Riding the Maratona dles Dolomites: 9000 riders in Italy's stunning mountains

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Ian Parr recounts another successful trip to Italy for the annual Maratona dles Dolomites with 'Team Cycling Weekly' and 9000 other riders

Maratona dles Dolomites 2015

By Ian Parr

The 29th Maratona dles Dolomites was one of the best ever, with glorious sunshine all day. A four hundred strong *Cycling Weekly* team took on the spectacular passes amongst a field of over 9000 riders from 64 countries.

The temperature at 6am was remarkably mild as we filed into our start pens and many had decided not to bother with arm warmers or jackets. Live music and the whirr of helicopters filming from above built the tension as we waited for the gun at 6.30am.

I've ridden the Maratona more than a dozen times and the excitement and anticipation at the start, along with the early-morning sun illuminating the peaks, never fails to get the hairs on the back of my neck standing to attention.

(https://keyassets.timeincuk.net/inspirewp/live/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/07/maratona-2015-Wow.jpg)
9000 riders on the roads of the Maratona dles Dolomites 2015

I decided against the long course as the forecast for late morning was for it to be well into the 30s and I didn't fancy suffering on the mighty Giau in the heat. The Giau comes towards the end of the 138km long course which entails over 4300 metres of climbing. I opted for the middle course of 106km and a mere 3100 metres of ascent.

For those who do the middle and long courses there's the recently added Mur dl Giat, or 'cat's wall' to contend with shortly before the finish. It's a devilish addition to the event which is actually lots of fun. It's a couple of hundred metres at 19 per cent and is packed on either side with noisy spectators who are ready to either pass you a drink, give you a push or pick you off the floor.

Top British guns who shone on the long course were Martin Shaw from Hampshire with 5:13.56, Matthew Davies from Stan's Cycles in Shrewsbury with 5:19.10 and Cycling Weekly riders Andrew Colvin from Croydon and Paul Sewell from Kent with 5:26.39 and 5:27.13 respectively. Fastest CW women were London's Britta Augsberg with 6:43.53 and Ruth Purbrook with 6:51.39. Well done to all!

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Stunning scenery and testing climbs: Maratona dles Dolomites 2015

Just to add a little cautionary tale from my ride involving a bit of bad then good luck. On the descent of the Gardena, the fourth pass of the day, I suffered a flat that was totally avoidable. Despite having new tyres, I'd somehow managed to put a repaired tube in the

front. The heat generated from braking melted the adhesive holding the patch down. This was then compounded by my new tube having a dodgy valve, requiring me to use my final spare.

It wasn't looking like my day when my second CO2 cartridge failed to inflate this last tube due to the little rubber seal on my adaptor disintegrating and allowing the gas to go everywhere other than in the tube.

(https://keyassets.timeincuk.net/inspirewp/live/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/07/maratona-2015-Me-seconds-before-my-flat.jpg)

Ian Parr, just seconds before his flat tyre in the Maratona dles Dolomites

This required me to wait for a service motorbike. Ricardo duly arrived on his well-equipped steed, pumped my tyre up and on my way I went again. With no spare I decided to call it a day at the bottom and just complete the short course. Before Corvara, however, where you either stay left to finish or keep right to continue, my luck changed.

I spotted a little saddle bag in the road and, with apologies to the guy behind me, I braked to pick it up. Inside were two tubes and two bombs with a nice new inflation adapter. So, I was able to continue up Passo Campolongo for the second time and thoroughly enjoy the middle course. Marvellous.

The service and organisation of the Maratona is second to none. Feed stops are fantastically well stocked, assistance, be it mechanical or medical, is quick and efficient and the buzz from the enormous pasta party afterwards is amazing.

The popularity of this event with British and Irish riders continues to grow. Ten years ago it was still a little known event here and *Cycling Weekly* is proud to be responsible for putting it on the cycling map. We've helped make the Maratona, and the Dolomites generally, very popular with individual cyclists and tour operators alike.

(https://keyassets.timeincuk.net/inspirewp/live/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/07/maratona-2015-CW-group-1.jpg)
'Team Cycling Weekly' at the 2015 Maratona dles Dolomites: Click on image to expand

There was an excellent feature a few weeks ago on cycling in The Dolomites on The Cycle Show and a nice piece by Peter Walker in the Guardian newspaper (http://www.theguardian.com/environment/bike-blog/2015/jul/08/maratone-dles-dolomites-bike-race-ups-downs) last week.

Ex-pro Dan Lloyd's five minute video of the Maratona from 2014 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvBy7ASLcBM) is well worth a watch.

A throbbing inbox of emails asking to go and do it again next year is testament to how well it all went and what a fabulous time everyone had. If you'd like to be a part of Team Cycling Weekly for Maratona 2016 then pop an email to wdcyclesport@gmail.com (mailto:wdcyclesport@gmail.com) for info.

Event details: Maratona dles Dolomites official website (http://www.maratona.it/it/)

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Liverpool Phoenix, Maratona dles Dolomites 2015

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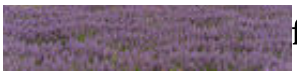
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2. Team Sky say Chris Froome's data was hacked as doping accusations fly (http://www.cyclingweekly.co.uk/racing/tour-de-france/team-sky-say-chris-froomes-data-was-hacked-as-doping-accusations-fly-182288)
3. Team Sky raise the alarm as Tour de France fans turn violent (http://www.cyclingweekly.co.uk/racing/tour-de-france/team-sky-raise-the-alarm-as-tour-de-france-fans-turn-violent-183186)
4. Chris Froome hit with urine as Tour de France fans get nasty (http://www.cyclingweekly.co.uk/racing/tour-de-france/fan-throws-urine-on-chris-froome-and-calls-him-doper-at-tour-de-france-183208)
5. Rider kicked off Tour de France for hitching a lift in another team's car (http://www.cyclingweekly.co.uk/racing/tour-de-france/rider-kicked-off-tour-de-france-for-hitching-a-lift-in-another-teams-car-183239)
6. Lance Armstrong arrives at the Tour de France and wades into doping debate

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