

= 2016 Gent ? Wevelgem =

The 2016 Gent ? Wevelgem , (officially Gent ? Wevelgem ? In Flanders Fields) was a one @-@ day cycling classic that took place on 27 March 2016 . It was the 78th edition of the Gent ? Wevelgem race and the seventh event of the 2016 UCI World Tour . The race followed a 243 @-@ kilometre (151 mi) course that started in Deinze and ended in Wevelgem in Belgium , with a portion of the race spent in northern France . The race included ten climbs , several of them cobbled , which provided the principal difficulty in the race . The last and most difficult climb was the Kemmelberg . The favourites for the race included Alexander Kristoff (Team Katusha) , Fabian Cancellara (Trek ? Segafredo) and Peter Sagan (Tinkoff) .

The race was won by Sagan , who escaped with Cancellara and Sep Vanmarcke (LottoNL ? Jumbo) on the Kemmelberg after a series of splits and had occurred in the first half of the race . They were joined by Vyacheslav Kuznetsov (Team Katusha) , who had been in the day 's early breakaway , and the four @-@ man group came to the finish together . Sagan won the sprint , with Vanmarcke second and Kuznetsov third .

During the French portion of the race , the Belgian rider Antoine Demoiiti   (Wanty ? Groupe Gobert) crashed and was then hit by a race motorbike . He died that evening .

= = Route = =

The route of the 2016 Gent ? Wevelgem was significantly changed from 2015 edition and from previous editions . Several different climbs were used . Central among these was the decision to use a different side of the core climb in the race , the Kemmelberg . In previous years , the route chosen had a maximum gradient of 17 % , but the 2016 edition used a road that had a section at 23 % , described by Cycling Weekly as " excruciating " . The race director , Hans De Clercq , gave three reasons for the change : the cobblestones had recently been relaid ; the 2016 edition marked the 60th anniversary of the inclusion of the Kemmelberg , with the difficult side used on that occasion ; and there was a desire to give the race more of a balance between sprinters and attackers . COTACOL , a Belgian work that lists and grades all the climbs in the country , rated the side of the Kemmelberg used in 2016 as the most difficult climb in Flanders : its grading of 183 points was more than the Koppenberg (172) , the Muur van Geraardsbergen (171) or the traditional route up the Kemmelberg (152) .

The race started in Deinze in East Flanders , 20 kilometres (12 mi) from Ghent . The route took the riders immediately into West Flanders . After 77 kilometres (48 mi) of flat roads , they came near the coast at Veurne . Here the route took the riders south into northern France ; after 119 kilometres (74 mi) the peloton passed through Wormhout , then continued south of Steenvoorde , where there were the first climbs in the race . The first eight climbs came quickly , packed into a 32 kilometres (20 mi) stretch of road . The first climb was the Catsberg ; this was followed by the Kokereelberg , the Vert Mon , the C  te du Ravel Put and the C  te de la Blanchisserie . The riders then returned to Belgium and climbed the Baneberg , the Kemmelberg and the Monteberg . There was then a flatter section , looping through Mesen , Ploegsteer and Nieuwkerke . The final two climbs were a repeat of the Baneberg ? Kemmelberg combination . At the top of the final climb , there were 34 kilometres (21 mi) of fairly flat roads to the finish in Wevelgem .

= = Participating teams = =

There were 25 teams selected to take part in the race . All 18 UCI WorldTeams were automatically invited ; the race organisers gave wildcard invitations to seven UCI Professional Continental teams . These included two Belgian teams (Wanty ? Groupe Gobert and Topsport Vlaanderen ? Baloise) , two French teams (Direct   nergie and Cofidis) , a Dutch team (Roompot ? Oranje Peloton) , an Italian team (Bardiani ? CSF) and a Polish team (CCC ? Sprandi ? Polkowice) . Each team could include eight riders . Orica ? BikeExchange 's team of seven was the only one submitted with fewer than eight riders , but three riders (Team Sky 's Ian Stannard , Team Katusha 's Alexander Kristoff

and AG2R La Mondiale 's Alexis Gougeard) did not start the race ; 196 riders therefore departed from Deinze .

= = Pre @-@ race favourites = =

There was some uncertainty before the race about whether it would favour the sprinters or those who attacked on the hills . Among the sprinters , Alexander Kristoff , the winner of the 2014 Tour of Flanders , was the favourite , with André Greipel (Lotto ? Soudal) , Arnaud Démare (FDJ) , Mark Cavendish (Team Dimension Data) , Elia Viviani (Team Sky) and Fernando Gaviria (Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step) also considered possible winners . Kristoff , however , had to pull out of the race due to a fever that started after E3 Harelbeke two days earlier .

There were also many riders who had the potential to attack earlier in the race . These included Tom Boonen (Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step) , who had won the race on three previous occasions , and his teammates Niki Terpstra and Zdeněk Štybar . Peter Sagan (Tinkoff) , the reigning world champion , had won the race in 2013 with a solo attack ; he also had the ability to perform strongly in a sprint . He had not yet won a race in 2016 . Other riders likely to attack early in the race included Fabian Cancellara (Trek ? Segafredo) , Luke Rowe (Sky) , Sep Vanmarcke (LottoNL ? Jumbo) , Greg Van Avermaet (BMC Racing Team) and Edvald Boasson Hagen (Dimension Data) , who had won the 2009 edition of the race .

The 2015 winner , Luca Paolini , was not present to defend his title due to his suspension following a positive test for cocaine during the 2015 Tour de France .

= = Race summary = =

The race took place in windy weather . Combined with a crash , these conditions caused the peloton to break into several groups in the first part of the race . The first group was a five @-@ rider breakaway , composed of Lieuwe Westra (Astana) , Pavel Brutt (Tinkoff) , Josef Černý (CCC ? Sprandi ? Polkowice) , Jonas Ricksaert (Topsport Vlaanderen ? Baloise) and Simon Pellaud (IAM Cycling) . Their lead extended to eleven minutes at one point , but was quickly reduced when the pace of the main peloton increased . This broke the peloton into echelons . By the halfway stage , there was a chasing group 90 seconds behind that contained many of the race favourites , including Boonen , Boasson Hagen , Cancellara , Sagan , Tiesj Benoot and Jens Debusschere (both Lotto ? Soudal) , and Van Avermaet . They were chased by another group that was led by Trek ? Segafredo and LottoNL ? Jumbo ; this group was around a minute further behind . With 115 kilometres (71 mi) remaining , the first chasing group caught the breakaway ; 24 kilometres (15 mi) later , this group was in turn caught by the other chasing group . There was therefore a 50 @-@ rider group at the head of the race .

There was calm in the peloton for a while , with five climbs remaining to be raced . Trek ? Segafredo controlled the peloton over the Baneberg and the first climb of the Kemmelberg . Between the two climbs , however , Debusschere crashed and was forced to retire from the race . On the Monteborg , with 66 kilometres (41 mi) remaining , five riders attacked . These were Matteo Trentin , who initiated the move , Brutt , Benoot , Daniel Oss (BMC Racing Team) and Giacomo Nizzolo (Trek ? Segafredo) . They were chased by Dimension Data and LottoNL ? Jumbo , but it took 15 kilometres (9 @-@ 3 mi) to bring them back . When they were caught , Vyacheslav Kuznetsov (Katusha) attacked alone and had a minute 's lead by the second climb of the Baneberg .

Vanmarcke attacked on the Baneberg , but was chased down by the peloton , led by Manuel Quinziato (BMC) . On the second climb of the Kemmelberg , from the difficult side , Cancellara attacked and was followed by Vanmarcke and Sagan . They caught Kuznetsov and formed a four @-@ man leading group . They were chased at first by a group of Luke Rowe , Zdeněk Štybar and Greg Van Avermaet , but were able to increase their advantage . The chasing group was caught by the peloton and the four leaders came to the finish together with a comfortable advantage . They had a lead of 40 seconds until they slowed down significantly in preparation for the sprint .

Kuznetsov was the first to sprint ; he was followed , however , by Sagan , who came past him to take the race victory . Vanmarcke finished just ahead of Kuznetsov to take second place , with Cancellara finishing fourth . The peloton finished eleven seconds behind , with Démare winning the sprint for fifth place .

= = = Death of Antoine Demoitié = = =

The race was marred by the death of Antoine Demoitié (Wanty ? Groupe Gobert) . Demoitié crashed with four other riders near Sainte @-@ Marie @-@ Cappel during the French section of the race , with approximately 115 kilometres (71 mi) of racing remaining . After the crash , he was lying on the road and was hit by a race motorbike that was following the riders . Demoitié was initially taken to hospital in Ypres before being transferred to the intensive care unit of the university hospital in Lille , due to the severity of his injuries . His team released a statement describing his condition as " extremely serious " ; several hours later , a spokesman for the local gendarmerie confirmed that he had died . The crash was seen by Julien Jurdie , a directeur sportif for the AG2R La Mondiale team , who said that Demoitié had been part of a group chasing to get back to the peloton , travelling downhill at around 70 kilometres per hour (43 mph) . He said that , when the riders crashed , there was no time for the motorbike rider to brake and he immediately recognised that the incident was very serious .

= = Results = =

= = Post @-@ race analysis = =

= = = Reaction to Demoitié 's death = = =

There was widespread sadness among those involved in professional cycling following Demoitié 's death , especially after a second young Belgian cyclist , Roubaix ? Lille Métropole 's Daan Myngheer , died after suffering a heart attack at the Critérium International . Sep Vanmarcke tweeted " Suddenly a 2nd place no longer important after this terrible news . " Other riders , especially those in Demoitié 's Wanty ? Groupe Gobert team , also expressed their sadness . The team 's directeur sportif , Hilaire Van der Schueren , paid tribute to his rider , saying that he was " happy because he was a cyclist " . Demoitié had made his first appearance at a World Tour race at E3 Harelbeke two days previously and had been in the day 's main breakaway . Following his strong performance , he had asked to be allowed to stay in the main peloton in search of a good finish in Wevelgem . The team withdrew from the Three Days of De Panne the following week .

As well as the tributes to Demoitié , many riders also called for improved safety for professional bike races . Many riders had been involved with crashes with race motorbikes in the previous few years , including Peter Sagan , Taylor Phinney , Greg Van Avermaet , Sérgio Paulinho , Jakob Fuglsang , Jesse Sergent , Sylvain Chavanel and Stig Broeckx . Alberto Contador tweeted " Regulations on motos in races are needed NOW " , while other riders called for clear rules , speed limits and exams for race motorbike riders . Marcel Kittel described rider safety as an issue that needed the same priority as anti @-@ doping . Wanty ? Groupe Gobert 's press officer said that the motorbike rider was experienced and was not to blame for the accident . The president of cycling 's governing body , the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) , said that there would be an emergency meeting of its Road Commission to discuss the incident ; he also said that they needed to wait for the result of the police enquiry and that it was important to make sure that the " right decisions " were made .

= = = Reaction to the race = = =

Peter Sagan 's victory in the race was his first since winning the rainbow jersey at the world

championships road race the previous year . It was the end of what Cycling Weekly called a " frustrating run " that had included second place at E3 Harelbeke two days previously . He said that he was very happy to have won in the rainbow jersey , especially as Gent ? Wevelgem was an important race to him . He said that he was determined not to make the same mistake as he had in previous races by working hard in the final part of the race ; Kuznetsov 's early sprint then set him up for his own sprint .

Vanmarcke said that he was " pleased with second place " as he had had a difficult race . He was trapped in the second echelon when the race split early on and it took a " long pursuit " to get back to the leaders . Although he was not quite able to follow Cancellara and Sagan on the final climb , he rode aggressively on the descent and got back to them . He said that he was very tired at the end of the race and that it was hard to beat Sagan and Cancellara . Cancellara said " for sure it ? s happy Easter day but it ? s not happy Gent @-@ Wevelgem day " as he finished fourth out of four riders in the final sprint . He was happy , however , that he had always been at the front of the race and had not crashed . Cyclingnews.com wrote that he would still be the " principal favourite " the following Sunday for the Tour of Flanders .

= = = UCI World Tour standings = = =

Following his second place in E3 Harelbeke and his victory in Gent ? Wevelgem , Sagan moved into the lead of the season @-@ long UCI World Tour competition , seven points ahead of Richie Porte (BMC) . Sagan 's teammate Alberto Contador had moved up into third place after the Volta a Catalunya ; Tinkoff moved into the lead of the teams ' rankings . Australia remained at the top of the nations ' rankings .