

Jasper Philipsen makes it two

Belgian sprinter ace Jasper Philipsen (Alpecin-Fenix) took his second stage victory in Turgutreis twenty-four hours after breaking the ice in Marmaris. He outclassed Mark Cavendish (Deceuninck-Quick Step) and André Greipel (Israel Start-Up Nation) after helping his team-mate Jay Vine to gain three seconds bonus and come into the last stage only one second on race leader José Manuel Diaz (Delko)!

“It was a hard day”, Philipsen said. “It started with a hard climb. Some riders wanted to make the race hard. The peloton split then it came back together but then we had the crosswinds. So it was actually never easy today. I’m yet to check my speed in the final sprint but that was a fast one for sure. At this speed, I had to come from behind. I know if I could do that, it would be very hard for the other guys to come over. I had a good power in my legs. At the intermediate sprint, we were dedicated to take the bonus seconds for Jay. It’ll be make it a nice final day tomorrow to fight for the GC. We’ll try to do our best to win the race overall. For me personally, two wins in a row is already nice, so we’ll see what tomorrow brings.”

Stage 7 started with a tailwind up the hill at the exit of Marmaris. Four riders went clear off the peloton before km 10: Alessandro Tonelli (Bardiani CSF-Faizanè), Francesco Gavazzi (EOLO-Kometa), Julen Irizar (Euskaltel) and Danilo Celano (Sapura). They got a maximum advantage of 4’30’’ on the line of the Beauties of Turkey prime won at km 25 by Irizar ahead of Gavazzi and Tonelli. Celano was more interested in the KOM prices and took the two of them. In the main climb after 35 km of racing, 19 riders formed the first part of the peloton, including Merhawi Kudus (Astana), Eduardo Sepulveda (Androni), Jojhan Garcia (Caja Rural), Anthon Charmig (UnoX), race leader Diaz and three of his companions from Delko. It was eventually bunched up again. The four leading riders were reeled in with 53km remaining. Alpecin-Fenix made a 1-2-3 in the intermediate sprint with Jay Vine taking 3’’ seconds bonus ahead of Jasper Philipsen and Marcel Meisen. Attacks kept going on the way to Turgutreis. Willie Smit (Burgos BH) rode solo for a while despite the headwind but got caught with 22km to go. The last attackers were successively Michel Griessemann (SKS Sauerland), Jokin Aranburu (Euskaltel) and Shane Archbold (Deceuninck-Quick Step).

All riders looked exhausted at the end of the stage that was the second hardest in difference in altitude after stage 5. The wind and the aggressiveness of the riders made it even more competitive.

“It’s been another difficult day”, race leader Diaz confirmed. “We started very fast. It was very competitive and selective from the gun. A group of four riders went away and got some time. They took some time but we caught them eight kilometres before the bonus sprint and at the end there was some tension because of the wind. Alpecin-Fenix took us by surprise at the intermediate sprint. They took the time bonus [for runner up Jay Vine]. Now I’m the leader only by one second. Tomorrow, I’ll to do the maximum to retain this lead, even though it’s slim. In reality we have a very strong team. We outnumbered the others in the first part of the peloton when the race was hard. We controlled the whole race except for this intermediate sprint. We’ll have to pay more attention to that tomorrow.”

Philipsen took the green jersey over from Cavendish and that will be the other classification to follow in the conclusive stage whereas the King of the Mountains and the Beauties of Turkey prime competitions seem sealed.

“It’s been a very hard stage”, also echoed Buts who retained the red jersey. “I didn’t manage to make the breakaway today. I didn’t take any more KOM points. Luckily, the points have been taken by people who were quite far down on me in the classification. For now I’m serene and happy that I still have the red jersey. Tomorrow is the last day. I’ll control Danilo Celano who took some points today. He’s the only one who can take this jersey from me.”

Ivar Slik, Beauties of Turkey prime leader, concluded: “Today it was too hard for me with a lot of climbing directly from the start. I’m happy just to have finished this stage. We had two climbs to start with and tailwind to make it even harder. Astana begun to push and I think the peloton was split in five groups. In the descent I made the second big group and after fighting for 100km, we finally came back together. But at the end of the day, none of my rivals took points and I’m assured of keeping the white jersey tomorrow.”