

= 2015 Il Lombardia =

The 2015 Il Lombardia (also known as the Giro di Lombardia or the Tour of Lombardy) was a one @-@ day cycling classic that took place around Lake Como in Lombardy in northern Italy on 4 October 2015 . It was the 109th edition of the Il Lombardia one @-@ day cycling race and was the final cycling monument of the 2015 season , as well as being the final race of the 2015 UCI World Tour . The race was organised by RCS Sport , who also organise the Giro d'Italia .

The course was difficult , taking in several hard climbs over the 245 @-@ kilometre (152 mi) route , including the famous Madonna del Ghisallo climb . It started in Bergamo and reached the coast of Lake Como about halfway through the race . The final 75 kilometres (47 mi) contained most of the climbing , with the final climb coming in the last 10 kilometres (6 @.@ 2 mi) . This was followed by a descent to the finish line in Como itself .

There was aggressive racing from the climb of the Madonna del Ghisallo and the very difficult Muro di Sormano that followed it . A small group came to the final climbs together . Vincenzo Nibali (Astana) , who had targeted the race following his expulsion from the Vuelta a España , attacked on the penultimate descent . Despite losing some time to the chasers on the final climb , he came to the finish line alone to take his first ever Monument victory . Daniel Moreno (Team Katusha) was second , with Thibaut Pinot (FDJ) third .

= = Background = =

Il Lombardia was the final race in the 2015 UCI World Tour . This was a change from recent years , when the Tour of Beijing was the final race . The individual victory in the World Tour had already been won by Alejandro Valverde (Movistar Team) . Valverde had won two of the one @-@ day classics that took place early in the season (La Flèche Wallonne and Liège ? Bastogne ? Liège) and took top ten places in both the Tour de France and the Vuelta a España . Team Katusha were leading the team rankings ahead of Movistar and Team Sky , while Spain were leading the country rankings ahead of Colombia and Great Britain .

Il Lombardia was also the last of a series of Italian classics . The most important of these came in two groups of three . The first three races formed the Trittico Lombardo : these were the Coppa Ugo Agostoni , the Coppa Bernocchi and the Tre Valli Varesine . Vincenzo Nibali (Astana) came second to Davide Rebellin (CCC ? Sprandi ? Polkowice) in the Coppa Ugo Agostoni , then won the remaining two races . The second group was the Trittico di Autunno : these were the Milano ? Torino , the Gran Piemonte and Il Lombardia itself , which was the only one of the races to be part of the World Tour . Diego Rosa , Nibali 's teammate , won the Milano ? Torino .

= = Teams = =

The seventeen UCI WorldTeams were automatically invited and obliged to attend the race . The race organisers , RCS Sport , also invited eight UCI Professional Continental teams to take part as wildcard entries . These included the five wildcard teams from the Giro d'Italia , four of which were Italian @-@ based . UnitedHealthcare and Colombia received entries after being rejected for the Giro , with Bora ? Argon 18 receiving the final place . Each team was expected to enter eight riders . Two riders failed to start the race , so the peloton initially comprised 198 riders . 99 riders finished the race .

The teams entering the race were :

= = Route = =

The route for the 2015 Il Lombardia was announced on 11 September 2015 , a little over three weeks before the race took place , with numerous changes from the previous year 's route . The race took place in Lombardy in northern Italy on 4 October over a course that was 245 kilometres (152 mi) in length , with most of the difficult hills coming in the second half .

The route began in Bergamo , where the 2014 race had finished , on the Viale Papa Giovanni XXIII . There was a neutral zone that took the riders south and out of the city , before the racing started on the Via San Bernardino . After first heading south , the route turned to the east and then to the north . After 43 @. @ 6 kilometres (27 @. @ 1 mi) the riders reached Entratico , where they joined the main valley road heading north @- @ east . The roads up to this point were almost entirely flat . 6 kilometres (3 @. @ 7 mi) after joining the valley road , however , the route turned to the west to cross the first climb of the day , the Colle Gallo (7 @. @ 4 kilometres (4 @. @ 6 mi) at an average gradient of 6 %) . After the descent from the climb , the route continued west and returned to the outskirts of Bergamo . By this point the riders had completed 79 kilometres (49 mi) of racing .

The route left Bergamo again , this time to the north @- @ west , and went past Valbrembo . After this the course turned west to come to the second climb of the day , the Colle Brianza . This was a moderate climb (approximately 3 @. @ 9 kilometres (2 @. @ 4 mi) at 4 %) and the descent was followed by more flat roads that took the riders north towards Pescate , where they came to the shore of Lake Como for the first time . Here the course turned gradually back to the south , to pass along the eastern coast of the Lago di Annone and around its southern tip . This was approximately the half @- @ way point in the race . The roads travelled north again , through Onno and to Bellagio , again riding along the coast of Lake Como . By this point the riders had covered 172 kilometres (107 mi) . The remaining 73 kilometres (45 mi) were by far the hilliest and most difficult of the race .

The first climb was the Madonna del Ghisallo . This is an 8 @. @ 6 @- @ kilometre (5 @. @ 3 mi) climb , with an average gradient of 6 @. @ 2 % . The middle 3 kilometres (1 @. @ 9 mi) of the climb are flat , however , so the remaining 5 @. @ 6 kilometres (3 @. @ 5 mi) had an average gradient of over 9 % and sections as steep as 14 % . Immediately after the descent , the riders faced the Colma di Sormano . The first 5 kilometres (3 @. @ 1 mi) of the climb had an average gradient of 6 @. @ 6 % . After this came the Muro di Sormano (the " wall of Sormano ") , which was a 1 @. @ 9 @- @ kilometre (1 @. @ 2 mi) section of road with an average gradient of 15 @. @ 8 % and sections of almost 30 % . At the top of the climb there were 50 @. @ 4 kilometres (31 @. @ 3 mi) to the finish line .

After the descent back to the shores of Lake Como , there were around 16 kilometres (9 @. @ 9 mi) of flat roads that took the riders south @- @ west into Como itself . The riders only got as far as the eastern outskirts , however , before they turned to the east for the day 's penultimate climb . This was the Caviglio (4 @. @ 2 kilometres (2 @. @ 6 mi) at 9 @. @ 7 %) , the summit of which came with 16 @. @ 6 kilometres (10 @. @ 3 mi) to the finish . The riders then descended back into Como , which they reached with 10 kilometres (6 @. @ 2 mi) remaining . The route left the town to the west and climbed the San Fermo della Battaglia (2 @. @ 7 kilometres (1 @. @ 7 mi) at 7 @. @ 2 %) . The summit came with 5 @. @ 3 kilometres (3 @. @ 3 mi) remaining . There was then a descent back into town . The descent ended as the riders went under the flamme rouge with 1 kilometre (0 @. @ 62 mi) remaining . There was a final corner with 600 metres (1 @. @ 970 ft) to the finish line , which was on the Lungo Lario Trento on the shore of the lake .

= = Pre @- @ race favourites = =

The defending champion in the race was Dan Martin (Cannondale ? Garmin) , who won the 2014 edition with a late attack . He had crashed during the Vuelta a España , however , and had been forced to retire from the race due to injury . After recovering from the injury , he had raced just once since the crash : he finished in 14th place in Milano ? Torino . His form before the race was therefore unclear , especially as Il Lombardia is both longer and more difficult than Milano ? Torino . Il Lombardia was the final race of Martin 's season and also his final race for the Cannondale @- @ Garmin team .

With Martin 's form uncertain , the favourite for the race was Alejandro Valverde . As well as performing strongly in the early @- @ season hilly classics in the 2015 season , he had been close to success in Il Lombardia in the past : he finished second in both 2013 and 2014 . Max Sciandri , a directeur sportif for the BMC Racing Team , said that the increased difficulty of the 2015 edition

suited Valverde : " now it suits the climbers and good descenders rather the Classics riders ... [Valverde] can climb , can descend and is even fast in a sprint finish . " Cycling Weekly suggested that Valverde 's ability to recover from the Vuelta in time for Il Lombardia would work in his favour . Joaquim Rodríguez (Team Katusha) would also have been a strong favourite for the race : he won the 2012 and 2013 editions and had come second in the Vuelta . However , he injured his knee when he hit a sign post while training and was forced to withdraw from the race .

Vincenzo Nibali was also cited as a potential winner of the race , following a difficult season . He had struggled during the Tour de France and was subsequently thrown out of the Vuelta for holding on to a team car . He had therefore made Il Lombardia a significant target . Nibali had performed strongly in the other late @-@ season Italian classics , while his team had shown its strength in supporting Diego Rosa to victory in Milano ? Torino . Fabio Aru , who had won the Vuelta , was not present : he was riding the Tour of Almaty instead .

With Rodríguez absent , two other former champions started the race : these were Philippe Gilbert (BMC) , the winner in 2009 and 2010 , and Damiano Cunego (Nippo ? Vini Fantini) , who won in 2007 and 2008 . Gilbert in particular was considered a potential winner of the race . Other favourites for the race victory included Thibaut Pinot (FDJ) , Rui Costa and Diego Ulissi (Lampre @-@ Merida) , Simon Gerrans (Orica ? GreenEDGE) , Rafa? Majka (Tinkoff ? Saxo) , Robert Gesink (LottoNL ? Jumbo) , Warren Barguil (Giant ? Alpecin) , Domenico Pozzovivo and Romain Bardet (AG2R La Mondiale) , Micha? Kwiatkowski (Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step) and Tim Wellens (Lotto ? Soudal) .

= = Race report = =

The race began in Bergamo with grey skies and rain falling . The race began with a succession of attacks ; eventually an eleven @-@ rider group escaped to form the day 's principal breakaway . These were Stefan Schumacher (CCC ? Sprandi ? Polkowice) , Enrico Barbin (Bardiani ? CSF) , Jan Polanc (Lampre @-@ Merida) , Matteo Busato (Southeast Pro Cycling) , Dennis van Winden (LottoNL @-@ Jumbo) , Simon Geschke (Giant @-@ Alpecin) , Pierpaolo De Negri (Nippo @-@ Vini Fantini) , Marco Canola (UnitedHealthcare) , Cesare Benedetti (Bora @-@ Argon 18) , Jérôme Coppel (IAM Cycling) and Oscar Gatto (Androni Giocattoli) . The break had a lead that extended to over eight minutes after the Colle Brianza , while the peloton was controlled principally by Astana , with some assistance from Movistar and Team Sky . By the foot of the Madonna del Ghisallo , the lead had been cut to just two and a half minutes .

The Madonna del Ghisallo was the location for several attacks . In the breakaway , Benedetti , Canola , van Winden and Barbin broke away from the other riders . Micha? Kwiatkowski was the first to attack from the peloton : he was then joined by Matteo Trentin , Carlos Verona , ?ukasz Wi?niowski (all Etixx @-@ Quick Step) , Tom @-@ Jelte Slagter (Cannondale @-@ Garmin) , Jon Izagirre (Movistar) , Robert Gesink , Timo Roosen (Lotto NL @-@ Jumbo) , Giacomo Nizzolo (Trek Factory Racing) and Tim Wellens . After this climb came the Muro di Sormano . Benedetti and Canola led at the beginning of the climb , but they were soon passed by Kwiatkowski and Wellens . Wellens had to struggle to keep up with Kwiatkowski . Meanwhile , Astana rode hard in the main peloton , reducing it to around 20 riders . Philippe Gilbert and Dan Martin were among the riders unable to stay with the group and , despite Gilbert 's efforts , they were unable to regain contact .

On the descent from the Sormano , Kwiatkowski and Wellens led , while Diego Rosa led the peloton on behalf of Nibali . The leading pair 's advantage was reduced on the descent and then further on the flat section leading towards Como . As the climb of the Civiglio started with approximately 20 kilometres (12 mi) remaining , Kwiatkowski attacked alone ; he was caught , however , by the peloton just 0 @.@ 5 kilometres (0 mi) later . Astana continued to lead the peloton ; their pace reduced the front group to just seven riders . Rosa was among the riders to be dropped , but he worked with Sergio Henao (Sky) to return to the group . He was then one of several riders to attack towards the top of the Civiglio , along with Mikel Nieve (Sky) , Nibali and Pinot . None of the attacks were successful , as Daniel Moreno (Katusha) brought the other riders

back to the leaders , and the group came to the top of the climb together .

Nibali attacked again just after the summit and rode alone down the descent . Despite almost colliding with a race motorbike at one point , he used his strong descending skills to gain an advantage over the rest of the group . He used the whole width of the road and coming very close to the crash barriers at various moments . Rosa , meanwhile , came to the head of the group in an attempt to slow the chase down . Nibali 's lead at the foot of the descent was around 40 seconds .

As the final climb began with 7 @. @ 5 kilometres (4 @. @ 7 mi) remaining , Nibali was still over 40 seconds ahead of the group behind . Pinot attacked but was soon caught and passed by Moreno , who set off alone in pursuit of Nibali . Moreno made up some time during the ascent , but was unable to catch him . On the descent towards the finish line in Como , Nibali 's superior skill at descending allowed him to stay ahead of Moreno and he reached the finish line alone to take the victory . Moreno finished 21 seconds later , with Pinot a further 11 seconds behind . Valverde won the sprint for fourth ahead of Rosa and Nieve .

= = Result = =

= = Post @-@ race analysis = =

= = = Reactions = = =

Nibali said after the race that his victory in Il Lombardia made his expulsion from the Vuelta a " good thing " as it helped him find some anger . He went on to say that his success had got his season back on track , particularly as he was the first Italian to win one of the Monuments in a long time . The last Italian to win any of the cycling Monuments was Damiano Cunego in the 2008 Giro di Lombardia . Nibali described the victory as being as good as a win in Liège ? Bastogne ? Liège ; he said also that , despite the risks he took on the descent from the Civiglio , Peter Sagan was " crazier " than him when descending .

Pinot described himself as " proud " at the end of the race , as Il Lombardia had been a major goal for him . He described Nibali as " the strongest , the smartest and the sneakiest " rider in the race . It was the first time Pinot had finished in the top ten of a Monument . Dan Martin , who had been unable to follow the leading riders on the Muro di Sormano , finished the race in order to repay his team 's faith in him following his injury earlier in the season . He finished 52nd , nearly ten minutes behind Nibali , and said that he had not been strong enough to follow the attacks on the climb .

= = = UCI World Tour rankings = = =

Despite the points won by Moreno 's second @-@ place finish , Katusha were not able to win enough points to win the UCI World Tour rankings . The 60 points that Valverde won were enough to secure the overall victory in the team 's competition , as well as increasing his own margin of victory in the individual classification . Pinot 's third @-@ place finish earned him 70 points and moved him up to tenth place in the World Tour rankings , while the success of the Italian riders moved Italy ahead of both Colombia and Great Britain to finish second behind Spain in the national rankings .