



PRESS RELEASE
Sunday 11th October 2009

Roel Paulissen, King of the Roc d'Azur

Belgian Roel Paulissen will leave his mark on the Roc d'Azur and the steep trails of the Maures massif. For the second year running, the world champion (Team Factory Racing) pulled off a double by winning the Roc d'Azur (53 km), two days after taking victory in the Roc Marathon (83 km). On Sunday 11th October, at the Fréjus nature base in France's Var region, Roel Paulissen triumphed by finishing (2 hrs 11 mins 51 s) with a 27 second lead over Columbian Leonardo Paez (Team TX Active Bianchi, 2 hrs 12 mins 18s) and more than a minute ahead of Spaniard Ruben Ruzafa Cueto (Team Orbea, 2 hrs 12 mins 56 s). In a summery atmosphere, Roel Paulissen became king of the Roc. Despite being introverted by nature, he danced on his bike prior to crossing the finish line...

Roel Paulissen could have been brimming with confidence a few hours earlier, on the start line. However, he was unaware at that point that his lucky star was watching over him. In a solid position at the front of the race from the start, he worked his way through the thousand or so spectators crowded around the Col du Bougnon, towards the 25th kilometre, where he went into the lead. In his wake, Ruben Ruzafa Cueto and above all Christoph Sauser were hot on his heels. Transcending himself however, the Swiss cyclist went into the lead and even managed to streak away from Roel Paulissen before misfortune hit. A puncture, which affected his rear tyre within a few lengths of the finish, dashed his hopes of finally deposing the King. *"I had a lead of about ten seconds over Paulissen and I was into a good rhythm in the last downhill section of the race when I saw this blasted puncture"* recounted Christoph Sauser, who finally finished in 14th place. *"I kept on going on the sand from the beach but I was then forced to stop for a few moments to use my instant puncture sealant. I'm obviously disappointed but I did my best..."* Roel Paulissen was only too willing to reap the benefits of this twist of fate. In front of a host of bathers, he overtook the Swiss cyclist at the Saint-Aygulf beach and rode on to take victory. *"Christoph was very strong today but luck wasn't on his side, stated the winner. I wanted to ride with him and thought that victory would be decided in a sprint between the pair of us. In the end, my performance stood out again... I've taken part in the Roc d'Azur since 1996 and it's always a pleasure coming here. It might be a good idea to live in the region! If all goes to plan I'll be back again next year with the same intentions"*. If Roel Paulissen continues to add luck to his talent, his reign over the Roc d'Azur looks set to last...

Statements

- Roel Paulissen (1st in 2 hrs 11 mins 51 s): *"Christoph Sauser was very strong today but luck wasn't on his side. I wanted to ride with him and thought that victory would be decided in a sprint between the pair of us. In the end, my performance stood out again... I'm very happy to have won this race again. I've taken part in the Roc d'Azur since 1996 and it's always a pleasure coming here. It might be a good idea to live in the region! If all goes to plan I'll be back again next year with the same intentions"*.

- Christoph Sauser (14th in 2hrs 18 mins 35 s): *"I had a lead of about ten seconds over Paulissen and I was into a good rhythm in the last downhill section of the race when I saw this blasted puncture. I kept on going on the sand from the beach but I was then forced to stop for a few moments to use my instant puncture sealant. I'm obviously disappointed but I did my best..."*

- Cédric Ravanel (7th in the general and 1st French cyclist in 2 hrs 15 mins 19 s): *"It was a very hard race, as usual... I failed to stay on the pace in a climb due to a derailment. I had to stop and put the chain back on. I ended up on my own in the pampas and then I picked my way through the competitors ahead of me before getting caught up in a bottleneck... I tried to catch onto the right groups but I didn't succeed. Bodies are always tired at the end of the season. The heavyweights were stronger than I'd hoped. Roel Paulissen had the energy and proved it again. The Roc d'Azur will always be a really great event and a very fine race!"*

- Jean-Christophe Péraud (54th in 2 hrs 29 mins 12 s): *"I started off well but at the midway mark I was wiped out: my legs had gone as had my mental state! I completed the race for fun, in trail mode!"*

The success of the Roc d'Azur 2009

Once again the Roc d'Azur has pushed back the limits. During this 26th edition, the event recorded the participation of 16,706 racers during the 24 events forming this year's programme and, warmed by a summer's sun throughout the week, played host to over 140,000 visitors at the Fréjus leisure base! On a sporting level, it saw a double champion Roel Paulissen – win both the marathon Roc (83 km) and the Roc d'azur (53 km) – as well as a victory to Laetitia le Corguillé to round off the BMX world cup competition. Also of note is that the largest ever gathering of mountain bikers in the world saw a whole score of champion participations: Jean-Christophe Péraud, Julien Absalon, Frédéric Belaubre (Triathlon), Vanessa Boslak (French pole vaulting champion), Anne-Caroline Chausson... A date has already been made for the 27th edition of the Roc d'Azur, which will take place from 6th to 10th October 2010. As has been the case this year, a wealth of entertainment will be on offer during these festival days. In short, a little something to satisfy all mountain bike enthusiasts, whatever their age or their size...

