



Only a few days remain now until the first important international multisport event of 2021. The organisers at Asiago, Triathlon 7c are delighted that they have been able to attract the world's very best winter triathletes back to this superb venue and, with excellent snow conditions, are looking forward to some exciting racing.

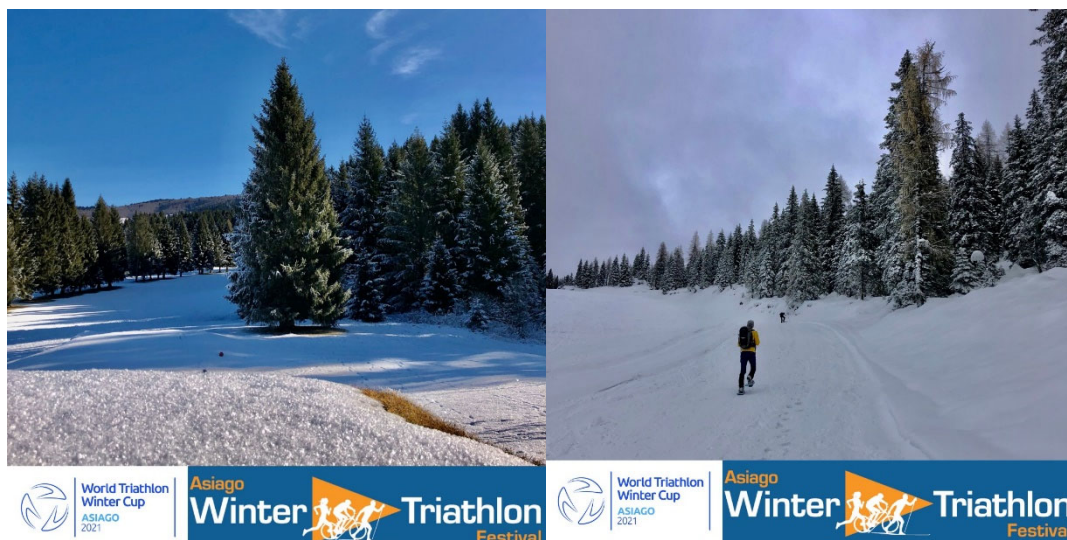


The World Triathlon Winter Cup will be the very best event for athletes to use as a warm-up ahead of the European Championships in Cheile Grădiștei and the World Championships in Andorra, which are due to take place in March.

Although the international focus will be on the World Cup, taking place this Friday (19th February) there are two more days of competition on the timetable; Winter Cross Duathlon - Kids, Youth and Age-Group on Saturday 20th and the Italian National Championships - Elite, U23 and Age-Group on Sunday 21st.



The snow has been falling over the past weeks and this means that the preparation of the tracks will be made all the more enjoyable to the hard-working Triathlon 7C team. A couple of images here will remind you just how stunning it is high up in these wonderful Venetian Alps.



For the past 12 months, athletes around the world have been unable to race as frequently, or train with their teams and yet many have successfully been able to maintain their fitness by following new training schedules and by adapting their existing ones.

Many of their routines have been shared on-line and have inspired others to try out new sports, or to perhaps revisit sports they used to enjoy. This Friday we will see many familiar names on the start lines but also a few surprises.

With the entry lists now complete and with athletes now beginning to arrive at the venue, it is time to look at just who will be racing.



Back in April last year, multiple World and European Champion, **Pavel Andreev** shared his training regime with us.

He will of course be on the start line but this time he comes not as the reigning Russian National Champion, a title he has held since 2014.

A surprise defeat on 23rd January, saw the title go to the younger **Evgenii Uliashev**, who outran and outskied the King of Winter Triathlon.

Andreev has had “off days” in the past, noticeably at the 2019 European Championships where, despite having a raging temperature, he still managed 4th place but Uliashev’s recent victory will likely make the race even more thrilling than usual.

Andreev’s main challenge should come from teammate, **Dmitriy Bregeda**. His race at the championships did not go as planned, with a heavy cold leading up to the race and a flat tyre out on the bike. Now, hopefully recovered from the disappointment, he will be forcing the pace.

Andreev however, with 7 national titles, victories at 8 World Championships in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019 and 2020, 7 times European Champion (2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2020), 26 gold medals in his international career, is most certainly the man to watch.

But back to Andreev’s training.

Would you like to see inside the Russian’s “pain cave”?

Well, **click this link** to see just how inventive he is.

<https://www.facebook.com/100002030037196/videos/2835111993233107/>

The Reigning women’s World Champion will be absent but we can still expect a battle at the front with European Champion, **Svetlana Sokolova** going head-to-head with former World

and European Champion, **Yuliya Surikova**. Both Russians will be looking to exploit each and every tiny error.

In 2020 on this course, it was the transitions that gave Surikova the advantage. Faster on the run and bike but only by the smallest of margins, Surikova held off the attack to claim bronze. At the European Championships a few weeks later, a lapse of concentration saw Surikova miss the finish chute and drop to bronze.



The weather conditions in Russia have been excellent and, adapting to the restrictions created by the Pandemic, they have still succeeded in hosting a number of winter triathlon events but Italy has also had some great snow conditions and the recent Gran Paradiso event, held at the former World Championship venue of Cogne, gave Italian athletes the chance to test their skills and see if their lockdown training had worked.

Victory went to **Giuseppe Lamastra**, who once again has shown that he is the best over the run, MTB, x-country ski mix that makes Winter Triathlon so special. Unable to match **Daniel Antonioli** on the run, he was able to catch up on the bike and skis to take a comfortable win. Antonioli has been putting in incredible performances on the Sky-Running circuit.



Races above 2,000m and over steep inclines have honed Antonioli's running skills but emerging from the younger categories comes **Alessandro Saravalle**.

Winner of the junior bronze at the 2012 Valsesia ETU Winter Triathlon European Championships, the 2018 and 2019 U23 European Champion, Saravalle will race here along with **Franco Pesavento**, who was the bronze medal winner at the 2016 Tiszaújváros ETU Triathlon Junior European Cup and at the 2015 Melilla ETU Triathlon Junior European Cup, the reigning World and European U23 Champion, from victories last year at Asiago and Cheile Grădiștei.



Sandra Mairhofer was a runaway winner at the Gran Paradiso event and has dominated the sport in Italy since 2019 when she took her first national title. Racing the World Cup will give the reigning national champion all the edge she needs for the National Championships that are due to be held on Sunday but she will have to not only battle against the powerful Russians but also against long-time rival from Austria, **Romana Slavinec**. The Austrian's power on the skis is a real threat and so Mairhofer will be wanting to make up as much time as possible over the two opening segments.

Who else, apart from athletes from Italy, Austria and Russia will be racing?

One athlete, who has made full use of the 2020 lockdown is Romania's **Viorel Palici**. Father of 3 children, dedicated husband and not least, performance athlete, Palici ran neck and neck with Andreev last year at the World Championships but had a bad bike split and was unable to reproduce his usual power on the final ski segment. He put that ghost to bed when he raced



at the Europeans and posted a breath-taking final leg that was quicker than Andreev and having beaten Bregeda out onto the skis, moved up into bronze behind Lamastra.

What did Palici do during lockdown? Well, he is living proof that anything is possible when you really want something. He built his own house in a year while preparing for a new competition season.

Back to the women and Austria will be sending three athletes;.

Two of them are serving police officers (Slavinec and **Gina Bin**) but one of them has an incredible 21-year career that has seen World and European Championship titles in Winter Triathlon (Gaishorn, 2009) and Cross Triathlon (Ibiza, 2007 and Myjava, SVK in 2010) and a collection of gold and silver medals at World and European Winter Triathlon Cups.

Carina Wasle will certainly be hoping to keep ahead of her two teammates and perhaps even threaten the Italian and Russian medal-hopefuls.



We are saving the best until last as this athlete deserves a special mention. How do you prepare for a winter triathlon when you have little or no snow, no established ski resorts, very few hills and a national lockdown?



For anyone who has been to the Netherlands around this time of year, especially when it gets really, really cold, you will have noticed an excitement that ripples throughout the community.

All attention turns to the thermometer and news reports will constantly be coming through about the chance, or not, of the Elfstedentocht taking place.

First held in 1909, this skating race, covering some 200km happens only when Mother Nature decides.

The last time that the nation stood still (it is true, the whole country stops and watches the TV) was 1997.

An average speed of just over 29km per hour for the 199.6km course does not come easy. Hours of skate training are logged by dedicated athletes who make full use of the cycle paths all year around.

Joep Staps has been using Rolskis to perfect his technique and will naturally get the title, “Flying Dutchman” when he arrives in Asiago. Once upon a time he was a professional footballer, then he discovered triathlon. Using the great facilities available in Livigno he found that the lockdown had not taken the edge off his fitness and, with legendary coach Rob Barel giving him the encouragement and support that was needed, decided that he would make a date with Asiago.

“I didn't have any experience with xc-skiing, no gear and only two weeks to go before the race. In the end, I was able to borrow the necessary ski equipment from and started with some roll-skiing the first week. Luckily, the Netherlands was covered with snow (the first time in years) last week so I could practice on real skis as well. Machiel Ittmann, former Dutch triathlon and xc-ski champion, was available to teach me some of the basics.”

Staps is keen to make full use of his trip to Asiago and will be on the start line for the Winter Cross Duathlon, scheduled for Saturday.

What advice does this Winter Triathlon novice have for us?

“I never forget that triathlon should be fun, and you should never forget that. Therefore, I am also participating at the winter triathlon: challenge yourself, have fun and enjoy the beautiful diversity triathlon has to offer.”

His motto, [#WorkHardCrushGoals](#) is one we can all follow.

You can find the start lists for the Winter Triathlon World Cup by clicking this link:

https://www.triathlon.org/events/start_lists/2021_world_triathlon_winter_world_cup_asiago

And don't forget to watch the race live, on <https://www.triathlonlive.tv/videos/2021-world-triathlon-winter-cup-asiago>