

## **The key points:**

**119 riders are expected to line up in the 55<sup>th</sup> edition of the Presidential Tour of Turkey.**

**“New” but “nostalgic” route to remember the event was created as Marmara Tour in 1963 and firstly won by Turkish cycling icon Rifat Çalışkan.**

## **Merhawi Kudus, a hot favorite**

17 teams of 7 riders each, divided into 6 WorldTour teams, 10 Pro Continental teams and the national team of Turkey will contest the 55<sup>th</sup> Presidential Tour of Turkey (16-21 April) that will start and finish on the historical Sultanahmet Square in Istanbul. The queen stage is on the penultimate day with an unprecedented finish at the ski resort of Kartepe throughout a 20-km long climb that will take the riders to the altitude of 1300 metres. Tour of Rwanda winner Merhawi Kudus of Astana is touted as a the favorite with Jan Polanc (UAE Team Emirates), Felix Großschartner (Bora-Hansgrohe), Jhonathan Restrepo (Manzana-Postobon) and Belgian prodigy Remco Evenepoel (Deceuninck-Quick Step) in the role of the underdogs.

“This is my second participation to the Presidential Tour of Turkey”, Kudus said. “Five years ago, I was a neo pro with MTN-Qhubeka and I got mixed feelings. I came fourth in the queen stage (to Elmali) but I crashed out with a broken collarbone on the last day in Istanbul. I think my form is good enough to compete for the overall win this time but it will all depend on my recovery after my crash on the last day of the Volta Catalunya in Barcelona.”

## **A star-studded field of sprinters**

Out of six stages, one is for the climbers, two suit the puncheurs and three seem to favour the sprinters. Once again, some of the world’s top fast men have chosen the Presidential Tour of Turkey to perform their art. With four victories under his belt this year including two at Paris-Nice, Ireland’s Sam Bennett (Bora-Hansgrohe) leads the field after he won seven stages in the past two editions of the Turkish race held in October. Caleb Ewan (Lotto-Soudal) makes his come back to racing after Milan-Sanremo. It’s his second participation to the TUR after his pro debut in 2015 when he came second to Mark Cavendish on stage 1 to Alanya. The superstar from Dimension Data who also achieved seven victories in two straight appearances in Turkey (2014 and 2015) returns to competing after his abandon on stage 2 in Paris-Nice. However, Deceuninck-Quick Step features a fabulous train with interchangeable lead out men and sprinters: Fabio Jakobsen, Alvaro Hodeg, Max Richeze, Michael Mørkøv and Davide Martinelli.

## **Around the Marmara Sea**

Erol Küçükbakırcı, the president of the Turkish cycling federation, called the race a “nostalgic Tour” in the press conference on the eve of the 55<sup>th</sup> edition of the event that changed its name from Marmara Tour in its inception in 1963 to Presidential Tour of Turkey in 1968. He himself took part in the event in its early days and represented his country in the individual road race at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich along with Rifat Çalışkan who won the inaugural edition of the stage race now known as the TUR. According to the archives of daily newspaper Cumhuriyet, 5000 noisy spectators escorted Çalışkan to Istanbul’s train station carrying him up in the air with his bicycle after his 922km long journey around the Marmara Sea on a similar course that makes the menu this year.

## **TV: The TUR to be seen in 190 countries**

The 2019 Presidentiel Tour of Turkey has a TV coverage in 190 countries via 39 media right holders. The race is broadcast live every day in Turkey on TRT Spor, also in Europe and Asia on Eurosport, in New Zealand on Sky Sport, in Sub-Saharan Africa on Supersport, in the USA and 18 Latin American countries on Global Cycling Network via Facebook Watch, and newly this year in Australia on SBS, in France on La Chaine L’Equipe and in Colombia on Señal Colombia.