

Issy-les-Moulineaux, 9th of April 2008

Remain the strongest...

It looks like the suit of the big race favourite is especially hard to wear on Paris-Roubaix where the title holders are often in trouble. What will be Stuart O'Grady's fate, the winner in style of last year's edition after breaking away in the final part making the best of the tense battle between the cobbled stones specialists? The first Australian winner of the queen of classics, who witnessed a fairly tougher summer after a heavy fall during the Tour de France, will certainly be a key rider in the CSC team plans, but what role will he really play? His leader Fabian Cancellara, who has shown his impressive shape ever since his victory in Milan- San Remo, could like last year and like recently on the Tour of Flanders pay his supposed superiority and be slightly too watched by his main rivals. Tom Boonen, also often troubled by that status of 'man to beat' will show up with a slimmer record of victories this season for the end of his classics campaign. He however remains one of the men to follow when it comes to tips, unless his team mate and compatriot Stijn Devolder manages a prestigious double: "Ronde" - Roubaix.

Around all these champions who have struggled to gain their role as possible winners, one should also add the likes of Alessandro Ballan. Several other contenders should also be battling it out at the entry of the famous Trouée d'Arenberg, traditional theatre for a first selection. The Belgians will try to play their part with for example Nuyens (COF), Hoste and Van Avermaet (SIL). One should also not forget the appetite of regulars in the front positions who have even more belief for this year's edition: Flecha (RAB), Hincapie (THR), Wesemann (COS) or Pozzato (LIQ) will without doubt be eager to triumph.

The main favourites from the 25 teams

Germany

Gerolsteiner: Haussler, Lang (All)

Team Milram: R.Grabsch (All), Terpstra (Hol)

Belgium

Topsport Vlaanderen: Eeckhout (Bel)

Cycle Collstrop: Wesemann (Sui)

Quick Step: Boonen, Devolder, Steegmans (Bel)

Landbouwkrediet - Tonissteiner: A.Capelle, Steels (Bel)

Silence - Lotto: Hoste, Van Avermaet (Bel)

Denmark

Team CSC: Cancellara (Sui), O'Grady (Aus)

Spain

Euskaltel - Euskadi: Albizuri (Esp)

Caisse d'Epargne: Gutierrez (Esp), Portal (Fra)

Saunier Duval - Scott: Flahaut (Fra), Pagliarini (Bre)

United States

Slipstream Chipotle: Backstedt (Sue), Dean (Nzl)

Team High Road: Hammond (Gbr), Hincapie (Usa)

France

AG2R - La Mondiale: Krivtsov (Ukr), J-P.Nazon (Fra)

Agritubel: Casper, Lequatre (Fra)

Bouygues Telecom: Martias (Fra), Pütsep (Est)

Credit Agricole: Hushovd (Nor), Renshaw (Aus)

Cofidis Le crédit par téléphone: Brard (Fra), Nuyens (Bel)

Française des Jeux: Guesdon, Mengin (Fra)

Great Britain

Barloworld: Cooke (Aus), Hunter (Afs)

Italy

Lampre: Ballan, Napolitano (Ita)

Liquigas: Chicchi, Pozzato, Quinziano (Ita)

Tinkoff Credit Systems: Loddo (Ita)

Netherlands

Rabobank: Flecha (Esp), Langeveld (Hol)

Skil - Shimano: Lhôtellerie (Fra), Siedler (All)

Find the full list of registered riders and all the information at www.letour.fr

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