The Maryland Cycling Classic started with one rider less than expected. Rwandan cyclist Samuel Mugisha (ProTouch) was reported as a DNS (Did not start) after his team announced that the 2018 Tour of Rwanda cyclist was missing.

According to the ProTouch team, Mugisha aged 24, flew to the Washington DC Dulles airport as planned on Tuesday, arriving early Wednesday morning but he failed to appear for his transport to Baltimore.

ProTouch revealed that they tried to contact the Rwandan rider on Wednesday but his mobile number was not receiving calls or messages.

“On Thursday morning, having had no contact, the team and organizers made contact with the police at the airport and reported him as missing.” ProTouch pointed out

“The police reviewed the security cameras and confirmed his arrival and [there is a] recording of him on his phone and leaving the airport exit where he got into a vehicle with two people he clearly knew,” said the team.

“He did not arrive at the team hotel nor the race he was entered to participate in on Sunday.”

The 2018 Tour of Rwanda winner, last raced at the Commonwealth Games in Warwick last month and was due to compete in the inaugural Maryland Cycling Classic on Sunday.

The rider joined ProTouch in 2021.

ProTouch have noted that they have tried to reach him on his email, social media and via cell phone, but he has not responded.

“We do not know his intention at this time but he missed his return flight to Rwanda today. So one can assume he plans to stay at this time.” The team thinks

In the statement, ProTouch expressed their dissatisfaction with the rider going AWOL in the United States because obtaining visas for African riders has been a difficult and laborious undertaking that has affected the careers of many professional Africans trying to race in Europe or the United States.

The team further reported, “Sadly, this irresponsible behavior has far-reaching

consequences to an already challenging process of getting visas for African riders. Hopefully, it won’t undo all the hard work being done to streamline this process and enable more athletes to compete internationally,” the team said.

Whether or not Mugisha will face disciplinary action when and if he is found remains to be seen.

“No decision has been made at this time regarding his contract with the team. We will seek advice in this regard in due course,” the team statement concluded.

Mugisha joins three other riders who went missing in America, after Hadi Janvier, Valens Ndayisenga, Uwizeye Bonaventure.