



## Age-Group athletes; making Winter Triathlon so very special.



Winter Triathlon and Europe go together. Hand in hand. It just is. Since the first ever international championships were held, back in 1997 and in fact in Italy, this sport has been a major attraction for Age-Group athletes who found an opportunity to combine their love of winter sports with their love of triathlon.

We have seen some truly inspirational performances over the years and no doubt this year in Asiago, with the 23<sup>rd</sup> European Championships we will once again see the great family that has become Winter Triathlon in Europe come together to celebrate their medals, relive the best moments, sympathise with each other when things go wrong and share the experience of run, MTB and ski once the races are over.





Athletes from all over Europe will have been planning their winter season around the two major dates on the calendar; Andorra for the Worlds and the now favourite location of Asiago, for the Europeans.

Asiago has twice hosted the World Championships, is easy to get to, offers superb tracks and a truly dedicated team behind the scenes to make sure everyone's journey there is worthwhile.

For some athletes, there is the chance of claiming medals at both events and for the very best there is the really tempting opportunity of being crowned champion in both Andorra and in Asiago.

At the moment, there will be only one medal contender in the youngest category, 18-19, with the host nation's **Luca Brusafarro** but we can expect to see some competitive racing in the women's 20-24 age-group, with Italy looking good for the medals. Favourite for the title would have been **Camilla De Pieri**, who claimed silver in both the 2019 and 2020 Worlds.

However, at the recent Italian National Championships, she was beaten by a stronger **Sofia Dalla Libera**. This race will no doubt be a chance for De Pieri to try and put those ghosts to bed. **Marianna Angelica Gilioli** will be there to claim the remaining medal and to ensure the host nation gets a clean sweep and no doubt keeping a close eye on her sister, who races in the next category.

There are no men in this age-group, which is a real shame.



For the 25-29 category, it will be the runner-up from the Italian Championships in Cogne, **Viola Dorotea Gilioli** who looks set to have a clean run to gold.

She is the only one on the start list so far. Looking back to her 2019 World title here and her silver in 2020, she will be relying upon her power on the run and bike to post a good time.

Here she is in 2019, wearing #75. Her sister, Marianna is wearing #74.

For the men, Italy is set once again to enjoy all three medals. **Filippo Parini** has shown considerable improvement over recent years. His first World Championship here in 2019 saw him come home in 7<sup>th</sup>. He upgraded that to a silver medal in 2020 and with a bronze at the Italian championships, he will be looking now to claim the European title ahead of his teammates, **Enrico Contin** and **Luca Fighera**.



Figuera's bronze here in 2020 saw him show great speed and power on the run and bike but lose out on the final ski segment to the more technically able Parini.

Germany's **Helena Pretzl** looks set to add yet another title to her incredible collection. The Bavarian athlete has managed to get onto the podium in each of her international races. A gold in 2018 at the Fyn World Cross Triathlon Championships gave her a chance to show her immense power on the bike. Gold medals and world titles came again in 2019 and 2020 on the Asiago course and a silver last year in Andorra. She will be up against Italy's **Margherita Norbiato** this year in the 30-34 category.

Pretzl's secret weapon is her participation in the Burglengenfeld Schneeballbiathlon.

Click here for something delightfully different: (<https://www.otv.de/burglengenfeld-schneeballbiathlon-411474>)



For the men, Germany's **Thomas Kerner** and Austria's **Walter Daniel** will be fighting for the title but with 4 World titles already, including the 2021 win in Andorra, it looks likely that Kerner will be the victor here. Kerner is a powerful off-road athlete who will use his ski power to carve through the field in the closing stages of the race.



In the 35-39 Age Group, at present we have no female athletes but on the men's start list we see the first of the several British athletes who can embrace the sport.

**Chris Gouldsmith**, 2018 European Champion, is a powerful man on the skis. His military training took him to many championships over his career and, along with a small but merry band of warriors, he has helped the British team to a number of medal successes as well as ensuring that the team spirit

is always strong. Silver and bronze in Cheile Grădiștei in 2019 and 2020, his target will be to disrupt the Italian team here. **Paolo Maltauro**, an older athlete but with a considerable lead over the Brit in 2020 is joined by teammates, **Luca Dalla Libera** who like Gouldsmith also moves up an age group category this year and an on-form **Rocco Righetti**. Italy looks certain to fill the podium here. The pressure will be on Gouldsmith delivering power across all three disciplines.

Moving up to the 40-44 category and it is the reigning Italian champion, **Sandra De Luca**, who looks set to add a European title to her collection. An outstanding performance in Cogne recently will give her extra confidence in front of a home crowd of supporters. She will be racing against other athletes new to international competition.



Amongst the men, there is likely to be a close battle between the Italian athletes with **Matteo Panzi** showing the best form in Cogne. He fought hard to beat **Alessandro Orsato** and **Gabriele Indraccolo** and looks most likely to be the winner in this Age-Group. As former Italian champion in this category, he will no doubt be hoping to add a European title to his collection.

45-49 and we are likely to see an interesting battle between the two Italian athletes and one sole German. Who will take the title? Well, **Laura Ravelli** has the greater international experience, having finished in the top ten here in 2020 and having won bronze in Zofingen in September last year.

The hours of training she put in for the 150km Zofingen bike course will have prepared her, power-wise, for Asiago but a disappointing performance at Cogne in the National Championships suggested that there was still work to do.

Turin based **Cristiana Barotti** will rely upon her run power but the two Italians face German athlete, **Carina Neubauer**.

It will be exciting to see how this race comes together.

The men's start list shows a strong Italian team but they will face a Russian duo and a single German athlete. The strength and depth amongst the Russians comes from a well-established circuit of races over the winter season and of course the long snow season that almost guarantees snow from November through until March.



**Viacheslav Krupko**, veteran of the Marathon des Sables, has a huge portfolio of races. We can see him here in one of the Russian SwimRun series (photo credit to 3sport). 13<sup>th</sup> place here in 2019, 6<sup>th</sup> in 2020 and a 5<sup>th</sup> in Andorra last year shows that he is getting stronger and stronger. He will be racing in Andorra with an eye on medals at both events.

His teammate, **Aleksandr Vasilev**, will have to dig deep to keep him in view. Of the two,

Krupko is significantly stronger. His two trips to Asiago have been tough compared to his 5<sup>th</sup> place in Cheile Grădiștei in 2018 at the Worlds.



Germany's **Alexander Denz** missed out on a European medal there in 2020 against some strong athletes. The Italian team, with **Mirco Scalzotto** having the best international results so far, will have to work really hard to secure a medal.

He faces **Michele Bellemo** who raced well in Cogne. The 2019 European Aquathlon champion in his age-group was a close 4<sup>th</sup> amongst the Italians behind our Race Director, Leonardo Franco.

**Barbara Lorenzini** makes her international debut wearing Italian colours and comes to the race as runner up in the Italian Championships. She will have a battle on her hands against the strong German athlete **Beate Pelani**, who has enjoyed the sweet taste of podium success in winter triathlon, long-distance duathlon and cross-duathlon. Her silver in Cheile Grădiștei at the 2019 European Championships was matched by a silver last year in Andorra. So far, Asiago has not given her a medal but 2022 might be her year.



Estonia's **Livian Laaneots** won the title in 2016 in Otepää. A home win then, can she challenge Pelani?

We get to see the first Belgian Age-Group athlete at this year's championships in this 50-54 category with **Olivier Henz**, an accomplished Ironman athlete and President of Triathlon Team Eupen in the far eastern part of Belgium, making his winter triathlon international debut. 10:25 over the Hawaii course back in 2018 in the sunshine. A 2021 finish in Lanzarote in 11:09; once again in the heat and wind. It will be interesting to see how well he adapts to the conditions in Asiago. GB's team manager and "man who makes it happen", **Keith Jenns** will once again be leading the Brits to Asiago. He will be coming fresh from Andorra and may well have his eye on a podium finish, having claimed bronze at the European Championships in Etna back in 2018 and missing out with a 4<sup>th</sup> place in 2020 at the Cheile Grădiștei event.



The 2020 European Champion, **Markus Denz** from Germany will be the man to beat here. As reigning European Duathlon champion, we know that he has power on the bike but he will have to work hard on the closing stages of the race to keep the Italian threat at bay.

Reigning Italian champion and 2020 World Champion, **Guido Ricca** will be there and with 2 World and 2 European titles (2020 – Asiago, 2013 – Cogne and 2018 – Etna, 2006 Schilpario), as well as a fine collection

of silver and bronze Winter Triathlon medals the Italian will no doubt be hoping that his recent form and a home advantage will be enough to take him all the way to gold.

Here you can see Etna in the background sending out a celebratory puff of smoke as Ricca celebrates with his family. Ricca is joined by a big Italian team, many of them having raced in Cogne recently.



German colours will also be worn by **Albert Hinterstoisser**, who skied hard but just missed out on a podium place here in 2020. He returned to Italy in September of last year to race the Europe Triathlon XTERRA Cross Duathlon Championships Dolomiti Paganella. A tough and scenic course with a bronze medal as a reward.



We get to meet **Sabine Greipel**, the great Austrian endurance athlete in the 55-59 category. She races across all disciplines. She is the reigning European Sprint Duathlon and Aquabike champion from her wins in Târgu Mureş and Walchsee, she comes at the defending European champion following her 2019 and 2020 victories in Cheile Grădiştei (there was no European Championship in 2021), has had wins in Kazan (ETU Sprint Championships, 2019), World Champion from her win here in 2019, European Champion from her victory at the 2019 Târgu Mureş Cross

Triathlon Championships, having won gold there in 2017 in the Cross Duathlon event. Her winning streak began in 2005 at the Barcis Long Distance Duathlon World Championships and her first international race was back in 1998.



In an incredibly exciting finish here in 2020, Greipel looked set to win until the very last part of the ski course. The first run was dominated by Greipel but she lost valuable time in T1. Out on the bike and Greipel regained control of the race with a powerful display of riding. Time was lost again in T2 but the Austrian looked good for gold. It was Italy's **Elena Garagnani**, with an amazing display of power and technique on the skis who stormed past Greipel in the closing stages to win by a nail-biting 4 seconds.



Garagnani has won silver medals in 2018 (Etna) and 2019 (Asiago) and was runner-up in Cogne.

She will be pushed hard by her experienced Age-Group teammates, 2013 Zofingen winner, **Virna Stavla** and 2013 & 2014 Winter Triathlon World Champion, **Carmela Vergura**. In the Cogne race, Garagnani was comfortably ahead of them both but this strength and depth in the Italian team will mean that Greipel will have to work hard across all three disciplines and focus on not losing time in the transition area.

Of all the categories, this is likely to be the most exciting one to watch.

For the Men, we get to meet the intrepid Estonian, **Aivar Veri**. For the past few years, we have been able to follow his amazing journeys from Estonia, across Europe to the World and

European Championship venues. From Estonia to Andorra is an easy 3,300km. From Andorra to Asiago is about 1,200km and then to get home is another 2,300km.

Despite all the hours behind the steering wheel, Veri is still able to perform well and has collected a number of podium finishes over the years. Two European silver medals in Cheile Grădiștei, a World bronze in Andorra last year and two further bronze medals at the Europeans in Otepää in 2016 and 2017. His best finish in Asiago was 6<sup>th</sup>, back in 2019.



The remaining places on the start list have been snapped up by the host nation and on paper at least, it looks like the strongest is **Aldo Frigo**.

A 5<sup>th</sup> here in 2020 and an impressive victory in his category in Cogne, where he took the National title with a comfortable 4-minute lead, suggests that he is pretty much the race favourite.



Accompanied by a number of Asiago regulars, the Italian team also has some athletes who are making this event their very first international one. Amongst them, 2021 Embrun Powerman Age-Group category winner, **Diego Zorzan**, who had a DNF in Cogne will be hoping to turn around that disappointment and to post a good time. Who knows, international debut ... first international medal?

Age-Group racing is what keeps our sport so exciting. In the world of sports, there is no other international federation that brings together the Elite, U23, Junior, Para and Age-group athletes in such a way as we see in triathlon.

With so many different combinations of swim, bike, run and ski, we see athletes across the ages compete together and against each other, compete at home and abroad and use multisport as a way of life.

As we move into the 60+ categories, you begin to realise just how important a role sport can play in a person's life and in the older Age-Groups you can truly see the benefit of sport.

The women's 60-64 start list shows **Dr Angela Boczek** and **Frances Hooper**. Germany and Great Britain. The pair have met on numerous occasions; Transylvania for the European Duathlon Championships, Transylvania again for the Cross Duathlon and Cross Triathlon Championships, Cheile Grădiștei for the World and European Winter Triathlon Championships and of course Asiago for the World Championships.



**Radu-Cristi**, Photographer for the Romanian Triathlon Federation, captured this shot of Hooper as she set off on the tough bike course in 2019.

Hooper's 2019 win in Cheile Grădiștei as at a time when both she and Boczek were still learning to ski. Since then, the pair have improved considerably. Hooper's strength and seed on the opening run cannot be matched by the German, who is stronger on the bike. On the final segment, it is again the power and technique of Boczek that is a major threat to the British athlete.



Hooper comes to this race as runner-up at the last Europeans, held in 2019. An early lead in the run and a lightning fast T1 was not enough to keep Austria's **Marianne Hergouth**, at bay.



Hergouth moves up a category this year. The battle between the pair in this age-group for the European title is likely to be won on the bike and skis.

In this category, the reigning Italian champion will face the runner up. The race in Cogne that decided the titles was won by **Gianpiero Brangero** with just a five second advantage over **Gaetano Grillo**. When they faced each other on this Asiago course in 2019 and 2020, it was the younger athlete, Brangero who had significantly greater pace. Somehow, Grillo was able to pull a magnificent performance out of the hat in Cogne. Chasing those five seconds in Asiago could make the race for a podium place rather interesting.

They will have to work hard though, because in this same age-group is the 2021 World Champion, **Janko “Jani” Železnikar** from Slovenia. His 17:46 for the closing ski segment in Andorra in the 60-64 category, was a truly impressive performance. Coming back into form after an injury, he races in Andorra and will no doubt be hoping to collect both titles in 2022.

He faces the 2020 European champion from Austria, **Joachim Rathbauer**. Following the Cheile Grădiștei win, the Austrian went on to win gold in Walchsee at the European Aquabike Championships and then gold at the Europe Triathlon XTERRA Cross Duathlon Championships Dolomiti Paganella. He also raced the Cross Triathlon event there, winning silver.

Rathbauer’s finish time in 2020 was beaten by the younger Czech athlete Ivo Grabmüller, who moves up a category this year. His winning time was 90 seconds quicker than the Austrian. Will Asiago be the chance for this Everest-conquering athlete to add another European title to his impressive collection of wins?



Long-serving coach and competitor, **Andrey Gudalov** will be flying the Russian flag in Asiago. Gudalov has been such an important figure in the sport and has enjoyed podium glory at the last two European championships, where he won bronze and then silver in 2019 and 2020 on the Cheile Grădiștei course. Watch out too for Great Britain’s **Dr Nicholas Farnell**. He has won silver and bronze at the European Winter Triathlon Championships in the past. Now retired, he was one of the small army of Doctors who stepped up to ensure that the vaccination programme in the UK was delivered.



In the Women's 65-69 age-group, we have the reigning Italian Champion and runner-up on the start list. **Luisella labichella** was stronger on the day to take the win in Cogne over **Rossella Carletti**. Both have raced here before with labichella having greater speed on the bike and ski segments. As two-times World and two-times European champion, she looks good for the title here but she will be up against Austrian and German challenges from **Marianne Hergouth** and **Marianne Grünebach**.

Both Mariannes have won European titles in Winter Triathlon. Both have won a host of World and European titles and medals across the multisport spectrum and

both are racing in Andorra over the Duathlon and Triathlon courses. They will arrive in Asiago sharpened and ready to challenge labichella.

**Wolfgang Leonhard** is a medal and title favourite in the Men's 65-69 category. The German athlete has dominated his age-group over the years and comes to the race with 9 World and 3 European titles dating back to 2001.

He knows the Asiago course and venue well, having raced here in both 2019 and 2020. 2019 saw him claim the title. He was beaten into silver in 2020 by a younger Italian athlete but went on to win the world title once more in Andorra in 2021.

He is at present back in Andorra, where he is due to race both the Duathlon and Triathlon. On then to Asiago and another title?



Team mate **Rainer Kaupp** won silver last year in Andorra and then went on to show his strength on the off-road course in the Dolomites at the Europe Triathlon XTERRA Cross Championships Dolomiti Paganella, where he added a silver medal to his collection.



The Italian challenge is led by **Aldo Nobili**, reigning national champion and 2018 European Champion. He is joined by **Gianluigi Zuccardi Merli**, who won bronze in Cogne and by **Paolo Giacomoni**.

A team as strong as this suggests that Italy stands a good chance of at least one place on the podium. We can anticipate some determined racing as they chase Leonhard.

There are no women on the start list for the 70-74 category but we have a strong line-up for the men. 4 athletes racing for the three medals. Who will lose out?



Well, the race favourite has to be **Hans-Peter Grünebach**. The former NATO Officer, a fluent Italian-speaker and one of the biggest supporters of this sport comes back to Asiago as a multiple World and European champion in this discipline. A silver medal here in 2019 was upgraded to gold in 2020. He followed that win with a clear statement of control in Andorra that saw him almost 5 minutes clear of Estonia's **Anti Oot**. Oot has yet to get onto the podium in Asiago but has worn the crown of European Champion in 2016 and 2018 in Otepää and Cheile Grădiștei. Italian hopes will be that **Valter De Rossi** can put in a strong performance. He won bronze here in 2019 but checking the times, he will have to dig deep to match the pace of Germany's three-times European Champion, **Reinhardt Engert**. 4 athletes. Three medals.

In the 75-79 Age-Group, the odds are good that each athlete will get a medal. Three experienced and successful athletes from Germany and Austria will battle it out for the title. **Anton Hergouth** and **Curt Maier** will face **Steffen-Luis Neuendorff**. Of the three, it looks like the youngest, Hergouth, is favourite for the title. His 1:17:18 here in 2020, was ten seconds faster than teammate Maier. Neuendorff won silver here before going on to win gold in the Europeans in 2020 and then gold in Andorra.

Between these gentlemen, there are 24 gold medals that have been won at World and European level, in Winter Triathlon and other multisport events.



Maier, the HSV Kärnten triathlete is known in his team as "Charles Bronson". It looks like we could have a tremendous fight on our hands as he goes head-to-head with Hergouth, a two-times World Triathlon Long-Distance Champion, for the title. His last European crown was at the Valsesia race in 2012. His tally of 9 starts, six podiums and 4 wins is pretty impressive but for Neuendorff, 28 starts, 26 podiums and 16 wins is simply outstanding.

In the 80-84 age-group, a retired hydro-carbon geologist, **Gherardo Mercati**, fresh from his win in Cogne, will be looking to add yet another title to his collection. His results on the international circuit began only in February 2019 when he raced in Asiago. A gold. He then went to Andorra in 2021. Another gold. Off to Târgu Mureş for the European Duathlon Championships, over both sprint and standard distances. Gold medals once more.



At the European Triathlon Championships in Valencia last September, he came away with a gold and a silver for the Sprint and Standard distance races. Rounding off the 2021 season in



Aviles at the European Duathlon Championships, he raced both sprint and standard, coming home with a silver medal for both events, losing out to a young French athlete both times.

## But ....

He is not the oldest athlete. Even though he was born in 1939, there is of course, the one and only, **Reinhold Wolter** from Germany. Born in 1936 and still going strong. Very strong.

It is always a delight to meet this gentleman. He can be seen at long distance ski events, triathlon events, duathlon events and classic car events.

His first European title came in Valsesia in 2021, followed in 2013 with a gold in Tartu, then in 2015 in Reinosa, two further golds in Otepää in 2016 and 2017. It was the 2016 race that multiple World and European Champion, Pavel Andreev, lent his bike to Wolter so that he could race. Gold again in 2018 at the Etna race.



His first trip to Asiago saw the younger Mercati beat him but he came back in 2020 to take the title and then in Andorra last year, he won his fourth World crown.

The Germany team are rightly very proud of Wolter. There is tremendous support from them to him but equally from him and his wife, who always travels with him, to the other members of the team.

Racing as Age-Group athletes is not all about the medals. A very big part of it is the team spirit.

Check out all the start lists here:

<https://triathlon.org/events/start-lists/2022-world-triathlon-winter-cup-asiago>



Austria's golden couple, Anton and Marianne Hergouth in Andorra.

(Photo Credit:  
Hans-Peter Grünebach)

Germany's golden couple,  
Hans-Peter and Marriane  
Grünebach, with Steffan-  
Luis Neuendorff in Andorra.

(Photo Credit:  
Hans-Peter Grünebach)





Sheri Schrock, US Athlete enjoys the wonderful sensation of Gemütlichkeit with the German Age-Group team in Andorra.

Left to right: Steffan-Luis Neuendorff, Sheri Schrock, Reinhold & Waltraud Wolter, Marianne & Hans-Peter Grünebach.



Team GB: Not so many this year but this is a team that has grown and grown over recent years.



Asiago  
2022



Click here to see the results of the Italian Championships, held in Cogne:

ITA Elite Men –

[https://www.fitri.it/images/2022/Gare\\_ITALIA/Tricolori\\_Winter\\_Triathlon\\_COGNE/classifiche/Assoluta\\_Uomini.pdf](https://www.fitri.it/images/2022/Gare_ITALIA/Tricolori_Winter_Triathlon_COGNE/classifiche/Assoluta_Uomini.pdf)

ITA Elite Women –

[https://www.fitri.it/images/2022/Gare\\_ITALIA/Tricolori\\_Winter\\_Triathlon\\_COGNE/classifiche/Assoluta\\_Donne.pdf](https://www.fitri.it/images/2022/Gare_ITALIA/Tricolori_Winter_Triathlon_COGNE/classifiche/Assoluta_Donne.pdf)

ITA Age-Groups –

[https://www.fitri.it/images/2022/Gare\\_ITALIA/Tricolori\\_Winter\\_Triathlon\\_COGNE/classifiche/Class. Categorie.pdf](https://www.fitri.it/images/2022/Gare_ITALIA/Tricolori_Winter_Triathlon_COGNE/classifiche/Class. Categorie.pdf)

**Asiago – see you there!**



Check the event website for regular updates

<https://www.asiagowintertriathlon.com>

**Follow us:**

**Facebook** - <https://www.facebook.com/triathlon7c>

**Instagram** - <https://www.instagram.com/triathlon7c>