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22-28 AUGUST 2022

**SOMMET MONDIAL
DU TRAIL RUNNING**



**Spain dominates the 2022 edition of
the OCC**

The two runners Manuel Merillas and Antonio Perez dominated the men's event. Victory was gained by Merillas in 5 hours, 18 minutes and 29 seconds, ahead of his team-mate and room-mate Perez who finished in second place 2 minutes and 30 seconds after him. For the women's event, Spain also dominated with Sheila Aviles claiming victory ahead of Nuria Gil.

1.200 runners took the start of the 8th edition of the OCC from Orsières in Switzerland at 8:15 am this morning, connecting Champex then Chamonix, for 55km and a 3.500m climb on the programme.

With perfect sunny weather and clear skies, there was no jockeying for position. With this hyper fast format, and large numbers of runners, the fastest did not take the time to measure themselves against each other. From the outset, the favourites took up their positions, initially with a trio made up by the Eritrean Petro Mamu, the British Robbie Simpson and the French 2022 European vice-champion Arnaud Bonin.

This trio blazed along the trail until reaching Trient, successively swapping the lead. This was followed by a long climb of about 9km, leading to the Col de Balme, the high point of the trail and a new feature of the 2022 edition. This is where Manuel Merillas, Skyrunning world champion in 2021, pushed hard to come back from behind. As the 31-year-old took the lead of the race, Petro Mamu inexorably lost his pace. Antonio Perez for his part gained ground on the next descent, leading to Argentière. At the beginning of the climb towards La Flégère, the Spanish duo alternated the race lead, just a few minutes ahead of Simpson and Bonin, who were not able to match the pace to claim victory.

When it came to tackling the final descent on La Flégère, Perez suffered from cramp. Merillas, imperturbable, kept up his incredible pace and once again took the lead which he maintained all the way, to win in 5 hours and 18 minutes. He follows on from last year's winner Jonathan Albion (GBR) and will be running the CCC tomorrow. He finished 2 minutes and 30 seconds ahead of his friend Perez and 5 minutes and 30 seconds ahead of Simpson.

The Frenchman Arnaud Bonin finished in 4th place, ahead of Paul Mathou and Nicolas Martin, for a fine French finish. "The aim was to finish in the top 5, so I can say that achieved I my goal, I am really happy. When battling it out at the front until half-way through the trail, we expect to get on the podium. But they held on tight at the front..." explained Bonin. *"Last year I was very calm, starting from the back. This year I wanted to be at the front. I really enjoyed it - I was running very fast until Trient!"*



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As for the women, Spain also came up with a double win under the Chamonix sun. While the American Allie Mc Laughlin dominated most of the race, she completely lost her pace on the climb from Argentière to La Flégère, to give way to Sheila Aviles Caston who claimed victory in 6 hours, 10 minutes and 16 seconds. *"After two years of injuries where I had lost confidence in myself, this victory has a particular flavour, it is very important for me"* said Sheila Aviles. *"I did not start too fast, I relied on the fact that the others would let up ahead, and I began to feel really good from km23, determined to win this race"*. Nuria Gil Clapera finished 2nd about 6 minutes behind and the American Dani Moreno 3rd, 7 minutes behind.

Tomorrow, the UTMB Mont-Blanc is going to be even more intense, with the start of the CCC at 9am from Courmayeur, and the UTMB at 6pm from Chamonix.

With its start from the Italian village, the trail around the Mont-Blanc, its passage through Switzerland and its finish in Chamonix after 100km and 6.100m of ascent, the CCC is often the race that leads to Ultra-Trail running.

Two stars of the discipline will be at the start: Jonathan Albon (GBR) and Blandine L'Hirondel (FRA), both winners of the OCC last year who will be attempting to win over the longer distance of this year's edition. Thibaut Baronian (FRA), 3rd last year in this CCC, will also be at the start. Competition will be fierce with the Americans David Sinclair and Hayden Hawks (2nd in the Western States Endurance Run), the Chinese Jiasheng Shen (3rd in the Lavaredo Ultra Trail by UTMB), the Italian Andreas Reiters (4th in the CCC last year), the Swedish Petter Engdahl (3rd in the OCC last year) and the Norwegian Anders Kjaerevik (3rd in the Penyalgosa Trails in Spain).

Among the women, Blandine L'Hirondel, French and European champion in 2022, will be a huge favourite, and Ruth Croft (NZ), winner of the Western States endurance Run in June, will not be starting the race. But Abby Hall (2nd last year) and Taylor Nolwin, the Canadian Jazmine Lowther (2nd in the 82km of the Sinister 7 Ultra), and the Czech Marcela Vasinova (5th in the Mont-Blanc Marathon) will be fine opponents for the French runner.

At the end of the day, the streets of Chamonix will be heaving with spectators to welcome the pack of runners who will take the start of the UTMB. Among the 2.300 competitors registered, we will find a plethora of favourites, who should battle it out mercilessly for victory over the 170km and 10.000m of ascent on the programme.

The American Jim Walmsley will attempt to win a first title for the United States in the men's race. Kilian Jornet (SPA) will be seeking a 4th win. Confronting them, the 2019 winner Pau Capell (SPA), the German Hannes Namberger, winner of the Lavaredo Ultra Trail by UTMB in June, and a fierce French trio made up of Thibaut Garrivier (winner of the CCC 2021), Aurélien Dunand-Pallaz (2nd last year) and Germain Grangier as well as the Chinese Jiaju Zhao and Yanqiao Yun.

For the women, the Dutch Ragna Debats, winner of the CCC 2019, will seek to win over the longer distance. Her contenders will be the young Katie Schide (USA), making constant progress (winner just over a month ago of the Val d'Aran by UTMB and 8th in the UTMB 2021), the experienced Mimi Kotka (SWE), the French Audrey Tanguy and Manon Bohard and the Chinese Fuzhao Xiang.

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