

Issy-les-Moulineaux, 7th of March 2007

MEETING POINT

After the exotic escapades in Australia, the Middle-East, South-East Asia and the United States, the best cycling teams in the World will meet again for a first confrontation on a European stage race: Paris-Nice. Traditionally, the 'race to the sun' gives a good opportunity to have a first appreciation of the riders in shape and find out how efficient the winter training sessions were for the main actors of the circuit. Its winner, whether it was Anquetil, Merckx, Kelly, Indurain, Jalabert, Vinokourov or more recently Landis (despite the events that happened just after the Tour), is generally speaking one who often plays a key role throughout the season. For that reason, Paris-Nice has become a yearly meeting point for a cycling planet ready for action.

To consider the identity of the winner, all eyes naturally turn to those having crossed the Atlantic. During the last two editions, the winners in Nice managed an impressive double after claiming the Tour of California. Levi Leipheimer, a new recruit in the Discovery Channel team therefore looks to be the obvious favourite. But his contenders for victory don't really care about statistics: Franck Schleck, Bobby Julich (CSC), Patrick Sinkewitz, Axel Merckx (TMO), Cadel Evans (PRL) or Philippe Gilbert (FDJ) could indeed be in winning shape on the Côte d'Azur. The experts in sprinting will have the opportunity to battle it out with Tom Boonen, who comes on the race after having already captured 6 wins this year and has taken the habit of triumphing in the bunched sprint finishes of Paris-Nice (three victories 2006, two in 2005). Italian Bennati looks to be the strongest to try and prevent the Belgian from shining next week.

Concerning the French contingent, Cyril Dessel, Sylvain Calzati and Pierrick Fedrigo, major actors of the 2006 Tour de France 2006, will have a good possibility to try and impress during this first real test. Voeckler, Casar or the recent winner of the Tour of Langkawi, Anthony Charteau will also be ones to keep an eye on.

The favourites from the 20 teams

Germany

Gerolsteiner : Rebellin (ITA), M.Zberg (SUI)
T-Mobile Team : Merckx (BEL), Sinkewitz (ALL), Piil (DAN)

Belgium

Quickstep Innergetic : Boonen, Cretskens (BEL)
Predictor - Lotto : Evans (AUS), Horner (EU)

Denmark

Team CSC : Julich, Zabriskie (EU), F.Schleck (LUX)

Spain

Caisse d'Epargne : Portal (FRA), Rodriguez (ESP)
Euskatel - Euskadi : Astarloza, S.Sanchez (ESP)
Saunier Duval - Prodir : Millar (GBR), Mayo (ESP)

United States

Discovery Channel Team : Leipheimer (EU), Popovych (UKR)

France

Bouygues Telecom : Voeckler, Fedrigo (FRA), Florencio (ESP)
Credit Agricole : Botcharov (RUS), Caucchioli (ITA), Charteau (FRA)
Cofidis crédit par téléphone : Sy.Chavanel, Augé (FRA)
FDJeux.com : Casar, Di Gregorio (FRA), Gilbert (BEL)
AG2R Prevoyance : Dessel, Calzati, Dumoulin (FRA)
Agritubel : Jalabert, Feillu (FRA)

Italy

Team Milram : Astarloa (ESP)
Lampre : Bennati (ITA), Vila Errandonea (ESP)
Liquigas : Paolini, Pellizzotti (ITA)

Netherlands

Rabobank : Flecha (ESP), Posthuma (HOL), Hayman (AUS)

Switzerland

Astana : Iglinskiy (KAZ), Colom (ESP)

Find the full liste of registered riders on www.letour.fr

Press Contact

Matthieu Desplats

00 33 (0)1 41 33 15 30 / 00 33 (0)6 75 37 11 03 / mdesplats@aso.fr