

= 2015 Vattenfall Cyclassics =

The 2015 Vattenfall Cyclassics was a one @-@ day classic cycling race that took place in Northern Germany on 23 August . It was the 20th edition of the Vattenfall Cyclassics one @-@ day cycling race , and was the twenty @-@ third race of the 2015 UCI World Tour . The race started in Kiel and ended in Hamburg . The course was mainly flat ; the race generally suits sprinters , such as the defending champion , Alexander Kristoff (Team Katusha) .

Despite several attacks in the late part of the race , the outcome was decided in a sprint finish . Pre @-@ race favourite Marcel Kittel (Giant ? Alpecin) was dropped on the final climb , while Mark Cavendish (Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step) was caught up in a crash with 3 kilometres (2 mi) remaining . Kristoff started the sprint , but André Greipel (Lotto ? Soudal) was able to follow him and come past to take his first victory in a one @-@ day World Tour race . With Kristoff finishing second , third place was taken by Giacomo Nizzolo (Trek Factory Racing) .

= = Route and background = =

The Vattenfall Cyclassics was the only UCI World Tour race held in Germany during the 2015 season . To celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the race , the organizers picked a new route , starting on board of the ferry MS Stena Scandinavica in the harbour of Kiel , and heading in a southwesterly direction towards Hamburg . The overall distance was shortened from 247 @. @ 2 kilometres (153 @. @ 6 mi) in the previous year to 221 @. @ 3 kilometres (137 @. @ 5 mi) . The final kilometers inside the city remained the same , with the finish line on Mönckebergstrasse . The course was largely flat , thereby suiting sprinters . However , the 0 @. @ 7 kilometres (0 @. @ 4 mi) Waseberg with a gradient of up to 15 % was to be climbed three times . The first ascent of the Waseberg came with 68 @. @ 9 kilometres (42 @. @ 8 mi) left to ride , the second and third at 28 @. @ 3 kilometres (17 @. @ 6 mi) and 15 @. @ 5 kilometres (9 @. @ 6 mi) respectively . Race director Roland Hofer said of the course : " Although the race profile may appear more suitable for the sprinters , it can ultimately be won by all types of great rider , and it ? s exactly this kind of race that ? s needed for a well @-@ balanced WorldTour . "

The World Tour came to Germany in the midst of a " renaissance " in German cycling , with the latest successes rejuvenating the country 's interest in the sport after a series of setbacks during the past , doping @-@ stricken years . For the first time since 2008 , German public broadcaster ARD decided to provide live footage of the race . The route from Kiel to Hamburg was also chosen to boost the two cities ' joint bid for the 2024 Summer Olympics . This was to be the last time the race would run under the name of Vattenfall Cyclassics , as Vattenfall announced that they would not extend their sponsorship . The energy provider had a significant role in the establishment of the race in 1996 , under its earlier name HEW . The event will now be forced to search for a new sponsor to provide the estimated 800 @. @ 000 Euro previously supplied by Vattenfall , about a third of the race 's budget .

= = Teams = =

All 17 UCI WorldTeams are automatically entered and obliged to send a team to the race . Three UCI Professional Continental teams were also invited as wildcards . All twenty teams entered eight riders each , meaning that 160 riders took to the course .

= = Pre @-@ race favourites = =

Given the nature of the course , a large number of sprint specialists came to the race , including local favourites Marcel Kittel (Giant ? Alpecin) and André Greipel (Lotto ? Soudal) . Greipel came to the Cyclassics after having recently won a career @-@ best four stages at the Tour de France , and another stage win at the Eneco Tour . Meanwhile , Kittel rode as captain for Giant ? Alpecin , while his teammate , 2013 winner John Degenkolb , went to compete in the Vuelta a España . Kittel

had returned to competition after an illness just a week earlier at the Tour de Pologne , winning a stage . He would race with the support of his sprinter teammates Nikias Arndt and Ramon Sinkeldam . Both Greipel and Kittel gave hope to the local fans for a German victory . Since the event was renamed from HEW Cyc classics into Vattenfall Cyc classics in 2006 , Degenkolb had been the only German winner , in 2013 . Coming into the race carrying his good form from the Tour de France , Greipel was seen as the more likely contender for race victory than Kittel . Gerald Ciolek (MTN ? Qhubeka) and Rick Zabel (BMC Racing Team) were two more sprinters considered to have ambitions to win the race , while an attack by Tony Martin (Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step) was deemed " a distinct possibility " . For Martin , it was the first race after he broke his collarbone while wearing the yellow jersey at the Tour de France .

The main non @-@ German favourites for the win were the previous year 's winner Alexander Kristoff , (Team Katusha) and Mark Cavendish (Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step) . While Kristoff came from a " disappointing Tour de France " , Cavendish could count on the support of teammates Mark Renshaw and Tom Boonen , who was preparing for the Road World Championships in late September . Arnaud Démare (FDJ) , who had won the race in 2012 , was competing , as was 2011 winner Edvald Boasson Hagen (MTN ? Qhubeka) . Other riders in contention for the victory were Ben Swift , Elia Viviani (both Team Sky) , Michael Albasini (Orica ? GreenEDGE) , Samuel Dumoulin (AG2R La Mondiale) , Sacha Modolo (Lampre ? Merida) , Moreno Hofland (LottoNL ? Jumbo) , and Giacomo Nizzolo (Trek Factory Racing) . Tinkoff ? Saxo aimed to defy the odds of a sprint finish , and named Matti Breschel as their captain . Sam Bennett (Bora ? Argon 18) was named as a " very strong outsider " .

= = Race report = =

Shortly after the peloton left the ferry in Kiel 's harbour , an early breakaway formed , including Jan Bárta (Bora ? Argon 18) , Matteo Bono (Lampre ? Merida) , Alex Dowsett (Movistar Team) , and Martin Mortensen (Cult Energy Pro Cycling) . The group was able to establish a lead of up to five minutes , while MTN ? Qhubeka controlled the pace in the field for most of the day , before Lotto ? Soudal and Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step joined them at the front for their respective team captains . 60 kilometres (37 @.@ 3 mi) from the finish , the lead group had broken up , with only Bono and Mortensen left with a lead of less than one minute . With 43 kilometres (26 @.@ 7 mi) left to ride , the two were joined by former road race world champion Philippe Gilbert (BMC Racing Team) , Manuele Boaro (Tinkoff ? Saxo) , and Matthias Brändle (IAM Cycling) , now leading by about half a minute . 20 km from the finish , the peloton had caught the escape group , and a field of about 75 riders was set to ride for the race victory .

Another late attack came from Linus Gerdemann (Cult Energy Pro Cycling) and Julian Alaphilippe (Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step) , but they were unable to build a significant gap , and were reeled back in with 10 kilometres (6 @.@ 2 mi) to go . While favourite Marcel Kittel dropped out of the field at the last ascend of the Waseberg , ruling him out of contention , Mark Cavendish was involved in a crash with 3 kilometres (1 @.@ 9 mi) to go . While the sprint trains fought for the lead of the field , Cavendish touched wheels with another rider and was brought to the ground . He was able to continue and eventually finished 66th , but was unable to compete for the victory . At the finish line , the victory was decided by a bunch sprint . Kristoff was the first to open the sprint , but Greipel was able to get around him to claim his first ever win in a one @-@ day World Tour race . Italian rider Giacomo Nizzolo claimed third for Trek Factory Racing .

= = Results = =