

Boulogne-Billancourt, 3 October 2023

4 to 8 October 2023

ROC D'AZUR

SWEET DREAMS ARE MADE OF THE ROC

Key points:

- The Roc d'Azur is the ultimate trophy for mountain biking specialists
- Romain Bardet, Pierre Rolland, Tom Dumoulin... road cyclists come to bask in the atmosphere of the Roc d'Azur too
- The three-time winner of the Roc d'Azur, Olympic gold medallist and 2000 world champion, Miguel Martinez, will be on the start line
- The Roc d'Azur is also the place to be for everyone who loves mountain biking and wants to see the stars of every flavour of MTB on the tracks and in the heart of the show

ROC CHAMPIONS THROW THEIR HATS INTO THE RING

Often announcing their participation at the eleventh hour, several great champions from France and abroad will vie to succeed the Frenchman **Jordan Sarrou**, who is skipping this edition because he will be taking part in the MTB World Cup in Mont-Saint-Anne this weekend. Another Frenchman, **Miguel Martinez**, who has taken the Roc d'Azur three times (1997, 2004 and 2013) and claimed gold in the 2000 Olympics and World Championships, is returning to his hunting grounds of yore. He will be seeking to pull level with four-time Roc d'Azur winner **Jordan Sarrou** (2014, 2016, 2019 and 2022). The event has a special place in the heart of the record holder. "The Roc d'Azur is tremendously important to French mountain bikers", he points out. "It's the last race of the year, so you have to work with the form you've got. Some parts of the course are technical, but it is still rather fast as a whole, with the leading riders clocking in at 22 to 25 km/h on average. It's tailored to well-rounded mountain bikers. You never know how it's going to play out, so you need to adapt your strategy depending on how the race unfolds."

Just like the last two years, **Romain Bardet** has made arrangements to cross the border after participating in Il Lombardia on Saturday to take the start of the [Roc d'Azur](#) on Sunday morning. The French champion, a three-time Tour de France stage winner and silver medallist in the 2018 world road race championships, put in a rather aggressive ride to finish eleventh in his debut in 2021, but he eased up a bit last year. "I had a blast", he laughed at the finish, clinking glasses with a friend. "I enjoyed catching up with the front group on the first climb, but then I switched to fun mode for the rest of the race."

Road cyclists also have a soft spot for the tracks that criss-cross Les Maures Massif. The recently retired **Pierre Rolland** will be entering the [Enduroc Électrique](#) on Friday and the [Canyon Gravel Roc](#) on Saturday, while the Dutch winner of the 2017 Giro d'Italia, **Tom Dumoulin**, is poised to test his legs in the [Rando Roc Esterel](#).

Less clear are the names of the favourites in the [Ford Roc Marathon](#), a 91.3 km race with an elevation gain of 2,300 m that never fails to attract the best riders in Europe. The 2014 and 2019 Roc d'Azur champion, **Margot Moschetti**, has also got a long history with this race. "I used to come here with the UNSS even before I started mountain biking with a club", explains the rider from Nice. "The atmosphere is unique. You cross loads of people on the aisles of the show. The Roc d'Azur is a sports event, of course, but it's a forum too. It's the last race of the year and everyone wants to finish on a high note. The first time I won the race was insane because I wasn't expecting it to have such an impact, far beyond what you see in other races. Winning the Roc d'Azur is a unique experience." Who will follow in her footsteps?

TIPS FROM STÉPHANE TEMPIER

The 2012 and 2018 [Roc d'Azur](#) champion, **Stéphane Tempier**, knows the tracks in this region like the back of his hand after coming here since he was a little boy. "Riders of all levels can have a blast in Les Maures Massif", he points out. "As usual in southern France, the ground is dry and, therefore, a bit slippery, with dust and gravel. You'll also come across stony ground and a few low steps on the descents. The climbs are quite tough, with steep gradients. Races that venture into the massif are of the 'undulating mountain course' type, with a 7/10 difficulty rating. The climbs are physical but fast. They are cross-country

courses with lots of rollers. It's what makes the Roc d'Azur so amazing. You need to reproduce these kinds of efforts in training." But always remember rule number 1: "You also need to train for the party and everything around it".

THE SHOW BRINGS THE WHOLE MTB FAMILY TOGETHER

The champions will go head to head on the tracks, but the Roc d'Azur also provides opportunities to see them in a more laid-back context in the heart of the show. **Julien Absalon**, an Olympic gold medallist in 2004 and 2008, always shows up to rub shoulders with fans. He will be at the Ekoi stand from 11 am on Saturday to sign autographs.

The Roc d'Azur is also where the whole MTB family comes together, so champions in other genres are also heading to Fréjus. **Aurélien Fontenoy**, one of the big names of international mountain bike trials, will be there, as will the freeride specialist **Tomas Lemoine**, the three-time downhill world champion **Fabien Barel**, the two-time enduro world champion **Isabeau Courdurier**, the newly crowned U21 enduro world champion from Corsica, **Lisandru Bertini**, and **William Robert**, a master of extreme genres such as freeride and downhill.

They will all drop by the Roc d'Azur, of course —who misses a family reunion, after all?

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