



Entrevista ▶ Parlem amb el director tècnic de La Vuelta

EL PERIÒDIC



Kiko García

La Vuelta's technical director

«In Andorra, there is always a good level of organization»

IRINA RYBALCHENKO
ANDORRA LA VELLA

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La Vuelta's technical director, Kiko García, told us about the race's organization and mentioned some lead teams who were in with a chance to win this year.

–Could you tell me a little about the history of La Vuelta – when did the first race take place? How much has the competition changed since then?

–La Vuelta is one of the oldest cycling events in Spain and in Europe – after Tour de France it is the second biggest one. The first Tour of Spain took place in 1935. The participants took part with heavy iron bicycles and carried their own patches and tools for repairs.

After World War II, the race began touring in Spain and the admiration of this popular sport began.

I can say that the event has been growing year after year. Until 1980, we did not have TV or live broadcasting. After the 80s the situation completely changed. We started using helicopters and the quality of images improved. Consequently, the image of cycling changed as well.

–How many teams and how many cyclists participate in the contest?

–Usually, there are 22 teams with 176 riders.

–Which teams have the biggest chance to win this year?

–I would say the three strongest teams are: Jumbo-Visma, UAE



I would say the three strongest teams are: Jumbo-Visma, UAE Team Emirates and Soudal-Quick-Step

Team Emirates and Soudal-Quick-Step.

–What would you say about the evolution of cycling? What has changed?

–Professional cycling is a rapidly evolving sport. One of the biggest changes is the team structure. The strongest teams have two tracks, one bus, a mobile kitchen, a lot of stuff – 35-40 people needed to support 8 riders, including psychologists, physiotherapists, nutritionists. This has become a problem for us, because we need more and more hotel rooms.

Moreover, now we have a new generation of riders who are young, from 21 years old. Even 10-15 years ago, the age of 28 was considered the ideal age to win a place on the podium. Now, the best riders are

under 25 years old.

The technologies for manufacturing modern bicycles are also rapidly developing.

–What is the weight of a professional bicycle?

–It's about 7 kg.

–And what was the maximum speed recorded on the downhill?

–Speeds have been recorded over 100 km/h.

–What is the budget for the event?

–It depends on the stage. I can say that the strongest teams have a budget of about 35-40 million euros.

–How many journalists cover la Vuelta?

–TV production is carried out by Spanish television networks. We

travel to over 200 countries to provide live broadcasts and evening race coverage.

-Do the same teams compete in the Tour de France and the Vuelta?

-We have 18 teams at the world level. They must participate in both the Tour de France and Vuelta. Then we have two first teams in the second division. The organizers can decide which team they want to invite, and the Spanish teams are usually invited.

-If we compare the Tour de France and Vuelta, which competition is technically more difficult?

-Actually, it is the same event. The Tour de France is the biggest cycling event in the world. Vuelta and Giro d'Italia are other important races that last 3 weeks. Then there are races that last one week. And finally, there are races that last only 1 day.

-You personally know the riders. What is their character? What qualities are most important in cycling?

-These guys are ready for anything, to ride many kilometers in the rain or hard weather, ready to take risks on the downhill. They are very young and very excited!

By the way, many of them live and train in Andorra.

-What is the prize for the 1st place finalists?

-It's very small if we compare it to tennis, for example. Riders earn more money from their personal

contracts. For first place, the best rider receives between 120,000 and 140,000 euros.

The first prize for each stage is 11,000 euros, the second is 5,500 euros, the third is 2,700 euros. The first prize for the best team is 12,500 euros, the second is 7,500 euros, and the third is 5,500 euros. The first place prize money for all the contests is 150,000 euros, the second is 57,985 euros, and the third is 30,000 euros.

Cyclists make money from contracts. There are cyclists who receive 6 million euros for a contact.

-What can you say about the level of organization of the stage in Andorra? Are you satisfied?

-In Andorra, there is always a good level of organization, they can hold sports competitions at the highest level.

-Could you tell us about the security of the event? And about the medical support?

-Safety is our priority. We have 50 people working in the security area, including protection for the riders, 3 doctors following us during each race, and a special medical ambulance in case of a crash.

-La Vuelta 2024: how much time does it take to get the competition prepared?

-We have started already. We already have 6 or 7 stages for the next year.

-Is Andorra on the list?

-This is a secret. But maybe. ☺



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