team-mate Peter Latham (Te Awamutu) to take out the men's pursuit final over 4000m.

Both winners believe the championships have kick-started their international season ahead of next week's UCI World Cup in Melbourne.

Shanks, in her first competition since winning the world championship, was ahead throughout although a fast time was thwarted when she was forced to work hard around the bend to pass Ellis.

"It felt pretty smooth. The first half I wanted to ride my own race and it was good to have Lauren as a bit of a carrot but when I stepped out to pass her she was not going to give up easily and it was a real battle to get around her," Shanks said.

"That cost me some time but while a fast time would have been nice, it was all about winning the gold medal. That's what was important tonight.

"It's definitely a stepping stone towards next week. It's back to training tomorrow before heading away on Sunday. It was a good hit out to remind the body and the mind what pursuing is all about."

Te Awamutu's Rushlee Buchanan beat off Auckland's Kaytee Boyd for third.

Sergent, fourth in the world championships last year, clocked an excellent 4:20.678 to dominate the final over Latham. He opened out the lead from the start with a 1:09 first kilometre before reeling off three consistent laps for the victory.

He said the pursuit had been a battle for all of the BikeNZ track squad who had competed in the Tour of Southland that finished on Saturday.

"I really wanted to go under 4:20 tonight so that was a good time. The initial goal was to win and then to get a good time, so I'm pleased with how it turned out," Sergent said.

"It's encouraging. I felt a lot better tonight than this morning. Every bit of recovery is important coming off the Tour. By the time we hit Melbourne we will all be fully recovered and going quickly.

"I'd like to go under 4:20 in Melbourne although you don't really know. It depends on how the track is running."

Rotorua's Sam Bewley beat off the challenge from Marc Ryan (Timaru) for the bronze medal.

Earlier the New Zealand combination of Andrew Williams, Eddie Dawkins and Simon Van Velthooven edged out their Australian rivals to claim the men's team sprint.

Manawatu's Van Velthooven, who has been based at the ILT Velodrome for several months, showed his class to come from behind to nab the narrowest of wins. The big sprinter did the same in the morning to edge out world junior teams' champion Ethan Mitchell in the semifinal to give the New Zealand team a spot in the final.

He was behind again in the final but cranked up a big gear to win in a new national record of 45.693, with the Australians 15/100ths behind.

The G-Force combination, including triple world junior champion Sam Webster, had earlier broken the national record clocking 45.820 in claiming the bronze before the New Zealand team eclipsed that mark.

"I didn't know we were behind. I just had my head down and was riding as hard as I can," Van Velthooven said. "That's my strength to hold the speed over the last lap. I've been down here since October working on my big gear speed. I was riding 100 gearing tonight in the final which is the biggest gear I have sprinted with and it paid off.

"I may not be the quickest starter but I am the quickest finisher."

In other finals Emily Rosemond took out the women's sprint in two over Stephanie Morton in an all Australian final, while Stephanie McKenzie came one-down to edge out fellow Auckland and national record holder Henrietta Mitchell in the under-19 final.

Outstanding Australian sprinter Matthew Glaetzer held out a late challenge from compatriot Jamie Green to win the under-19 men's keirin final.

The championships continue until Saturday.