

Issy-les-Moulineaux, 24th of April 2008

## THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

At the end of the final straight at Ans, where the finish line of Liège-Bastogne-Liège is set and victory decided after a traditionally fierce battle between the specialists of the Ardennes classics, a new page of the cycling season is turned. For several weeks now, the main contenders have started focusing on the oldest of classics that they consider as a precious race to be conquered. The moment has come to put the pressure on the others, to work on the lack of energy noticed in some of the key sectors. Having allowed Damiano Cunego and Kim Kirchen, winners of the Amstel Gold Race and the Fleche Wallonne, to enter the exclusive club of Ardennes winners, the likes of Valverde, Rebellin or F.Schleck now only have one last option left to add a line to their record list with yet another prestigious victory. Added to the strong competition noticed on the first two meetings, they will have to keep an eye out on Paolo Bettini, two-time winner in Belgium's *Little Italy* (2000, 2002). The World champion, who has modified his usual preparation, shows up with the ambition to catch up a start to the season troubled by physical upsets.

Other than the confrontation between the different generations of Ardennes specialists in which Cadel Evans hopes to find his place, the change established in the final part of the event could also have its importance. Added to the program of difficulties, the Côte de la Roche aux Faucons, with a climbing gradient close to 10%, could add some riders to the circle of contenders able to conquer the 'Doyenne'.

### The main contenders in the 25 teams

#### **Germany**

*Gerolsteiner*: Rebellin (Ita), Wegmann, Schumacher (All)

*Team Milram*: Astarloa (Esp), Grivko (Ukr)

#### **Belgium**

*Topsport Vlaanderen*: Pauwels (BEL)

*Silence - Lotto*: Evans (Aus), Popovych (Ukr)

*Quick Step*: Bettini (Ita), Barredo (Esp)

*Landbouwkrediet - Tönissteiner*: Cappelle (Bel)

#### **Denmark**

*Team CSC*: F.Schleck, A.Schleck (Lux), Kroon (Hol), Sastre (ESP)

#### **Spain**

*Caisse d'Epargne*: Valverde, Rodriguez, Pereiro, L.L.Sanchez (Esp)

*Euskaltel - Euskadi*: Astarloza, Isasi (ESP)

*Saunier Duval - Scott*: Cobo Acebo (Esp), Ricco (Ita)

#### **United States**

*High Road*: Kirchen (Lux), Boasson Hagen (Nor)

*Slipstream Chipotle*: Millar (Gbr)

#### **France**

*AG2R - La Mondiale*: Gadret (Fra), Nocentini (Ita), Valjavec (Slo)

*Agritubel*: Moreau, Bichot (Fra)

*Bouygues Telecom*: Pineau, Lefèvre (Fra)

*Credit Agricole*: Caucchioli (Ita), Gerrans (Aus), Rolland (Fra)

*Cofidis Le crédit par téléphone*: Moncoutié (Fra), Monfort (Bel)

*Française des Jeux*: Casar (Fra), Gilbert (Bel)

#### **Great Britain**

*Barloworld*: Soler (Col), Pfannberger (Aut)

#### **Italy**

*Liquigas*: Carlström (Fin)

*Lampre*: Cunego, Righi (Ita)

*Tinkoff Credit Systems*: Ignatiev (Rus)

#### **Netherlands**

*Rabobank*: T.Dekker (Hol), Freire (Esp), Gesink (Hol)

*Skil-Shimano*: Den Bakker (Hol), Hupond (Fra), Rooijackers (Hol)

*Cycle Collstrop*: Wesemann (Sui)

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