

el Periòdic News

Xary Rodríguez

A FORMER PROFESSIONAL CYCLIST WHO LEADS THE ANDONA WOMEN'S TEAM

«An indoor velodrome would have a positive impact on Andorra's image»



Originally from Cadix, Xary Rodríguez, a former professional cyclist, has been living in Andorra since 2013 with her husband, Xavier Florencio Cabré (also a former professional cyclist).

Her professional cycling career was preceded by other sports, such as basketball and triathlon.

From 2002 to 2011, she represented the Spanish Cycling Federation, participating in international races such as the Spanish Cup, Tour de France, Giro d'Italia and world championships.

After creating a social cycling club three years ago, she now leads the ANDONA women's team, a dream project that has become a reality with the support of a gold sponsor: Andbank (among other sponsors).

—Please tell us about the ANDONA team: when was it created?

—ANDONA club was born three years ago with the sole purpose of involving women in cycling – there was never any thought of competition. Last January, I decided to invite the women to fill out a questionnaire, and it turned out that 25 women wanted to compete. So, for a year now, we have been a club with ambitions to compete and win.

I am the leader of this project,

but, without the team, this project would not have been possible.

Jan Missé and Jaume Mas are in charge of physical and technical training, Laia Santuré is responsible for nutrition, Anna Verdaguer is in charge of psychological support and Cathy Labouyrie is responsible for logistics.

—Are there only women in the club?

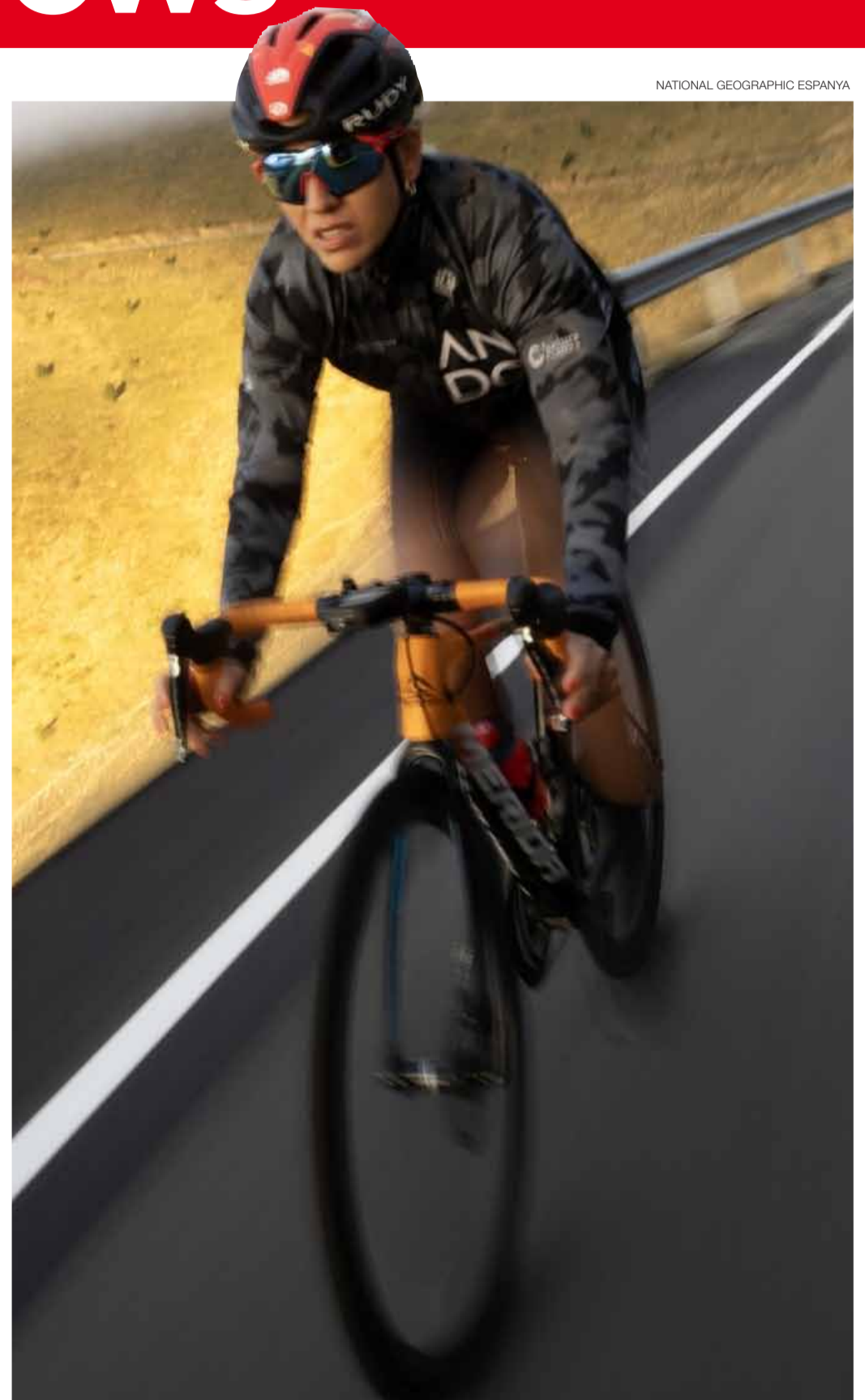
—We don't exclude men! In total, there are 300 people: 70% women and 30% men. The youngest girl in the competition team is 16-years-old, and the average age is 23-25 years old... but there are also 30-year-old female racers. In the club, they are from 35 to 45-years old.

—So, this year, the team starts its active professional life. What competitions will ANDONA team take part in?

—Our girls are very strong! But they are not professionals and have never participated in cycling competitions. For 2024, the team plans that the cyclists will take part in the Spanish Track Championships, four Spanish Cups and eight Catalunya Cups.

Competitions are a great way to get motivated. But cycling is not only about physical form, it is also about being able to adapt, not to be nervous, to ride a bike in the peloton...

We would like to fight to keep this project going. But we need to work hard to gain experience.



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ESPANYA

—This year your main sponsor is Andbank. What does this mean?

—This year for the first time we had sponsors. Previously, in order to pay for all the costs of the competitions' projects of the club, we had some savings, thanks to the backing of our sponsors. We also had financial support from the government. Andbank has been our gold sponsor for three years.

Our team is growing, and we are a national level project. The image of the project is very positive.

Andbank pays us 20,000 euros out of a total budget of 30,000 - a

very small budget that helps us to start the project.

We really like Andbank because of the play on words. ANDONA and Andbank are quite closely related in that sense.

It is important to note that the design of the uniforms was developed in a way to maximise the visibility of Andbank and our other sponsors.

—Andorra is positioned as a country of cyclists. Is it true that the famous cyclists train and live here?

—Yes, it's true, and not only men, but also women professional

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ESPANYA



CECILIA BELLOMO

cyclists. I myself came to live in Andorra with my husband, who had a house here. Little by little, I settled in Andorra. It's quite funny, because we came to Andorra for him, but we stayed for me.

—What can you say about the quality of cycling infrastructure in Andorra? What should be improved?

—It is difficult to do sports here all year round. Cycling is an outdoor sport, and, in Andorra, a mountainous country, the weather conditions in winter don't allow for good training. If it's snowing or raining, it's quite difficult: you go up with no problem, but when you come



down, it's very cold.

We lack a track velodrome where we can train all year round. Andorra is positioned as a cycling territory. Having an indoor velodrome would be very important and would have a

positive impact on the country's image, as well as allow training all year round.

—How popular is cycling in Europe today? How is this sport developing?

—Cycling has grown considerably in recent years and even more so in the case of professional women's cycling. There has been a very strong evolution, just like in football. We now see women who can dedicate themselves to a sport and inspire other girls in a sport that was once considered a man's sport.

—What are the most beautiful roads in Andorra and Spain?

—In Andorra, my favourite road is the one that leads to Port de Cabús, a mountain pass in the Pyrenees on the Andorra-Spain border that connects the parish of La Massana to Alins in Catalonia.

And speaking of Spain, I enjoy the Basque Country immensely. There are a lot of secondary roads there without cars. And the culture is also very important. If you go cycling, you will find a lot of cyclists who train there.

—Some practical tips: how do female athletes train? Is there a special diet?

—The topic of nutrition and psychology is very much evolving. In my time, it was not sufficiently appreciated. Nowadays, female athletes not only run kilometres, but also know how to take care of themselves in all aspects. It's called «invisible training.»

All competitive sports require a lot of effort. Cycling requires the right weight. I don't believe in restrictive diets, I believe in nutritious ones. ●

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