

= 2016 Volta a Catalunya =

The 2016 Volta a Catalunya was a road cycling stage race that took place in Catalonia , Spain , from 21 to 27 March . It was the fifth race of the 2016 UCI World Tour and the 96th edition of the Volta a Catalunya .

The race included seven stages . Two of these included summit finishes , so the favourites for the race were all climbers . Favourites for overall victory included Chris Froome (Team Sky) , Alberto Contador (Tinkoff) , Nairo Quintana (Movistar Team) and the defending champion Richie Porte (BMC Racing Team) : the race was the first meeting of several of the riders expected to feature in the Grand Tours later in the season .

The first two stages were Nacer Bouhanni (Cofidis) . He then withdrew through illness on the third stage , which included the first summit finish . This was won by Dan Martin (Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step) , who took over the overall lead . Martin lost the lead , however , on the next stage , the second summit finish of the race , where Quintana won the stage and took over the overall lead . Quintana defended his lead over the following stage to take the overall victory , seven seconds ahead of Contador , with Martin ten seconds further back in third . Thomas De Gendt (Lotto ? Soudal) won both the mountains and intermediate sprints classifications , with Hugh Carthy (Caja Rural ? Seguros RGA) winning the young rider classification . BMC won the team classification .

= = Route = =

The 2016 Volta a Catalunya included seven stages , all of which were road stages with no time trials . The first two stages were moderately hilly and were possibly suitable for sprinters . The third and fourth stage both included summit finishes . The third stage finished on the climb of La Molina , with the fourth finishing at Port Ainé . The fifth stage included a climb shortly before the finish , giving an opportunity for an attack , before another flat stage on the sixth day . The final stage finished on a hilly circuit in Barcelona .

Following the cancellation of mountain stages in both Paris ? Nice and Tirreno ? Adriatico in the previous weeks , there was some concern before the start of the race that the Volta might also be affected by heavy snow ; the finish at Port Ainé still had 75 centimetres (2 @. @ 5 ft) of snow on the nearby ski slopes .

= = Participating teams = =

The race organisers invited 25 teams to enter the Volta a Catalunya . These included the eighteen UCI WorldTeams , which were automatically invited and obliged to enter a team . Seven Professional Continental teams received wild card invitations Each team could include eight riders . Astana only included seven riders in their team , so 199 riders started the first stage .

= = Pre @-@ race favourites = =

The race was expected to be decided on its two mountainous days and so was particularly suited for climbers . Cyclingnews.com described the list of favourites for victory at the Volta as " formidable " and as including " almost all the main contenders for both the Giro d ? Italia and the Tour de France " . Foremost among these was Chris Froome (Team Sky) , the reigning champion of the Tour de France . Froome 's only previous race in the 2016 season was the Herald Sun Tour , which he won . Froome had a strong team that included two other possible contenders for overall victory : Geraint Thomas (who had won Paris ? Nice) and Wout Poels (who had won the Volta a la Comunitat Valenciana) . Froome 's form was , however , described by his directeur sportif as " an incognito " , given the long period since his last race .

The prominent riders competing with Froome for overall victory included Alberto Contador (Tinkoff) , the reigning champion of the Giro d 'Italia ; Nairo Quintana (Movistar Team) , who was second in the 2016 Tour de France ; Fabio Aru (Astana) , the reigning champion of the Vuelta a España ; and

Richie Porte (BMC Racing Team) , the defending champion of the Volta itself . Other riders with a chance of high placings included Joaquim Rodríguez (Team Katusha) , who had won the race on two previous occasions , and Dan Martin (Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step) , the 2013 Volta winner , as well as many other climbers .

On account of the mountainous terrain , there were few pure sprinters starting the race . The strongest sprinter who was present was Nacer Bouhanni (Cofidis) , who had been strong in Paris ? Nice and had been close to victory in Milan ? San Remo until his chain slipped .

= = Stages = =

= = = Stage 1 = = =

21 March 2016 , Calella to Calella , 175 @.@ 8 km (109 @.@ 2 mi)

The first stage of the Volta covered a 175 @.@ 8 @-@ kilometre (109 @.@ 2 mi) course that started and ended on the coast in Calella ; the course looped through an inland region and crossed several climbs . After first travelling along the coast , the riders turned north as far as Anglès , then turned west to cross the day 's first climb , the second @-@ category Alt de les Guilleries , followed immediately by the third @-@ category Alt de Viladrau . As the roads turned back to the south , there was then a flat section before the biggest climb of the day , the first @-@ category Coli Formic . After the descent came the second @-@ category Alt de Montseny and the final climb of the day , the third @-@ category Alt de Collsacreu . The summit of the final climb came with 18 @.@ 2 kilometres (11 @.@ 3 mi) to the finish line , on a long straight road in Calella .

An early breakaway was formed by Lluís Mas (Caja Rural ? Seguros RGA) , Boris Dron (Wanty ? Groupe Gobert) and Cameron Meyer (Team Dimension Data) ; they built a lead of over six minutes . From the climb of the Coll Formic , however , they were chased by Movistar and Cofidis ; Meyer was the first over the summit to take the lead of the mountains classification , but they were caught soon afterwards . On the Alt de Montseny , Louis Vervaeke (Lotto ? Soudal) broke away , with a six @-@ man group chasing ; meanwhile the main group split in two until Vasil Kiryienka (Sky) pulled the groups back together .

With 15 kilometres (9 @.@ 3 mi) remaining , Sky and Cofidis came to the front of the peloton to control the race for their sprinters . Björn Thurau attacked and was quickly brought back ; Nicolas Roche (Sky) then attacked on a slight uphill section of road with approximately 5 kilometres (3 @.@ 1 mi) remaining and built a twelve @-@ second lead . He was caught , however , by Tinkoff and Orica ? GreenEDGE within the final 2 kilometres (1 @.@ 2 mi) . After Katusha led the peloton under the flamme rouge , Orica ? GreenEDGE opened up the sprint with Simon Gerrans . Ben Swift (Sky) and Nacer Bouhanni (Cofidis) followed Gerrans and Bouhanni came past to win the stage . Swift was second , with Gerrans third .

= = = Stage 2 = = =

22 March , Mataró to Olot , 178 @.@ 7 km (111 @.@ 0 mi)

The second stage was raced over a 178 @.@ 7 @-@ kilometre (111 @.@ 0 mi) course from Mataró to Olot . The stage was generally flat , with two categorised climbs . The first of these was the third @-@ category Alt de Can Bordoï after 30 kilometres (18 @.@ 6 mi) . The second was the first @-@ category Alt de Els Angels ; at the summit of the climb there were 70 kilometres (43 mi) remaining . In the final 15 kilometres (9 @.@ 3 mi) , the roads rose again , although there was not a categorised climb and the final kilometres were flat . There was a 270 ° turn with just over 1 kilometre (0 @.@ 62 mi) remaining ; after this the road was straight all the way to the finish .

Before the stage started , there was a minute 's silence to acknowledge the bombings in Brussels that morning , with many riders ? especially the Belgians ? wearing black armbands . There was a four @-@ man early breakaway that included two Belgians ? Boris Dron (Wanty ? Groupe Gobert) and Thomas De Gendt (Lotto ? Soudal) ? alongside Kamil Gradek (Verva ActiveJet) and Maxime

Bouet (Etixx ? QuickStep) . Dron was first across both categorised climbs , with De Gendt winning both intermediate sprints and the associated bonus seconds . Dron fell away from the break with 30 kilometres (19 mi) remaining ; shortly afterwards De Gendt attacked alone . About 7 kilometres (4 @. @ 3 mi) later , however , he gave up on his effort , as Cofidis were chasing too hard in the main peloton .

In the final 10 kilometres (6 @. @ 2 mi) , there were several teams attempting to control the peloton ? including Team Sky with Chris Froome sitting in second place in an attempt to keep him out of danger . Movistar moved to the front with 3 kilometres (1 @. @ 9 mi) remaining , with FDJ and Orica ? GreenEDGE also at the front . In the final 1 kilometre (0 @. @ 62 mi) , however , Cofidis moved back to the front , with Geoffrey Soupe leading out Bouhanni . Bouhanni easily won the sprint , with Gianni Meersman (Etixx ? Quick @- @ Step) second and Philippe Gilbert (BMC) third . Bouhanni therefore extended his lead to 14 seconds ahead of Swift ? who finished outside the top 10 ? and De Gendt , who moved up to third thanks to the bonus seconds he won . Bouhanni revealed after the stage that he had been suffering from a sore stomach and had visited the race doctor .

= = = Stage 3 = = =

23 March , Girona to La Molina , 172 @. @ 1 km (106 @. @ 9 mi)

The third stage included the first summit finish of the race . It covered a 172 @. @ 1 @- @ kilometre (106 @. @ 9 mi) route from Girona to the La Molina ski resort . The route generally took the riders north @- @ west , with four first @- @ category climbs along the way . After passing through Olot , where Stage 2 had finished , the riders crossed the Alt de Coubet after 63 kilometres (39 @. @ 15 mi) . There was then a long climb to the Alt de Toses , the highest climb of the day , which came with 56 kilometres (34 @. @ 80 mi) to the finish line . After the descent , the riders passed through Alp , then began the first climb to La Molina , a 12 @. @ 6 @- @ kilometre (7 @. @ 8 mi) climb at an average gradient of 4 @. @ 2 % , including a descent towards the top . The riders then descended back into Alp and repeated the climb ; the finish of the stage came at the ski station itself .

The day 's early breakaway was formed by seven riders : Julian Alaphilippe (Etixx ? Quick @- @ Step) , Koen Bouwman (LottoNL ? Jumbo) , Kévin Reza (FDJ) , Johann Van Zyl (Dimension Data) , Jan Hirt (CCC ? Sprandi ? Polkowice) , Huub Duyn (Roompot ? Oranje Peloton) and Alex Howes (Cannondale) . On the day 's first climb , Bouhanni lost several minutes due to his stomach illness ; after 90 kilometres (56 mi) he was over seven minutes behind the peloton and was forced to retire from the race . Howes and Duyn attacked the breakaway and had a 31 @- @ second lead going into the first of the two ascents of La Molina . During the climb , Pieter Weening (Roompot) attacked from the peloton and caught the two breakaway riders ; almost immediately he attacked alone and built a gap . Meanwhile , Team Sky led the peloton with all eight riders , with Movistar close behind ; they quickly caught Howes and Duyn . Weening had about a minute 's advantage at the top of the climb .

During the descent , the peloton chased hard and reduced Weening 's advantage to 30 seconds , with Sky still leading the peloton . Louis Meintjes (Lampre ? Merida) crashed shortly before the final climb began . On the climb , Louis Vervaeke attacked with 10 kilometres (6 mi) remaining and passed Weening . Within the final 5 kilometres (3 @. @ 1 mi) , the peloton caught him and the peloton stayed together , led by Sky , as the road descended briefly before the final ascent to the finishing line . Wout Poels (Sky) attacked as the road began to rise , but was followed by Contador . Quintana attacked next and was chased by Ilnur Zakarin (Katusha) and Contador . Richie Porte attempted to escape the group , but he was chased down by Froome . Quintana then attacked again and was followed by Dan Martin , who then passed Quintana and moved into the lead . Tejay van Garderen (BMC) chased , with Contador following , but Martin was able to stay away to the finish line . Contador finished two seconds back , with Romain Bardet (AG2R La Mondiale) third and van Garderen fourth , all on the same time . With the bonus seconds , Martin moved into the overall lead , six seconds ahead of Contador .

=== Stage 4 ===

24 March , Bagà to Port Ainé , 172 @. @ 2 km (107 @. @ 0 mi)

The fourth stage included the second and final summit finish of the race . It covered a 172 @. @ 2 @- @ kilometre (107 @. @ 0 mi) route from Bagà to Port Ainé , with four categorised climbs on the route . The first climb came at the very beginning of the day 's racing ; it was a third @- @ category climb whose summit came 5 @. @ 6 kilometres (3 @. @ 5 mi) into the stage . There was then a long flat section ? which passed through Alp again ? before the special @- @ category Port de Cantó . After a steep descent , there was a first @- @ category climb , followed by a descent . The final climb to Port Ainé was 18 @. @ 5 kilometres (11 @. @ 5 mi) at 6 @. @ 8 % .

The early breakaway was formed by Philippe Gilbert (BMC) , Imanol Erviti (Movistar) , Rubén Plaza (Orica ? GreenEDGE) , Thomas De Gendt (Lotto ? Soudal) , Laurens ten Dam (Giant ? Alpecin) , Kristijan ?urasek (Lampre ? Merida) , Pieter Weening (Roompot) , Boris Dron (Wanty ? Groupe Gobert) , Alexey Tsatevich (Katusha) and Ben Swift (Team Sky) . Dron won the special @- @ category climb , with the lead over the peloton at around ten minutes . The breakaway then broke up , with De Gendt and Erviti continuing together at the front of the race ; on the penultimate climb , they had a seven @- @ minute advantage on the peloton . Weening made contact with them again just before the summit of the climb and they collaborated on the descent . Coming towards the base of the final climb , Wout Poels (Sky) attacked from the peloton and linked up with Swift ; despite their work , they were unable to build a significant advantage as Contador chased them .

On the final climb , Erviti attacked , but he was soon passed by Weening , who built up a minute 's lead . Poels was eventually caught with 5 kilometres (3 @. @ 1 mi) remaining , while De Gendt had caught up with Weening again . There were several attacks in the peloton , from Mikel Nieve (Sky) , Robert Gesink (LottoNL ? Jumbo) and Miguel Ángel López (Astana) , but the first strong attack came from van Garderen . Contador eventually chased him , with Porte , Quintana and Martin following , but Martin was soon dropped . Van Garderen was caught by Contador 's group and Contador and Quintana then dropped the BMC riders . Meanwhile , De Gendt passed Weening and continued solo to take the stage win . Quintana attacked in the final 1 kilometre (0 @. @ 62 mi) and finished second , 15 seconds ahead of Porte and Contador . Quintana therefore took over the race lead , with Contador eight seconds behind in second .

After the stage , Contador blamed his time loss to Quintana on the effort he had put into chasing down attacks in the final kilometres , in particular that of van Garderen . Porte also praised van Garderen 's efforts and was pleased with their collaboration . Froome , meanwhile , lost 37 seconds to Quintana and his directeur sportif , Nicolas Portal , said that he " didn 't have the legs " to follow the leaders ' attacks .

=== Stage 5 ===

25 March , Rialp to Valls , 187 @. @ 2 km (116 @. @ 3 mi)

After two consecutive summit finishes , the fifth stage was simpler , with a 187 @. @ 2 @- @ kilometre (116 @. @ 3 mi) stage with just two categorised climbs . The route took the riders south from Rialp to Valls . The first 65 kilometres (40 mi) of the stage was fairly flat , before the second @- @ category Port d 'Àger climb . The roads continued to be flat until the final 40 kilometres (25 mi) of the stage . First there was an uncategorised climb with a summit around 35 kilometres (22 mi) before the finish . Then , in the final 15 kilometres (9 @. @ 3 mi) , there was the Alt de Lilla , a 4 @. @ 1 @- @ kilometre (2 @. @ 5 mi) , second @- @ category climb with an average gradient of 4 @. @ 8 % . After the final descent , the road slightly to the finish .

No breakaway was formed in the first two @- @ and @- @ a @- @ half hours of racing . Dan Martin won the day 's first intermediate sprint , earning him three bonus seconds , with Contador taking one second for third place at the sprint . Eventually , after more than 100 kilometres (62 mi) of racing , a seven @- @ rider breakaway was formed . The riders in the breakaway were Carlos Verona (Etixx ? Quick @- @ Step) , Dario Cataldo (Astana) , Jan Polanc (Lampre ? Merida) , Kanstantsin Sivtsov (Dimension Data) , Tosh Van der Sande (Lotto ? Soudal) , and Gaëtan Bille and Frederik

Veuchelen (both Wanty ? Groupe Gobert) . With 15 kilometres (9 @. @ 3 mi) remaining , the breakaway had two minutes ' lead . On the Alt de Lilla , Poels attacked alone . At the summit , Poels had a lead of 20 seconds over the other breakaway riders . Cataldo and Verona attempted to chase him down , but their failure to collaborate in the chase meant that Sivtsov and Bille were able to catch them ; Poels 's lead extended to 30 seconds . In the final kilometres , the chase group got closer to him , but he was able to take the stage win , eleven seconds ahead of the chasing group .

In the main peloton , Quintana followed Contador on the climb . Daniel Navarro (Cofidis) , Rigoberto Urán (Cannondale) and Romain Bardet (AG2R La Mondiale) all attempted attacks but were unable to escape . The peloton of 66 riders finished 33 seconds behind Poels , with no change to the overall standings .

== = Stage 6 == =

26 March , Sant Joan Despí to Vilanova i la Geltrú , 197 @. @ 2 km (122 @. @ 5 mi)

The sixth stage took the riders 197 @. @ 2 kilometres (122 @. @ 5 mi) from Sant Joan Despí to Vilanova i la Geltrú . The riders initially travelled along the coast , crossing the third @- @ category Alt de la Maradona , then turned inland for a long loop . The day 's most significant climb , the second @- @ category Alt de la Ventoses , came after 110 kilometres (68 mi) , but the roads were otherwise mainly flat . The route turned back towards the coast to the finish .

One of the principal sprinters left in the race , Sky 's Ben Swift , pulled out of the stage before the start due to illness . There was again a fast start to the stage . Riders attempted to form a breakaway , but the teams with overall favourites sought to give their riders a chance at contesting the intermediate sprint that came after 12 kilometres (7 @. @ 5 mi) . The sprint was won by Dan Martin , putting him just one second off the overall podium . After another 50 kilometres (31 mi) of racing , the day 's breakaway was finally formed by eleven riders : Petr Vako? (Etixx ? Quick @- @ Step) , Esteban Chaves (Orica ? GreenEDGE) , Laurens Ten Dam (Giant ? Alpecin) , Ryder Hesjedal (Trek ? Segafredo) , Bert @- @ Jan Lindeman (LottoNL ? Jumbo) , Alex Howes (Cannondale) , Cameron Meyer (Dimension Data) , Axel Domont (AG2R La Mondiale) , Romain Hardy and Rudy Molard (both Cofidis) , and Marco Minnaard (Wanty ? Groupe Gobert) . Around halfway through the stage , they had a lead of five minutes but , due to the flat terrain , there were several teams with sprinters who were determined to bring the break back . Lampre ? Merida did most of the work at the front of the peloton ; several riders also fell away from the breakaway during the course of the stage . In the final 30 kilometres (19 mi) , Trek ? Segafredo joined in the chase ; Tinkoff then tried to split the peloton in the crosswinds but were unsuccessful .

With 15 kilometres (9 @. @ 3 mi) remaining , the breakaway had a 40 @- @ second lead . Vako? made a failed attempt at a solo attack ; the lead was reduced to 20 seconds with 7 kilometres (4 @. @ 3 mi) remaining . Meyer , Lindeman , Vako? and Molard attacked again and stayed clear of the peloton into the final kilometre . The chasing group was close , however , and Meyer made another attack ; he was caught in the final 100 metres (330 ft) . Davide Cimolai (Lampre ? Merida) used the slipstream of the breakaway riders to launch his sprint and won the stage comfortably . It was Cimolai 's first ever World Tour victory , and Lampre ? Merida 's first victory at any level in 2016 .

== = Stage 7 == =

27 March , Barcelona to Barcelona , 136 @. @ 4 km (84 @. @ 8 mi)

The final stage followed a 136 @. @ 4 @- @ kilometre (84 @. @ 8 mi) course that started and finished in Barcelona . The stage began by taking the riders north out of the city as far as Ullastrell , where there was a second @- @ category climb . The route then turned back south , crossing a third @- @ category climb as it returned to Barcelona after 80 kilometres (50 mi) of racing . There were then eight laps of a 6 @. @ 5 @- @ kilometre (4 @. @ 0 mi) finishing circuit , each lap including the third @- @ category climb of the Alt de Montjuïc .

Early in the stage , Dan Martin came third in an intermediate sprint , giving him a bonus second . He

was level on time with Porte , but moved ahead of him into third place thanks to his better placings through the race . There was then a 12 @-@ man breakaway , whose lead was over three minutes at the start of the first circuit . There were attacks in the breakaway group from Lluís Mas (Caja Rural ? Seguros RGA) and Matej Mohorič (Lampre ? Merida) . In the peloton , there was a brief attack by Contador , then a more significant attack from Fabio Aru . Aru was joined by Barguil and Vervaeke and they gained half a minute . They were brought back by Quintana 's Movistar team ; Froome then immediately made an attack . Quintana chased the move down himself , with Contador , Rodríguez and Navarro following , and the group was caught by the peloton . Hugh Carthy (Caja Rural ? Seguros RGA) also made an unsuccessful attack .

Mohorič was passed by Alexey Tsatevich (Katusha) and Primož Roglič (LottoNL ? Jumbo) , who went on to contest a two @-@ man sprint . Tsatevich won the sprint , despite an early celebration that nearly allowed Roglič to come past him . The peloton finished together , 14 seconds behind , with Jarlinson Pantano (IAM) winning the sprint for third place . Quintana therefore sealed his overall victory , with Contador second and Martin third .

= = Post @-@ race analysis = =

= = = Reactions = = =

Quintana described himself as " very pleased and proud " with his victory , describing it as one of the toughest races of his career , especially after his team was reduced to five riders in the final stages . He said , however , that he did not believe he was significantly ahead of Contador , Froome or his other rivals for the major races later in the season , saying that " there 's a long way to go for the Tour " . Contador , meanwhile , described himself as " very happy with how I 'm feeling " , though he described it as a " pity " that he had lost Paris ? Nice by four seconds and the Volta a Catalunya by seven . He suggested that he could have won the race had he ridden differently on Stage 4 to Port @-@ Ainé . Nicolas Portal , Chris Froome 's directeur sportif , described his form as " very encouraging " , saying that all he lacked was the top @-@ end speed when the other riders accelerated at the end of the mountain stages . One other prominent performance was that of Hugh Carthy , who finished ninth overall and won the young rider classification . He described it as " by far the best [he 'd] ever performed " ; Cyclingnews.com described it as a " breakthrough performance " .

= = = UCI World Tour standings = = =

The top ten riders in the Volta a Catalunya general classification were awarded points in the 2016 UCI World Tour competition . Points were also awarded for finishing in the top five places on each stage . With the points from the Volta , Quintana entered the rankings in eighth place , while Contador moved from tenth to third . Despite his fourth place , Porte was unable to defend his first place in the rankings , as Peter Sagan (Tinkoff) had won points from both the E3 Harelbeke and the Gent ? Wevelgem and moved into the lead . Tinkoff also moved into the lead of the teams ' rankings , while Australia remained top in the nations ' rankings .

= = Classifications = =

In the 2016 Volta a Catalunya , four different jerseys were awarded . The most important of these was the general classification , calculated by adding each rider 's finishing times on each stage . Time bonuses were awarded to the first three riders at the intermediate sprints on each stage (3 , 2 and 1 seconds respectively) and at each stage finish (10 , 6 and 4 seconds) . The leader wore a white and green jersey . A related competition was the youth classification : the highest @-@ ranked rider born after 1 January 1991 was the leader of this classification and wore a " design " jersey .

Additionally , there was a sprints classification , the leader of which was awarded a white jersey . In

the sprints classification , riders received points for finishing in the top three at intermediate sprint points during each stage . There was also a mountains classification , the leadership of which was marked by a red jersey . Points for this classification were won by the first riders to the top of each categorised climb , with more points available for the higher @-@ categorised climbs .

There was also a classification for teams , in which the times of the best three cyclists per team on each stage were added together ; the leading team at the end of the race was the team with the lowest total time .

== Classification leadership table ==

== Final classifications ==