

= 2016 Tour of Flanders =

The 2016 Tour of Flanders was a one @-@ day classic cycling race that took place in Belgium on Sunday 3 April 2016 . It was the 100th edition of the Tour of Flanders ; it was the eighth event of the UCI World Tour and the third of the cobbled one @-@ day classics . It was the second Monument race of the 2016 cycling season .

The race started in Bruges and finished in Oudenaarde . The total distance was 255 kilometres ( 158 mi ) , covering 18 categorized climbs and seven flat cobblestoned sectors . The principal favourites for the overall victory were Fabian Cancellara ( Trek ? Segafredo ) , Tom Boonen ( Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step ) and Peter Sagan ( Tinkoff ) .

After several riders had abandoned the race due to crashes and injuries , the decisive break was formed with 30 kilometres ( 19 mi ) to go by Sagan , Micha? Kwiatkowski ( Team Sky ) and Sep Vanmarcke ( LottoNL ? Jumbo ) . On the last climb of the Oude Kwaremont , Kwiatkowski was dropped ; on the Paterberg , which followed shortly afterwards and was final climb of the race , Sagan dropped Vanmarcke and set off alone towards the finish . Vanmarcke and Cancellara collaborated in an effort to chase him down , but Sagan was able to ride to the finish alone . Cancellara finished second with Vanmarcke third , both more than 20 seconds behind Sagan .

= = Route = =

The route of the 100th edition was presented on 29 November 2015 at Brussels Airport . It contained small changes from previous editions : the Tiegemberg in West Flanders was omitted , while in the Flemish Ardennes the flat cobbled sector of the Holleweg was cut from the race and replaced with the Jagerij cobbled road . The change was needed to keep the iconic Molenberg climb in the route due to roadworks . The recent tradition of announcing a Dorp van de Ronde ( " Village of the Tour " ) was also abandoned , although the route passed through Kanegem and Aarsele in tribute to Briek Schotte and Roger Decock ( the oldest living winner of the Tour of Flanders ) respectively .

The race started in the Market Square in Bruges with a neutralised zone , leaving the town to the south . The racing started outside the city and took the riders southwest through Torhout to Roeselare , then east through Ardooie and Tielt , then south @-@ east to Oudenaarde , passing across the first cobbled sector of the day , the flat Huisepontweg . After Oudenaarde , the route continued into a series of circuits through the hilly area to the south and east . After 103 kilometres ( 64 mi ) came the first climb , the Oude Kwaremont , a 2 @,@ 200 @-@ metre ( 2 @,@ 400 yd ) , partially cobbled climb that would feature twice more later in the race . The route turned north and , following the climb of the non @-@ cobbled Kortekeer , the riders entered a 20 @-@ kilometre ( 12 mi ) section with several cobbled roads . These included the cobbled climbs of the Eikenberg and the Wolvenberg , then the flat Ruitersstraat , Kerkgate and Jagerij , the climb of the Molenberg , then finally the 2 @,@ 300 metres ( 2 @,@ 500 yd ) of the flat Paddestraat . The route then turned back to the south @-@ west , across the flat Haaghoek cobbles and then the non @-@ cobbled climbs of the Leberg , Berendries , Valkenberg , Kaperij and Kanarieberg . This brought the route back to take on the second ascent of the Oude Kwaremont , followed immediately by the steep cobbled climb of the Paterberg , 360 metres ( 390 yd ) long with an average gradient of 12 @.@ 9 % and sections at over 20 % . At the summit of the Paterberg , there were 51 kilometres ( 32 mi ) left to the finish .

There were six more climbs in the next 40 @-@ kilometre ( 25 mi ) loop . The first of these was the Koppenberg , which includes the steepest roads of the race , with gradients of 22 % . This was followed by the flat cobbles of the Mariaborrestraat and the climbs of the Steenbeekdries and the Taaienberg . The roads took the riders south into Ronse for the climb of the Kruisberg , then north @-@ west to the foot of the Oude Kwaremont . The Oude Kwaremont ? Paterberg combination was used for a second time ; at the top of the Paterberg there were 11 @.@ 7 kilometres ( 7 @.@ 3 mi ) to the finish . These took place over mainly flat roads , with a long finishing straight on the outskirts of Oudenaarde .

= = = Climbs and cobbled roads = = =

In total , the race included eighteen categorized climbs .  
Additionally , there were seven sectors of flat cobbled roads :

= = Participating teams = =

The 18 UCI WorldTeams were automatically invited and were obliged to participate in the race . An additional seven UCI Professional Continental teams were given wildcard entries : two Belgian teams ( Wanty ? Groupe Gobert and Topsport Vlaanderen ? Baloise ) , a Dutch team ( Roompot ? Oranje Peloton ) , a German team ( Bora ? Argon 18 ) , a French team ( Direct Énergie ) , an Italian team ( Wilier Triestina ? Southeast ) and a Polish team ( CCC ? Sprandi ? Polkowice ) . With eight on each team , the peloton at the start of the race included 200 riders . Of these , 118 reached the finish line .

= = Pre @-@ race favourites = =

The principal favourites for the race were Tom Boonen ( Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step ) and Fabian Cancellara ( Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step ) , both of whom had won the race on three previous occasions . Cancellara was in strong form , having won the Strade Bianche and having come fourth in E3 Harelbeke and Gent ? Wevelgem the previous week . Boonen , however , was not in strong form : he had not won a major classic since 2012 and had not performed strongly in the previous week 's races . Nevertheless , Cycling Weekly wrote " you can never write the three @-@ time Flanders winner off in a race like this . " The other former winners present at the start were Alexander Kristoff ( Team Katusha ) , the defending champion , and Cancellara 's teammate Stijn Devolder . Kristoff 's strong sprint gave him an advantage if he was in a group that finished together ; he had , however , been ill in the previous week . Devolder , meanwhile , was expected to work for Cancellara .

The other major favourite for the race was Peter Sagan ( Tinkoff ) , the reigning world road race champion . Sagan had come second in E3 Harelbeke and first in Gent ? Wevelgem . He had the advantage of being able to follow attacks and also to wait to use his strong sprint if he came to the finish with other riders .

Other riders with a chance of victory included Micha? Kwiatkowski ( Team Sky ) , who had won E3 Harelbeke ahead of Sagan and who had a strong team with Geraint Thomas , Ian Stannard and Luke Rowe ; Greg Van Avermaet ( BMC Racing Team ) ; Boonen 's teammates Niki Terpstra and Zden?k ?tybar ; Sep Vanmarcke ( LottoNL ? Jumbo ) ; and Tiesj Benoot ( Lotto ? Soudal ) .

= = Race summary = =

Before the race began , there was a minute 's silence in memory of Antoine Demoi?ié , a Wanty ? Groupe Gobert rider who had been killed in a crash with a motorbike during Gent ? Wevelgem . After 25 kilometres ( 16 mi ) , the riders arrived in Hooglede , the birthplace of Daan Myngheer , a rider for Roubaix ? Lille Métropole who had died following a heart attack in the Critérium International ; the peloton rode slowly through the town in memory of him .

The day 's breakaway took a long time to form : over an hour into the day 's racing , with more than 70 kilometres ( 43 mi ) covered , a six @-@ man move broke free . The riders were Hugo Houle ( AG2R La Mondiale ) , Federico Zurlo ( Lampre ? Merida ) , Imanol Erviti ( Movistar ) , Lukas Pöstlberger ( Bora ? Argon 18 ) , Gijs Van Hoecke ( Topsport Vlaanderen ? Baloise ) and Wesley Kreder ( Roompot ? Oranje Peloton ) . They earned a lead of over four minutes , but broke apart as the day 's climbs began .

During the middle part of the race several riders were forced to withdraw after crashes . Arnaud Démare ( FDJ ) , the winner of Milan ? San Remo , crashed after 100 kilometres ( 62 mi ) , while Marcus Burghardt ( BMC ) and Tiesj Benoot crashed on the Wolvenberg shortly afterwards . Less

than 30 kilometres ( 19 mi ) later , several BMC riders crashed together and four were forced to withdraw . These included Greg Van Avermaet , who broke his collarbone .

On the Molenberg , with more than 110 kilometres ( 68 mi ) remaining , a hard effort by Tony Martin ( Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step ) caused a split in the main peloton , with 25 riders in the front group , but the groups came back together shortly afterwards . André Greipel ( Lotto ? Soudal ) and Nils Politt ( Katusha ) then attacked on the Leberg and were allowed to go ; they were followed by Dmitriy Gruzdev ( Astana ) and Dimitri Claeys ( Wanty ? Groupe Gobert ) . These four riders joined up with Houle , Erviti and Van Hoecke from the original break ; Houle was dropped soon afterwards to form a six @-@ man leading group , which had a two @-@ minute lead at the foot of the second ascent of the Oude Kwaremont . On the climb , Stijn Vandenbergh ( Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step ) and Dylan van Baarle ( Cannondale ? Drapac ) attacked from the peloton . Another group , including Sep Vanmarcke and Ian Stannard , attacked before the Koppenberg . Stannard then went solo over the top of the climb . Meanwhile , Vandenbergh and Van Baarle caught up with the group of leaders .

There were several more attacks before the climb of the Taaiberg , where a small group of favourites formed and quickly caught Stannard . Shortly afterwards , with 30 kilometres ( 19 mi ) remaining , Micha? Kwiatkowski and Peter Sagan attacked together and were joined by Sep Vanmarcke . They crossed the Kruisberg together and caught the remainder of the breakaway with 23 @.@ 5 kilometres ( 14 @.@ 6 mi ) remaining , 40 seconds ahead of the peloton . On the final climb of the Oude Kwaremont , Kwiatkowski was unable to follow Sagan and Vanmarcke , while Cancellara rode clear of the peloton . Sagan was first to the summit with Vanmarcke ; Cancellara was twelve seconds behind . Cancellara was then caught by Niki Terpstra , Erviti and Claeys .

On the final climb , the Paterberg , Sagan rode away from Vanmarcke , who was caught by Cancellara at the top of the climb . They rode in pursuit of Sagan , who had a 15 @-@ second lead at the summit . The chasing pair were unable to bring Sagan back and he rode to the finish to win his first Monument . Cancellara finished second , 25 seconds back , with Vanmarcke allowing him to take second place . Kristoff won the sprint for fourth place , ahead of Luke Rowe ( Sky ) , 49 seconds behind Sagan .

= = Result = =

= = Post @-@ race analysis = =

= = = Rider reactions = = =

Sagan celebrated his victory by doing a wheelie after the finishing line . He said afterwards that it was the hardest Tour of Flanders he had ever raced , having been " full gas " throughout and suggested that Cancellara had made a mistake by not following the attack he had made with Kwiatkowski and Vanmarcke . Cancellara was emotional after finishing his final Tour of Flanders . He said that he had " missed this one second " , referring to the attack by Sagan . He said that he and Vanmarcke had done all they could in the chase , but that Sagan was too strong . Vanmarcke , meanwhile , said that he had struggled due to crashes in the middle part of the race and then had suffered cramp when Sagan attacked on the Paterberg . He described the move by Sagan and Kwiatkowski as the " decisive moment in the race " .

Boonen , who finished fifteenth , described Sagan as " really strong " and as the " deserved winner " ; he said " The way [ Sagan ] rode up the Paterberg was a good showcase on how to ride a bike " . Boonen , meanwhile , turned his attention to Paris ? Roubaix the following week . Van Avermaet described himself as " really disappointed " following his crash , which ruled him out of Paris ? Roubaix . Luke Rowe 's fifth place was Team Sky 's best ever performance in the Tour of Flanders ; he praised Kwiatkowski 's move , but said " there ? s not much you can do when someone has better legs " ; he described Sagan , Cancellara and Vanmarcke as " the three strongest guys in the race " . Imanol Erviti , who had been in the breakaway for 180 kilometres ( 110 mi ) , finished

seventh . Cycling Weekly described this as " phenomenal " ; it was Movistar 's best ever result .

= = = World Tour standings = = =

Sagan remained at the top of the 2016 UCI World Tour standings following his victory ; his total of 329 points was more than 100 ahead of the next rider , his teammate Alberto Contador . Cancellara moved up from thirteenth to fourth and Vanmarcke from sixteenth to sixth . Sagan 's total put Slovakia in third place in the nations ' rankings , ahead of Great Britain and Spain , even though he was the only Slovakian to have scored World Tour points .