

Morzine, Sunday, 9 July 2023

L'ÉTAPE DU TOUR DE FRANCE 2023 IN THE HEART OF THE LEGEND!

The 31st edition of L'Étape du Tour de France was a day to remember for all the participants, who tackled a 157-kilometre challenge with an elevation gain of 4,100 metres between Annemasse and Morzine, on the roads of Haute-Savoie. Riding under the glorious sun, the whole bunch lived the experience of a lifetime on the course awaiting the pro peloton in stage 14 of the Tour de France, due to take place on next Saturday, 15 July.

Key points

- 16,000 entrants in the 31st edition of L'Étape du Tour de France, held between Annemasse and Morzine
- Artus Jaladeau (FRA) and Martina Sáblíková (CZE) come out on top
- 92 nationalities on the start line and 45% of first-timers
- Biathletes on the French national team crack the top 300
- A shining accomplishment for amateurs and great champions alike

The finish of the 31st edition of L'Étape du Tour de France was packed with clenched fists, arms raised in triumph and sunglasses that barely concealed flowing tears, as cries of anger, joy and relief pierced the air. It took the riders five, six, seven and up to more than ten hours to complete this larger-than-life challenge.

Rolling out of Annemasse at the crack of dawn, the field set course for the Col de Saxel —a gentle start with an average gradient of 4% to warm up. Following a fast descent, the road bent towards the sky again with a succession of three category 1 passes: the Col de Cou (7 km at 7.7%), the Col de Feu (5.9 km at 7.9%) and, last but not least, the grinding Col de la Ramaz (13.9 km at 7.1%).

As the course tightened the screws on the participants, many raised their heads and sought respite in the **exceptional views of Haute-Savoie**, first with **Lake Geneva** and a bit later with the snow-capped and majestically lit Mont Blanc, adding to this unique experience on roads entirely closed to traffic. The long, hard slog up the **Col de Ramaz** was also a ride down memory lane, with signs erected as a tribute to all the great champions of the Tour de France, making riders feel like they were pushing the pedals right next to **Bobet, Anquetil, Hinault, Merckx, Bahamontes, Fignon, Indurain** and many more. What a morale boost!

ARTUS JALADEAU AND MARTINA SÁBLÍKOVÁ TAKE THE SPOILS

The Frenchman **Artus Jaladeau**, head and shoulders above the rest, crossed the finish line in 4 h 31'28" and added his name to the list of winners, as did the Czech **Martina Sáblíková**, who wrapped up the women's race in 5 h 19'39". Yet, in the heart of the peloton, time is often an afterthought, just a way of keeping track and staying on the right course. From battle-hardened veterans to rookies (**45% of first-timers**), riders from every corner of the planet (**92 nationalities** represented, with **foreigners accounting for 30% of the field**), they all shared the same simple goals: crossing the finish line, getting their hands on the medal, making fond memories, having fun... and earning bragging rights.

A CHALLENGE FOR EVERY RIDER

Delphine Reinert came from Manosque for her baptism of fire in L'Étape du Tour de France. "It was tough, but riding on closed roads is a real treat", she pointed out. "The atmosphere is out of this world. Sometimes you feel like you're racing in the Tour de France, with the locals coming out to cheer us on and playing their part to perfection."

Anthony came from Quimper and can't stop smiling after just over 9 hours of effort. I've been dreaming of doing L'Etape du Tour de France for years," explains the Breton rider. I've given myself the means to succeed by following the training plans suggested by the organisers. I listened to all the advice from the pros, particularly on diet and how to manage the last few days before the start. I didn't want to regret anything. On the descent to the finish, I thought about it all again and it brought tears to my eyes. Thank you so much for this unique experience."

PRESS RELEASE



In the heart of the peloton, **Damien Lustre** is one of the 300 "Runners of the Heart" who signed up for the event to raise funds for the charity **Mécénat Chirurgie Cardiaque**. "The course is amazing, and pinning on a charity race number really fills it with meaning", explained the man from the Pas-de-Calais department. "When you start to run out of steam, it makes sense."

ATHLETES RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

The sun was near its zenith when the riders tackled the final hurdle, the *hors catégorie* Col de Joux Plane, an 11.6 km climb with an average gradient of 8.5% and sections north of 12% (note that the timed section ended at the top of the Col de Joux Plane to avoid any risks on the descent to Morzine). A few household names from French sport joined the ranks of the amateurs. One of them was the 2006 Olympic downhill gold medallist, **Antoine Dénériaz**, another "Runner of the Heart", who completed the course in 7 h 27. The biathletes on the French national team also acquitted themselves honourably, with **Loïs Habert** (5 h 12) in the top 100 and **Fabien Claude** (5 h 24), **Émilien Jacquelin** (5 h 33) and **Antonin Guigonnat** (5 h 34) between 200th and 300th place. The star motorcycle rider **Loris Baz** stopped the clock at 6 h 31. **Tom Lecomte**, a French triathlete touted as one of the best in the world over long distances, staged a heart-warming comeback after sustaining grievous injuries in a road accident about a year ago. His doctors had told him he would be lucky if he could walk again, but today, he pinned on a race number for the first time and finished the event in 6 h 12!

L'ÉTAPE DU TOUR DE FRANCE: A MAGNET FOR CYCLISTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Along with the champions, the finish area was packed with amateurs, some from far-flung places. **Anders Tonsager** from Norway, who completed the course in over 6 h 30, could barely take his eyes off his third L'Étape du Tour de France medal. "Wow, it was hot and the last climb was tough", he panted. "We're not used to this in Norway. Skiing is our cup of tea, but it's not really the best way to train for an event like this one. But it's awesome. I even stopped to take some pictures and send them to Norway, and now everyone is jealous!"

Next Saturday, it will be the turn of the pro peloton of the Tour de France to tackle this course. Whether they are standing on the side of the road or glued to their screens, the pro race will pack an intense emotional punch for the participants in the 31st edition of L'Étape du Tour de France, with their finisher's medal around their neck and their minds full of exhilarating memories!

PRESS CONTACTS

Agence AFC
Aurélia Filho
07 85 82 89 72
aurelia@agenceafc.com

ASO Press Office Mélanie Vallage 07 89 31 57 38 mvallage@aso.fr