Today we were treated to a truly outstanding display of racing. A programme packed with excitement. A venue that showcased our wonderful sport and a delivery of the highest quality event that you could wish for.

The Centro Fondo Campolongo has been a favourite for winter triathlon fans now for three years. The organisers have hosted two world championships and a world cup and this year, the venue was selected to be the European Winter Triathlon Championships, with the added bonus of a World Cup. We are still some way from the old freedom and perhaps due to travel restrictions, the start list did not feature any athlete from outside Europe but when you have multiple world and European Champions, you can be guaranteed a race to remember.
It was to be a day of celebrations for the Russian Team with a thrilling Elite Men’s race taking Pavel Andreev once again to the top of the podium. An incredible 8 European Crowns now belong to him, matching his 8 World titles. He fought hard against a stiff challenge from his teammates, Evgenii Uliashev and Pavel Yakimov. The host nation was denied a medal, despite the very best efforts of reigning World Champion, Franco Pesavento. The Italian athlete, born and bred here in Asiago was unable to reproduce the form that took him to gold in Andorra and so it was three Russians who battled at the front end of the race with ultimately, the King of Winter Triathlon, Andreev, putting all the ghosts of Andorra to sleep with a well-measured, wonderfully tactical race that took him all the way to gold.

The silver and bronze medal positions went to Yakimov, who has shown that he really can be the successor in Russia to Andreev, with world and European titles since he burst onto the scene with a 2010 and 2011 win at the Worlds.

It was Uliashev who claimed bronze. All three athletes from Russia crossing the finish line within 40 seconds.

The Russian delight did not end there.

Defending European Champion, Svetlana Sokolova, winner of both the Elite and U23 title when the last European Championships were held in Chelie Grădiștei in 2020, looked to be on form but was up against the newly crowned World Champion, Daria Rogozina. We missed seeing Rogozina race for a year as she took time off to start a family with Andreev. The pair have a baby boy who was here today to support his mum and dad.

Local hopes were on Sandra Mairhofer, who sowed truly impressive power out on the bike but who ultimately could not match the speed of the Russians who have been racing on their Winter Triathlon Cup series now since November last year. With ten cup races and a national championship and with their long season of good quality snow the Russian team once again arrived race fit and ready for the tough challenge that Asiago offers.
Rogozina gradually built up the lead. Running easy, biking hard and skiing with precision she crossed the finish line over a minute ahead of Sokolova who at times looked as if she could challenge. Despite the hardest efforts of Yulia Surikova, also a previous World and European champion, the final position on the podium went to Anna Medvedeva.

An impressive clean sweep for Russia in both the Elite Men and Elite Women’s categories but a moment in history as both Andreev and Rogozina, joined now with their son, posed for the cameras after the race, wearing their medals as the King and Queen of European Winter Triathlon.

The U23 athletes started alongside the Elite and there was high drama in the men’s race as the chasing athlete, Danila Egorov from Russia, crashed in an explosion of snow and ski poles on the final descent. He was giving everything to try and catch the Slovakian, Mario Kosut, who was leading and about 30 metres ahead of him.

Whether Kosut saw or heard the crash behind him we will never know but as he neared the point on the course to head to the finish chute, he missed the turn and seemed to set off for a third lap.

Shouts echoed out from his supporters and he cut across the virgin snow to find the finish chute. The shouts became louder as the crowds realised he had cut the course and could face a DSQ.
He crossed the finish line first, raised the finish tape above his head but, surrounded by officials, soon realised his massive mistake.

Egorov, back on his skis came to the finish line as the officials hastily set up a second finish tape and took the title.

Kosut headed back to the point that he had left the course, completed the final stage of the ski segment and still managed to come home for silver. A mistake he will never make, a title that he has lost and will never forget. Bronze went to Italy’s Mattia Tanara who crossed the finish line unaware of the drama that had delivered gold and silver.

In the U23 Women’s race, the reigning World Champion, Valeria Kuznetsova was favourite to add to the collection of titles for the Russian team.

She looked strong throughout the race and gradually established a lead the two Slovakian athletes could not match.

Closest to her at the finish was Zuzana Michaličková, who added a silver to her medal portfolio and bronze went to Lydia Drahovská.

Once again Slovakia showed that their development programme is working well.

Last to race today were the Junior Athletes. As the sun came out and warmed up the venue, there were several brave souls who chose to race in shorts. A psychological advantage? Perhaps. It certainly looked impressive as they lined up for the start.
The Junior Men set off five minutes ahead of the Junior Women and immediately it was the Italian team that set the pace with the two Giuliano brothers, Riccardo and Guglielmo enjoying a particular battle but facing the immensely powerful Lukas Lanzinger who showed such potential when he raced the Europe Triathlon XTERRA Championships last year in the Dolomites.

Lanzinger took control on the bike on the shortened course (the juniors race a sprint distance) and despite an error on the first ski segment was able to pull ahead and race to the finish ahead of the Giuliano brothers.

Claiming silver was the younger brother, Riccardo who sped past his elder brother after a bike crash saw Guglielmo lose valuable time.

Italy filled the podium. The Italian anthem filled the hills. The Italian flags were waved and Head Coach, Marco Bethaz was a happy man.

For the Junior Women it was the youngest athlete, turning 16 this year who raced into the lead on the first run and kept the pressure up. Ksenia Skvortsova, showing tremendous promise for the Russian team led all the way home. Austria’s Katja Krenn dug deep to claim silver ahead of Italy’s Lena Göller. The first of our podiums to feature three athletes from three different nations.

The races were watched over by Europe Triathlon’s President, Renato Bertrandì, FiTri’s President Riccardo Giubilei as well as local dignitaries Roberto Ciambetti, Presidente Consiglio Regionale Veneto, Nicola Finco, Vice-Presidente Consiglio Regionale Veneto and Franco Sella,
Deputy Mayor of Asiago. The crowds of supporters expressed their thanks to the politicians who had done so much to ensure that the European Championships and World Cup had been so successful and once again, the Organising Team, led by Leonardo Franco were praised for delivering such a great event.

Today’s race can be seen by clicking the following link:

https://fb.watch/bfvkhROaB3

All results can be found on the event webpage:

https://triathlon.org/results/result/2022_world_triathlon_winter_cup_asiago

And as soon as the media team have edited their many images, you will be able to find a wonderful selection of photos on the Asiago Winter Triathlon page:

https://www.facebook.com/asiagowintertriathlon
Follow us:

Facebook - https://www.facebook.com/triathlon7c
Instagram - https://www.instagram.com/triathlon7c