



Engadin Bike Giro vom 10. bis 12. Juli 2020 //
press release 10. Juli 2020

Engadin Bike Giro
1.st stage 36,1 Kilometer / 1.336 vertical meters
Start: St. Moritz-Dorf / Finish: St. Moritz-Signalbahn

Photos and results: <https://engadin-bike-giro.ch/live-2020/>

Swiss double victory at the start of the Engadin Bike Giro

Simon Vitzthum (jb Brunex Felt) and Alessandra Keller (Thömus) leave the marathon specialists behind them in the first, with 35 km still quite short stage. Under bright sunshine, the first Swiss race after the Corona break started in the heart of St. Moritz. At the Engadin Bike Giro 460 riders were allowed to go on the three stages through the upper Inn Valley, of course with corona conditions: no common feed zone, but with masks before the start and after the finish. The elite riders started out on the course at an astonishingly high speed. Even faster was the young Swiss rider Simon Vitzthum, who immediately launched a solo attack and gained a small lead, which did not last long. Soon a three-man leading group was formed with Vitzthum, his compatriot Lukas Flückiger (Infinity) and the Austrian Daniel Geismayr (Centurion Vaude). Together, the group managed to gain a small lead that lasted until the finish. Before the last descent down to the valley station of the St. Moritz Signalbahn, Vitzthum took the lead, while Geismayr was already a few seconds behind before the Foppettas Trail started. "Simon was much stronger in the first part," Flückiger paid tribute to the winner. Up on the surface Simon rode a lot in the wind. That's why I didn't attack him again at the end. I thought that was fair. And there are still two days to go." Marathon specialist Geismayr had a similar opinion. The rider in the jersey of the Austrian State Champion was quite satisfied with third place: "I was certainly at a disadvantage with the hardtail today. But it wasn't about the ranking, I want to win the overall standings. Today's short distance doesn't suit me very well. Tomorrow, when the longer climbs come, my chances will increase a little bit", the Vorarlberger showed himself confident despite his 21 seconds gap.

Vitzthum (winning time 1:26:30 h) on the other hand can already look back on some successes in the pre-Corona time this year. The Rheinecker (SG), unlike most of the others, already has seven days of racing in his legs before the race was stopped due to the corona pandemic. "I've already been to the Costa Blanca Race and the Mediterranean Epic, where I won two of four stages." He was visibly happy with his renewed victory: "I was hoping there was still some form left. Now I can also present my sponsors well."

Tour de France stage winner Simon Geschke (Team CCC) used the trip on his mountain bike for a successful training session: "Today was my first mountain bike race in 18 years", Geschke said at the finish. However, the German was 6:26 min behind Vitzthum and was classified 21st. "But the result is secondary for me. It is simply fun to shoot through the forest. Technically, I still have potential for improvement when I look at the mountain bike pros here. It's a different world already."



But the real favourites for the day's victory had to give forfait: first and foremost last year's winner Sascha Weber (Majola-Rocky Mountain), who got into a fight with Simon Stiebjahn (Bulls) early on, got a flat tire afterwards, lost his rear thru axle and finally crashed. "Actually, I could go home again right away," he said at the finish. After all, he is exactly 9:00 minutes behind Vitzthum. Simon Stiebjahn (7th), who crossed the finish line in the chase group, was better off. However, the winner was Georg Egger (Lexware, +2:02 min), who crossed the finish line at the Signalbahn at the same time as Julian Schelb (Stop&Go Marten Defence) and two seconds before Stiebjahn, followed by Nicola Rohrbach (Goldwurst Power). "I felt even better today than a week ago in the Czech Republic," Egger summed up his result. However, the man from Obergessertshausen first had to get used to the thin air in the Engadin: "When I went uphill for the first time, I had problems finding my breathing rhythm. The second time it went better. Here at altitude it is important to breathe with concentration. I was at the limit when I was high when I was drinking or taking a gel: Then I was on the edge for a minute, but then I was fine again." All-rounder Stiebjahn, who has already been successful in sprints, over the Olympic distance and in marathons as well as stage races, found the pace "extremely high" at the beginning. "At first I thought: 'You're not that well prepared!', but then it all came back to normal." "Tomorrow we can expect a completely different race characteristic and a completely different race course".

The women's race was dominated over a long distance by German cross-country champion Elisabeth Brandau (Radon EBE), but a crawler made her slower and slower uphill and forced her off the bike in the downhill. Former U23 World Champion Alessandra Keller (Thömus), who had already approached Brandau in the climb, took advantage of this opportunity and confidently secured victory over the first stage in a time of 1:44:37 hours. "I have no problem with the altitude," said the athlete from the canton of Uri: "I live in the valley, but I often train at altitude, so I don't mind. Unusual for the young Swiss athlete was the competition with the men: "Uphill I could benefit from them, but downhill I was quite stuck." Keller is known in the scene for her fast descents.

Second place went to the German Stefanie Dohrn from Team Centurion-Vaude. The specialist for stage races, who has already won the BIKE TransAlp twice, did not expect to do so well here at the Engadin Bike Giro: "The women's field is really strong", said the 28-year-old rider from the Bergisches Land. "I am just happy that there will be a race again at all, that you can present your sponsors, that we can show that we have trained hard in winter and summer. The third place was a big surprise, both for the rider and for the observers of the MTB scene. After all, it was only the third mountain bike race for Steffi Häberlin from the canton of Thurgau, who starts in the jersey of the German Stop&Go Marten Defence Team. "I am inexperienced as I am, I went full throttle right away and had to suffer a lot on the first mountain", the 23-year-old described her first impression. But then she found her way into the race well and was able to enjoy the "cool" descents, "even though I still have a bit of catching up to do technically.

Brandau, who had dominated the race for a long time, lost a lot of time in the last downhill because she had to get off her bike again and again to inflate the tyre and finally even had to run a bit. With a gap of 12:18 min she only finished twelfth and thus probably lost all chances for a good position in the overall standings. Tomorrow, the second stage of the race from Silvaplana will cover 71.2 km and 2,553 metres of altitude difference up to 2,549 m and then, in a rapid descent over the Corviglia, the Olympic and Foppettas Trail back to Silvaplana. The weather forecast predicts a cool and above all wet race.

Further information about the event under www.engadin-bike-giro.ch !