

Morzine, Sunday, 9 July 2023

L'ÉTAPE DU TOUR DE FRANCE 2023 ARTUS JALADEAU AND MARTINA SABLIKOVA COME OUT ON TOP

On Sunday, 9 July, the Frenchman Artus Jaladeau won the 31st edition of L'Étape du Tour de France, held between Annemasse to Morzine on the course that awaits the pro peloton of the Tour de France next Saturday. At the end of a 157 km course through the Haute Savoie with a total elevation gain of 4,100 metres, he dispatched the Swiss Dimitri Bussard with an attack in the final kilometre of the Col de Joux Plane. The Czech three-time Olympic gold medallist in speed skating, Martina Sáblíková, claimed the women's race.

Artus Jaladeau, a 23-year-old rider from Toulouse, added his name to the honour roll of L'Étape du Tour de France with a dominant performance. He stayed near the front from the start in Annemasse and put his impressive descending skills to good use on each climb to create a gap that would allow him to tackle subsequent climbs —the category 3 Col de Saxel, followed by three category 1 passes in the shape of the Col de Cou, Col de Feu and Col de la Ramaz— more easily and build a comfortable lead ahead of the final ascent, the *hors catégorie* Col de Joux Plane (11.6 km at an average gradient of 8.5%), the end of the timed section.

It was another flash of talent following his maiden Elite stage race victory, which he took in the Tour du Pays Roannais last week. "I'm lost for words", sighed the man who rides for OCF Team Legend Wheels. "Winning L'Étape du Tour de France is very special. It's one of the biggest cyclosportive races on Earth, so of course, I'm thrilled I won it. It's a world apart from what I usually do in typical race efforts. I was on fire today. More importantly, I was very crafty. I glided on the descents and managed to open up a big gap every time. I was on high alert to stay well positioned. I had over two minutes at the foot of the last climb. I reckoned that might do the trick. I started to struggle on the steep slopes, but I stayed calm. I eased up a bit. I let **Dimitri Bussard** catch up with me. He tried to attack straight away, but I managed to latch onto his wheel and, when I saw him fade with one kilometre to go, I made my move. **I took off and saw it was going to stick."**

This victory will fuel his hopes of signing for a pro team and, who knows, one day following in the slipstream of Victor Lafay, who clinched L'Étape du Tour de France in 2018 and went on to take a stage in the Tour de France this year!

Dimitri Bussard clawed his way back to the front on the last climb, but the effort took its toll and left him with nothing in the tank to counter Jaladeau's final attack. The Swiss rider claimed second place, ahead of the Frenchman **Damien Jeanjean**.

Meanwhile, the Czech three-time Olympic gold medallist and eleven-time world champion in speed skating, 36-year-old **Martina Sáblíková**, predictably raised her arms in triumph at the top of the Col de Joux Plane after spending the entire race in the lead. "The heat and terrain made it an incredibly tough day, but I love this region and the crowds were an absolute delight, cheering me on every time the road bent towards the sky", she said. The French rider **Océane Mahé** came in second, almost 13 minutes down. **Camille Udny** took the bottom step of the podium in a repeat of her performance last year.

RESULTS

MEN

- 1. Artus Jaladeau (FRA) 4 h 31'28"
- 2. Dimitri Bussard (SUI) 4 h 32'54"
- 3. Damien Jeanjean (FRA) 4 h 34'04"

WOMEN

- 1. Martina Sáblíková (CZE) 5 h 19'39"
- 2. Océane Mahé (FRA) 5 h 32'03"
- 3. Camille Udny (FRA) 5 h 39'14"

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