

Great Britain's Harry Hudson, just 18 years old, delivered a breathtaking show of grit and tactical brilliance to claim the rainbow jersey in the men's junior road race at the UCI Road World Championships in Kigali.

Hudson's solo attack from 36 kilometres out stunned rivals and the roaring Rwandan crowd, making him the first British rider ever to win the junior men's road race. Hudson stopped the clock at 2 hours, 55 minutes, and 19 seconds, sealing a place in cycling lore.

### **The race unfolds with high speed and relentless attacks**

The 119.3-kilometre race, comprising eight laps of Kigali's demanding circuit with its short, steep climbs and cobbled ramps, began under a bright African morning sky. From the first pedal strokes, ambition was on display. France, Italy, Belgium, and Austria pushed the pace, but it was American Beckam Drake who first dared to fly. The fourth-placed rider in the junior time trial built over a minute's lead, stringing out the peloton.

One by one, moves flared and faded. Johan Blanc of France and Austrian Heimo Fugger featured in the early counters. With four laps to go, Drake's advantage shrank as the big nations regrouped. Spanish sensation Benjamin Noval and Italian Mattia Agostinacchio tested the legs behind; the tension built with each rise of Kigali's punishing terrain.

### **Harry Hudson senses the moment**

Hudson, already a rising star with victories at junior Liège-Bastogne-Liège and the CiCLE Classic, saw hesitation ripple through the group.

"I just saw the pace drop a bit, so I went," he said later, still dazed by his own daring. What seemed at first like a gamble turned into destiny.

Behind him, nations scrambled ) Daan Dijkman for the Netherlands, Italy trying to organise - but the elastic snapped. Hudson settled into his rhythm, tapping out the kilometres alone as Kigali's crowd grew louder with every lap.

### **Spanish drama for Benjamin Noval Suarez ahead of the penultimate climb**

Chasers regrouped and launched their final gambit. Spain's Benjamin Noval, the pre-race favourite, surged fiercely on the penultimate climb, the Côte de

Kimihurura, carving Hudson's lead from forty seconds to just fifteen. Cameras cut to the young Brit, grimacing but unflinching.

Then disaster for Noval, who suddenly crashed on a wide, open road with less than three kilometres to go, unfortunately killing his medal chances.

Only France's Johan Blanc remained in real pursuit, but his chase soon faltered. Further back, Poland's Jan Michal Jackowiak launched late, managing to get back to Blanc, but the road was running out for both of them as Hudson proved unstoppable.

### **The cobbles, the crowd and finally the rainbow for Harry Hudson**

Hudson hit the final cobbled rise alone, teeth gritted, every turn of the pedals echoing in the Rwandan capital's charged atmosphere. Behind, Blanc could see him but not reach him. Jackowiak's sprint came too late.

Hudson roared in triumph, crossing the finish line solo and taking in the cheers from the fans on the side of the road.

"It's probably still settling in. I don't really know what's happening," Hudson admitted at the finish, overwhelmed and grinning. "I thought I was going to get caught with a lap to go... but I just stayed away. It was really hard on the last climb, but somehow, I held on."

For Great Britain, the victory adds to a golden week after Zoe Bäckstedt's triumph in the under-23 time trial.

### **Johan Blanc versus Jan Michal Jackowiak for silver**

Behind him, Blanc and Jackowiak led a furious chase to close the gap. On the final cobblestone climb, Jackowiak clawed his way back to Blanc, the two locked side by side in the fight for silver.

But when the road opened into the finishing straight, Jackowiak lacked the power to contest the sprint, and Blanc surged ahead to take second, 16 seconds after Hudson, leaving Jackowiak to settle for bronze on countback. Britain's dominance was underlined by Max Hinds and Matthew Peace finishing just behind, in fourth and fifth.

## **Local riders Moïse Ntirenganya and Jackson Nkurikiyinka in the mix**

Rwanda had home pride on the line, and Moïse Ntirenganya carried the flag all the way to the finish. Out of the 142 starters, only 66 riders completed the demanding race, and Ntirenganya was among them, finishing in 3:09:32 (+14:13). Fellow Rwandan Jackson Nkurikiyinka fought hard but was forced to abandon on lap five after a tough opening half of the race.

## **Men's Junior Road Race: Top 10 Results**

- 1. Harry Hudson (GBR) - 2:55:19**
2. Johan Blanc (FRA): +0:16
3. Jan Michal Jackowiak (POL): s.t.
4. Max Hinds (GBR): +0:22
5. Matthew Peace (GBR): +0:24
6. Édouard Claisse (BEL): s.t.
7. Elias Wandel (SWE): s.t
8. Daan Dijkman (NED): s.t
9. Moritz Mauss (GER): s.t
10. Benedikt Benz (GER): s.t