

Fréjus, 8 October 2023

4 to 8 October 2023

## 2023 ROC D'AZUR

# HUGO DRECHOU AND NOÉMIE GARNIER OPEN THEIR ACCOUNTS IN THE ROC D'AZUR

### Key points

- Frenchman Hugo Drechou succeeds Jordan Sarrou and claims his maiden Roc d'Azur win
- French 1-2-3 in the women's race, with Noémie Garnier on top of the podium
- Romain Bardet, tenth the day after Il Lombardia, and Juliette Labous, eighth, have a great time in the Roc d'Azur
- Hikes wildly successful in their first Roc appearance
- 39<sup>th</sup> edition hits all the right notes with 19,000 participants
- 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition next year

### HUGO DRECHOU EXACTS REVENGE

"I'm seething!" Standing on the start line of the [Roc d'Azur](#), the centrepiece race of the week, **Hugo Drechou** did not beat about the bush when queried about the broken chain that knocked him out of contention just 30 metres into the [Ford Roc Marathon](#) on Friday. However, nothing could stop him this time round as he wrapped up the 54.5 km course in 2 h 18'43", a minute ahead of his compatriot **Mathis Azzaro**, the bright rising star of the discipline, and 3'30" clear of the Italian **Fabian Rabensteiner**. The runner-up of the previous edition (although he did win the [Roc Marathon](#) back then) added his name to the list of winners of the [Roc d'Azur](#), right underneath **Jordan Sarrou**. "Winning the [Roc d'Azur](#), here in France, is super important", said the 32-year-old **Drechou**. "It makes a bigger splash than other races. It'll also buoy my morale ahead of the winter break. I felt good and decided to move to the front from the get-go, but I had to keep my anger and thirst for revenge in check. It's best to ride smart and follow wheels at the beginning. I was all fired up, but there was a little voice telling me to calm down. **Mathis** is incredible on the descents and me on the ascents. We worked well together, so we managed to open up a gap. Marathoners start to have an edge after two hours. I knew it would be a bad idea to go up in a sprint against a young rider like **Mathis**. Last year, I scored a near-miss in the queen event, although second place is not bad at all either. This time round, I came through!" Aching from a nasty gash on his shin as a result of a crash, the 23-year-old **Mathis Azzaro**, a silver medallist in the U23 World Championships, was delighted with second place. "I hit a tree near the start of the race and had to grit my teeth for an hour and a half", he lamented. "**Hugo** dropped me in the finale, but I finished second, which is my first Elite podium spot in the [Roc d'Azur](#)... I'm not complaining."

### ROMAIN BARDET HAS "A GREAT TIME" ROMPING TO TENTH PLACE

**Romain Bardet** finished tenth, less than 5 minutes down on the winner, following his overnight trip from Il Lombardia. "It was a nice day, I had a great time", explained the Team DSM rider, a three-time Tour de France stage winner. "The course is out of this world, but very technical for a bloke like me who rides a mountain bike twice a year. I don't have time to train on a mountain bike, but we set up the bike yesterday to take the start this morning. I'm fine on the climbs, but I'm out of my depth on the descents, so I have to take my time. But I had a blast, and that's what really matters. It was my first day on holiday!" Another road cyclist, **Axel Zingle** (Team Cofidis), also posted an impressive performance in fourth place.

## NOÉMIE GARNIER INHERITS THE CROWN FROM PAULINE FERRAND-PRÉVOT — JULIETTE LABOUS EIGHTH

The home nation also shone in the women's race, with the young Noémie Garnier triumphing in her blue, white and red U23 French champion's jersey. The rider from Sarthe blitzed the course in 2 h 49'27" to succeed **Pauline Ferrand-Prévot**. A Roc regular since her O15 years, the 22-year-old slowly but steadily powered away as the miles went by. "Winning the Roc d'Azur in my very last race in the U23 national champion's jersey is amazing", chirped the French rider. "I eased into my pace and had a blast today. The climb up Le Bognon sent shivers down my spine. It felt like the Tour de France. The ascent flew by. I made the decision to come here on Thursday evening. I hit the road on Friday, spent 9 hours travelling from Le Mans and got here in time to win! Today, I savoured every kilometre, the atmosphere, the crowds, the sun. It was awesome. The Roc is quite something." **Constance Valentin** (2 h 56'29") and **Marine Allione** (2 h 58'44") completed a French 1-2-3.

**Juliette Labous**, fifth in the last Tour de France Femmes avec Zwift, finished an impressive eighth in her Roc d'Azur debut, racing alongside her Team DSM stablemate **Léa Curinier**.

View the full results [here](#).

## ROC TROPHY AND MULTI ROC CHALLENGE —WHEN YOU JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH

Making its first appearance in 2023, the Multi Roc Challenge served up a hearty and, especially, varied menu, with a combined classification for the Tri Roc, Ford Roc Marathon, Roc Trail 32 km and Roc d'Azur. Julien Galot emerged as the Renaissance man of outdoor sports, inaugurating the honour roll of this new series. "I've been coming to the Roc for ten years", pointed out Julien, an official with the Paris Fire Brigade who is targeting a sub-2:30 finish in the next Valencia Marathon. "I always sign up for the Tri Roc and Roc Marathon. Last year, I added the Gravel race to the mix. The Multi Roc Challenge seemed cut out for me. It's a way of making the most of my time in Fréjus with highly specific efforts. The Challenge has proved its worth."

The Belgian Jarne Vandersteen and the Swiss Ilona Chavallaz won the Roc Trophy (a combined classification with one race every day) by a country mile. "I'm delighted I won", chirped the Belgian. "This challenge is really fun. I'm lucky to recover quickly, but it all comes easier when you're having a blast every day."

## SUCCESSFUL PREMIERE FOR THE HIKES

They took their sweet time. Time to look up and take a short break to gaze at the picture-perfect views that were revealed with each step. **Hikers** joined the Roc Family for the first time. Courses stretching for 5, 8, 13 or —for the veterans— 22 km showcased the Rocher de Roquebrune on the horizon, the aqueduct hanging over the Path of 25 Bridges and all the other gems to be discovered on the Argens Plain. Smiles glistened at the finish, with a treasure trove of memories for all. The hikes are here to stay.

## THE ROC HITS ALL THE RIGHT NOTES WITH 19,000 PARTICIPANTS

"We're really pleased with how this edition went", said **Vivien Hocquet**, the coordinator of the Roc d'Azur. "We've had 19,000 participants across all events. It was a bumper year. The show was also a resounding success, with 300 exhibitors and a packed venue every day. The fabulous weather allowed us to make the most of this environment that we get to race in. Everything fell into place."

Mountain biking is still the beating heart of the event, but the Roc Family has been expanding for several years and now spans triathlon, gravel grinders, trail running and, since this edition, hikes. "The Roc d'Azur family keeps growing. The trail run was a big hit again after its launch last year. On top of that, the hike met with widespread acclaim as more than 450 people took to the trails. This is exactly what the Roc d'Azur is all about: a cocktail of fun and nature."

## NEXT UP, THE 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

Next year, the Roc d'Azur will turn 40, fit as a fiddle and with its zest for life intact. The 40<sup>th</sup> edition of the event launched in 1984 will mark 40 years of an event that has gone down in the history of the sport. "We'll soon start brainstorming about our plans for the sporting aspect of the event, of course, but also about how to celebrate this anniversary", continued **Vivien Hocquet**. "We've been in Fréjus since 1997 and last year we extended our partnership until 2027. The Roc d'Azur continues to grow with the backing of our partners, including Fréjus, Roquebrune-sur-Argens, Saint-Raphaël and Esterel Côte d'Azur Agglomération. Forty years is a nice number and we're going to celebrate it!"

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