



MASS CYCLO-SPORTIVE IS BIG HIT WITH RIDERS

British 'Etape' is a grand success

ALMOST 4,000 amateur riders got a taste of the Kent stage of the Tour de France when they took part in the British Cyclo-Sportive on Sunday.

Starting at Greenwich and finishing at Canterbury, 3,742 riders completed the 120 miles, clocking times of between five and 12 hours.

Reaction to the ride at the finish line was overwhelmingly positive with many riders praising the

organisation for this British take on the Etape du Tour. "I've ridden a few sportives this year and this was far and away the best one," commented London resident Jeremy Dahdi, who completed the ride in a time 6-26-15.

Police and marshals provided assistance at junctions, and reported incidents

were few and far between, although an accident unrelated to the event did cause the hold-up of a supplies

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truck, leading to a shortage of food for early arrivals at a couple of the latter feed-stations.

Despite a heavy downpour before the start, and constantly threatening skies, most riders enjoyed a relatively dry run. There had been some

complaints about the long-winded sign-up procedure, but Simon Lillistone, British Cycling's director of marketing and communications, declared the day a general success. "The outcome has been great," he commented. "It's taken a lot of hard work to make it happen, but I think we've delivered a fantastic event."

A full report of the British Cyclo-Sportive will appear in next week's *CW*.

ARSENAL STAR'S HARD SLOG

All Wright in the end

FORMER Arsenal football legend Ian Wright summed up the spirit of Sunday's sportive after completing the ride in a time of nine hours and sixteen minutes.

"57 miles was my previous limit, so when I got to 60 miles I was out of it," he admitted. "It seemed against the odds that I would finish, but I was encouraged to keep going by the people I was riding with."

Wright began the day with former Crystal Palace team-mate Geoff Thomas, who is raising money for his leukaemia charity by riding the entire route of

the Tour. Having ridden the 2005 Tour course, Thomas described this year's stage one as "not easy".

"It was a bit bumpy," he said. "You think of Kent as nice, flat roads leading to Dover but today was tougher than that."

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