



La 22ème Charly Gaul - September 4, 2011 - Echternach

## Report:

***The 2011 edition of The Charly Gaul will surely be noted as one of the most successful in the history of the race, for the second time since the beginning of the event, more than a thousands of competitors have lined up in Echternach, 1002 exactly. With Ronald Norga, Sandra Huberty and Isabelle Golard, the winners of the B-course and of the women rankings were not at all unknown in the statistics of the race, but the palmares of the A-race saw something new this year: for the first time, an American rider has put his name there, in the person of former professional rider James Mattis.***



more than thousand competitors

1200 competitors had registered on the start lists of the events A or B at La 22ème Charly Gaul, but all of them did ultimately not cut the starting line located on the marketplace: 1002 riders have crossed the timing carpets from Chronorace after the start signal and were thus officially recorded as starters. That means 75 of them fewer than during the record year 2009, but still 56 more than in the last year. 2011 now is the second most popular edition of La Charly Gaul, behind 2009 (1077 starters), but ahead of 2010 (950 competitors) and 2005 (928 riders). There were 326 contenders to set off for the long trip of 163 kilometres, (against 353 in 2010 and 422 in 2010), while 676 riders opted for the shorter distance of 103 km, which is a

new record. In 2009, about twenty riders less took the start of La Charly Gaul B. On the female side, there is a decline on the long distance (9 ladies only starting in 2011 against 11 in 2010 and 19 in 2009), while the number of participants at the 103 km course increased compared to previous editions: 29 starters in 2011, 24 in 2010 and 25 in 2009. On the B-course, 21 riders were recorded as DNF or disqualified, while 17 competitors took the start of the Charly Gaul A without being included in the rankings at the end of the day.

11 riders of 16 years or less were present on one of the two courses, but only one of them, the Dane Frederik Laursen, competed in the long race, where he took an excellent 160th place, at more than 33 km/h average speed. Other achievements: only 16 years young, Ivan Centrone finished 13th in the B Charly Gaul, while Lex Reichling finished his first race ever over 150 km in eleventh position, at the tender age of 19. However, experience is vital to a cyclo-sport competitor and only three riders under twenty years have managed to integrate the Top 50 on the course A, with Alec Lang from Luxemburg (17 years of age) rounding up the list in 50th place. At the other end, the Belgian competitor José Cambrai was the most experienced one in the bunch with 73 years, before the everlasting Albert Even (70 years). While Cambrai finished 472nd in the B-race, Even has won once again the classification of riders over 60 years, crossing the finish line in 149th position of the event A. 37 riders of 60 years and more completed the 22nd Charly Gaul in total. Two registrations always gather a big interest before the race as two riders are the only ones that took part every year without exception from the beginning. Yves Lehnert and Nico Thoma were present again, they did not break the tradition and have both participated in their 22nd Charly Gaul.

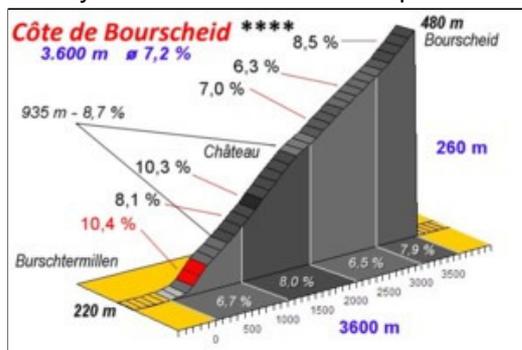
In terms of nationalities, people from Luxemburg

are traditionally dominant, this year, the 282 home riders outperformed the Belgians by 54 units and the French by 129. With 47 contenders at the finish, the Danes occupied the top in the rankings of countries that are not from the border area ahead of the Italians (15 participants). 4 Icelanders, 3 Poles, two Americans, one Canadian and one Slovak constituted the group of exotic riders at the 22nd Charly Gaul. At the 103 km race, the top three nationalities were identical to the aggregate score, while foreigners have dominated the long distance of 163 km: 98 Belgians and 79 Dutch were in a large majority over the 52 riders from Luxembourg. All in all, 17 nations were represented at the 2011 Charly Gaul, against 23 the previous year.



Jule Mohren is among the experienced riders of the 22nd edition

Regarding the course, 2011 has largely innovated compared to recent editions, combining classic climbs of the Luxembourg cycling history (côte de Bourscheid, côte de Hoscheid) with unprecedented roads (côte de Beaufort from Dillingen, côte de Merscheid) and sections already visited in a more distant past: the trip to Boulaide and Misärsbréck was already



côte de Bourscheid

common in the years 2000 to 2003, when start and finish were located in Steinsel. After a long warm-up on the flat of about thirty kilometres, the côte de Fridhaff (3.2 km at 4.1%) was the first climb to break the monotony. While the peloton of race B went straight on to Hoscheid after 44 km, the long distance riders turned left and found themselves at the foot of the main piece of their menu: the côte de Bourscheid, 3.6 km at 7.2% average slope for a total change in altitude of 260 meters was waiting, with passages up to 10% of gradient. Fortunately, the splendid views over the surrounding valleys and the castle of Bourscheid have contributed to

lower the pain of the competitors. A good forty kilometres later, another highlight of the route A turned up for the riders, both in terms of landscape and physical effort. The trip around the Lake of Haute Sure coincided with the double difficulty côte de Boulaide and côte de Schumanseck. The never ending côte de Hoscheid (4.5 km of 5.6%) was again common to both courses, while after the long and traditional descent through Bastendorf and Brandenburg, the final was ridden around Beaufort. All in all, it was probably a less difficult course than in the years before, which suggested a very tactical race for the top positions.

### Report from race A

Riders of the race A (163 km) were the first to set off at 9 in the morning and on the long portion of flat before the first climb, there was lots of nervousness: at 45 km/h average speed, the peloton was stretched in a long line. While the first riders were dropped, one man seemed very eager to start the battle. Belgian Bart Van Damme, second of the Gran Fondo Eddy Merckx, 13th at the legendary Marmotte and 23rd of the terrible Marathon des Dolomites this year, he broke away even before the first climb with another Belgian, Peter Enckels, fourth last year in the Charly Gaul and winner of La Christophe Brandt 2010. Both of them are regulars contenders in cyclo-sport races tough, were even two of the main favourites, but they were not lucky in their attempt since they were reeled in a little bit later.



first climb

If the peloton was more or less compact in Diekirch, after 28 km of racing, it quickly broke into pieces on the côte de Fridhaff. But the slopes of this first climb of the day were not steep enough to make a difference and roughly 150 competitors, half of the peloton, found

themselves together in the valley of the Sure, riding on the flat towards the côte de Bourscheid. In the most difficult climb of the course, Bart Van Damme continued to pace the pack with team-mate Kristof Houben, a multi-talent who combines mountain biking (winner of the open event in Houffalize) and cyclo-sport races (he was second of La Claudy Criquillon and third at the 3 Ballons this year). After the acceleration of these two riders, a group of nine went clear on the côte de Bourscheid with also Benn Wurth, Peter Enckel, James Mattis, Bob Adriansens, Wielfaert Kristof, who won a few weeks ago a race at Lake Charapont in front of professional racer Sébastien Delfosse as well as Anthony Spyschart, winner of the cyclo-sport race Les Six Bourgeois.

There were strong riders at the front, but a group of thirty riders had not yet admitted defeat after Bourscheid, because they were not too back. A frantic pursuit followed on the open roads



They have animated the race: Jean-Charles Martin and Christophe Houben

with strong headwinds near Kehmen and Heiderscheid, then on the road between Grevels and Koetschette, where numerous small climbs made the race very hard. They were finally 21 to bridge up to the front, among them Jean-Charles Martin, the three-time winner and defending champion of La Charly Gaul A, Peter Schroen, the three-time winner and defending champion of La Charly Gaul B, converted this time to the long distance, globe-trotter Lionel Syne, who has already won a dozen of stages at the famous Tour du Faso, Frans Hoveijn, the leader of the Dutch Gaul.nl squad with team-mate Mark Touwen, third of the Charly Gaul 2009 or Genseric Andreoli. In addition to the American Mattis, a few Frenchmen

and the many Dutch and Belgian riders, there were also four contenders from Luxembourg in the new leading group, with former national champions Marc Leyder and Benn Wurth, Tom Kohn and the excellent Lex Reichling, the youngest of the group who normally rides in junior races.

The group of thirty riders split up and reformed over the next climb, with the race tactics causing a regroupement after every split. The gaps remained small, however, because the next group of about 20 riders was just one minute back at Schumanseck, shortly after mid-race. The long climb to Hoscheid (4.5 km at 5.6%) has not really brought any change, but the small and steep côte de Merscheid led to a next selection. Six riders broke away, but in the long descent to Bastendorf and Brandenburg, they got some more company, with 14 riders being now in the lead: last year's winner Martin plus Leyder, Wurth, Van Damme, Andreoli, Mattis, Guyot, Houben, Adriansens, Hoveijn, De Coster, Wielfaert, Spyschaert and the young Lex Reichling

It was expected that the race would be decided in the climb of Beaufort, but American citizen James Mattis did not want to wait until then, he attacked shortly before the uphill. If the rider is very little known over here, he nevertheless enjoys a good reputation overseas where he was US amateur national champion in 2008, ahead of Andy Jacques-Maynes who has since built up a reputation with the pros in races like Tours of California or Colorado. Between 2003 and 2005, Mattis was professional rider at the Webcor team, winning among others a few championships of California, a stage of the Tour de Nez in front of Lance Armstrong's team-mate Antonio Cruz, or the race of San Ardo ahead of a man named Levi Leipheimer. The American broke away, though, and the very active Bart Van Damme did not wait long to jump on his wheel. Both riders climbed the côte de Beaufort at a steady rythm before throwing themselves into the downhill to Grundhof with a small advantage on four pursuing riders: three contenders from Lorraine with Genseric Andreoli, third at a race in his hometown Thionville just two days ago, Antoine Guyot and Jean-Charles Martin, as well as Belgian Kristof Houben.



The two strongest riders: Mattis et Van Damme

The differences were small and doubts still remained with fifteen kilometres to go. But after

some hesitation, the two leaders have managed to increase their advantage more and more, up to a minute when they reached Echternach. The victory was thus battled out in a two man sprint where the American was smartest in taking the lead ahead of the last turns and never allowing the Belgian to come back. James Mattis wins the 22nd edition of La Charly Gaul with a bike length advantage over the Belgian Bart Van Damme, while Genseric Andreoli won the sprint of the chasers for third place. Defending champion Jean-Charles Martin finished in fifth place, while Benn Wurth won the sprint of the next group two minutes later, to take seventh place and the position of best Luxembourger.



Best lady: Isabelle Golard

In the **women's race**, Isabelle Golard and Mini Kaliviniakis were clearly the two strongest. While they were still five being close together after the first climb in Fridhaff, Belgians Laure Mohnen and Katrien Vandewalle as well as Dutch Rien Tienkamp were dropped by the two others in Bourscheid, a few miles later. Golard and Kaliviniakis are used to ride long distances since the first has already made several appearances on the podiums of La Charly Gaul, finishing third in the

women's scratch result down in 2008, while the Dutch rider has already participated in extreme events like Paris-Brest with more than 1200 km of race without interruption. The two girls rode together for a long time, but in the second half of the race, Isabelle Golard managed to get herself into a faster group than her opponent. She finished the event six minutes ahead of the second lady in 226th position of the overall ranking, an hour and 8 minutes behind the male winner. Kaliviniakis was not ranked too far back, she can be found in 235th position of the general classification, while Laure Mohnen completed the women's podium a good twenty minutes behind the winner.

### **Report from the B-race**

15 minutes after the long distance competitors, the riders of the shorter distance took off with a quieter start, their average speed was significantly lower in the first kilometres than in the A-race. But in the climb of Fridhaff, there were numerous accelerations and the pack exploded in all directions. After the descent to Erpeldange, about a hundred riders came together at the front of the race, a number that would decrease a little bit later in the climb of Hoscheid. They were 17 still together at the top of the hill, led by Romain Wolkowia with Quentin and Vincent Melon, but the first chasers were not far behind and bridged up to the leaders on the long descent after the climb of Merscheid. Shortly after the half race, they were eventually about sixty at the front, among them the winners of 2006, 2008 and 2009, Jean-Michel



Leading group in Hoscheid

Thimister, Jeff Decloux and Steve Bourgraff, multiple national champion and former winner on the two distances, Enzo Mezzapesa, Nino Guistizia, a regular Top 10 contender, young and excellent David Klein and Ivan Centrone, 16 years of age for both, other riders from Luxembourg named Sergio Prado, Simon Donne, Manuel Micolino, Patrick Rauen, Emanuel



Norga wins

Da Silva, Thierry Aumer as well as a whole bunch of Belgians who are usually animating the Charly Gaul since a few years now: the Melon brothers, Grosjean, Bastin, Norga or Degroot, winner of La Claudio Chiappucchi a few weeks ago.

In the climb of Beaufort, the selection continued and they were only a handful in front of the race when passing in the village with the castle and the ice stadium. But the downhill to Grundhof was long and on the flat section direction Echternach, a dozen other riders joined the ranks of contenders for the win again, among them Thimister and

the two from Luxembourg, Centrone and Mezzapesa. The differences were small and behind the fifteen leading riders, a large field of forty was led by defending champion Steve Decloux at less than a minute. They did however not manage to come back and the victory was decided in a tight sprint of fifteen, where Ronald Norga, fifth in the Charly Gaul B in 2009, imposed his law without discussion. Taking all the risks in the last corners, the Belgian was two bike length ahead of his compatriots Jean-Pierre Degroot and Romain Wolkowia. Thimister, the Melon brothers, Jeremy and Grosjean completed the triumph of the Belgians on the positions 4 to 7, while Enzo Mezzapesa was the highest ranked Luxembourg rider in twelfth place, just ahead of the young Ivan Centrone.



Les meilleures dames: Huberty et Kovelter

In the **women's race**, Sandra Huberty has won La Charly Gaul for the second time after 2008. The multi-task woman (triathlon, cycling, running) was accompanied during a while by Christine Kovelter, but she managed to get rid of the member of the UC Dippach in the final. Until the finish in Echternach, Huberty has opened a gap of two and a half minutes on Kovelter, finishing in a nice 188th place of the overall ranking, 15 minutes only after the male winner. Kovelter was ranked 215th overall, while the third lady, Anna-Kreeta Rantamaa from Finland, was more than 7 minutes behind the best lady in 271st position of the common rankings with the male competitors.

