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**City in a spin for Tour of Ireland stage visit**

By AINE FITZGERALD &amp; ANNE SHERIDAN

IT was all over in seconds, yet hundreds of people lined the streets of Limerick city last Friday afternoon to witness the Tour of Ireland cycle pass through the city centre.

A total of 140 cyclists participating in the cycle, sped through the city on their way to Killaloe and were greeted with rapturous applause from local citizens and tourists at they came into view over Shannon Bridge.

"The circuit through Limerick is just fantastic and the weather unbelievable," explained a breathless Tom Balaban, press pilot on the tour as he arrived in the city on the third stage of the six-day 864km race, which concluded in Dublin's Merrion Square on Sunday.

Sponsored by Failte Ireland, the tour began last Wednesday near Kilkenny Castle and on Friday the group left Tralee at 12.15pm.

Shortly after 3.15pm up to 20 cyclists travelled up the Dock Road, onto Henry Street and then cycled out the Corbally Road towards Ennis, and finished Friday's four hour cycle in Killaloe.

Another larger group of cyclists, who were six kilometres behind, descended on the city at 3.20pm to a warm welcome.

"We travelled along the west coast through Tarbert before we arrived here and now we are heading for Cahir Mountain and Ennis tomorrow. The course today is 194km," explained Tom, before adding, "we are then going to Galway tonight before making the long trek up north to Westport, Louisburg and back to Galway."

Leading the third leg of the race was Stijn Vandenberg. Stijn went on to be crowned the Tour of Ireland champion on Sunday evening after leading from pillar to post in the five stage, 900km race.

One of Ireland's hopefuls, Nicolas Roche, was one of two non-finishers of the first stage of the race as he was suffering from saddle boil infection—it also prevented him from competing in the third stage through Limerick.

Meanwhile, traffic congestion which arose as a result of the cycle through Limerick led to confusion amongst many motorists in the city.

Although there was a large Garda presence in attendance along the Limerick route, the closure of Henry Street and the disruption to the normal service of traffic lights, caused confusion.

Brian Slattery from Caherdavin who was passing through the Henry Street area of the city at lunchtime on Friday labelled as "disgraceful" the lack of traffic control for such a high profile event.

"The lights were flashing amber and it was every man and woman for themselves. There were no signs up to inform motorists of what was happening. It was complete mayhem," he told the Limerick Leader.

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