

## One for all...and all against Froome!

*Between Aigle and Lausanne, the 2017 TdR will feature many surprises: hills that have never been cycled before, a clover-shaped stage, two mountain finishes, a final time trial "Through Lausanne", and... who's going to beat Chris Froome?*

**Lausanne, 11 April 2017** / 14 days away from the 71st edition, excitement is building for the Tour de Romandie. Everything is in place to offer a new treat: both in terms of the route, with new surprises, and the peloton. The UCI WorldTour-stamped participation sees its 18 teams on the starting line (plus Wanty-Groupe Gobert as a guest) and ensures the presence of the greatest riders, with Chris Froome at the head. Staying faithful to his winning pre-Tour de France programme, the British rider has once again chosen the Tour de Romandie as a launch pad. He will find the majority of his strongest rivals in his path. They will all be presented on Monday 24 April (6.30-7.30 pm) at the UCI World Cycling Centre in Aigle, at the opening of the prologue organising committee's gala supper.

The best riders will be wearing new jerseys: while the general leader's yellow jersey remains with Vaudoise assurances, and that of best sprinter with PMU Romand, the Banque du Léman will now be displayed on the best young rider's jersey and Net+ on that of the best climber, with the combativity prize keeping the colours of Prodis. Among the new partners are the Masset company and the Elitia agency (graphic design), Craft (official jersey sponsor) and Losinger-Marazzi (official supplier).

### **A route to savour right up to the last second!**

From the prologue in Aigle to the final time trial in Lausanne, the route features two mountain finishes as it did in 2016. The 1<sup>st</sup> stage towards Champéry (173.3 km) is destined for adventurers, with 5 GPM climbs, including the last of which is category 1. The short descent at Troistorrents, 7 km from the finish line, could well prove to be the key moment at which a strong rider catches everybody out.

If, between Champéry and Bulle (160.7 km), no bold rider stands out after the roller coaster of a route, the red carpet will be waiting for the sprinters. And they'll do well to take their marks at the first passage of a right-angle bend, 300 metres from the finish line.

The clover-shaped route around Payerne (187 km) proposes three different loops. And two new humps that route manager Bernard Baertschi has pulled out of his sleeve. The first is paved in 20%-gradient bends, then the Lovens climb, also with 20%- gradient sections and, to finish, the Sassel climb, 25 km from the finish line. An extension of the Classics!

The Queen Stage from Domdidier to Leysin (163.5 km) will look a little like the Tour de France 2016! Jaun (1,509 metres) then Gstaad and the Col du Pillon (compared to the 'roof' of the Tour: 1,546 metres) will precede the ascent to Leysin, which may create gaps of one minute.

Like in 2015, the final time trial in Lausanne will decide the winner. A trickier proposition than two years ago, it will have the riders climbing "Through Lausanne", that's to say even higher than La Mercerie, up to the Sauvabelin look-out post, before diving down onto Bellerive Square. It will be enough to keep the fans and team members on tenterhooks until the very last second.

### **Chris Froome and Sky against Spilak, Zakarin, Porte and all the rest...**

Last year, Chris Froome did not achieve the exploit that would have brought him level with Stephen Roche. Froome, who has already won the Tour de France three times, realised that the smallest of the big tours also demands mastery and luck. The British rider will have to manage a peloton that is well stocked with rivals. Spilak, another regular at the Tour de Romandie, which he won in 2010; Zakarin, the surprise winner in 2015; Richie Porte, who, like Cadel Evans, is dreaming of bringing victory to his BMC team; Kreuziger, 2<sup>nd</sup> in 2008 and 1<sup>st</sup> in 2009; Van Garderen, who, although he has won the Tour du Colorado twice, has yet to come out on top in a stage race in Europe; and the Colombians Uran and Betancur. In terms of Swiss riders, Matthias Franck will be the one to watch in the AG2R team. Michael Albasini will be aiming for his 7th stage win in four years and the return of Stefan Küng, who won the stage ending in Fribourg in 2015 alone and ahead of the pack, brings back good memories for Swiss supporters.

### **Romand racers: Steve Morabito and Sébastien Reichenbach are "going to really be full of surprises!"**

Among the Swiss riders on the starting line are three delighted Romands. Steve Morabito was given carte blanche by his team—a rare occurrence at this level—in the absence of Thibaut Pinot. He said so at this press conference via video interview. "Without wishing to put pressure on myself, as that doesn't work for me on this race, I know that I have an opportunity to pull something off, in the general ranking or with a stage." The Valais rider makes no secret of the fact that he's dreaming about the Champéry stage, which is on his home ground. "I'm definitely going to surprise people." And with him, his team mate Sébastien Reichenbach (11<sup>th</sup> in 2016), who was repatriated to the TdR by a foot injury. The two Swiss riders in the Française des Jeux team are going to pair up to try and achieve an exploit.

The other Romand in the peloton, Danilo Wyss, is overjoyed to be taking his leader Richie Porte onto roads he knows like the back of his hand. "I have to protect him, especially in the grouped finals, to ensure his place in the first 20. Even if it prevents me from playing my personal card, it's exhilarating and motivating to ride for the World No 1, in a BMC team that has already won the TdR with Cadel Evans. And, of course, I'm particularly inspired by the Payerne stage, whose loops go around my stamping ground."

### **A new application, live video, social networks and the website: you'll be able to follow the race all the time, everywhere, at full speed!**

With a new "TDR-Official" application created by E-Novinfo, the #TDR2017 will be delighting those following the TdR in situ or at a distance. And we haven't even mentioned the TV coverage, with 458 hours of broadcasting and 8.1 million viewers. On social networks, in addition to Snapchat for the younger fans, the race will be reverberating on Instagram and Facebook, with many videos being live streamed this year, including the press conference for the stage winners. The videos will also be available on the [www.lematin.ch](http://www.lematin.ch) website.