

Cavendish strikes again, JM Diaz wins 56th Presidential Tour of Turkey

Mark Cavendish (Deceuninck-Quick Step) claimed his fourth stage win on the conclusive day of the 56th Presidential Tour of Turkey as he outsprinted Jasper Philipsen (Alpecin-Fenix) and Kristoffer Halvorsen (UnoX). Spain's José Manuel Diaz (Delko) defended his one-second advantage over Jay Vine (Alpecin-Fenix) to win the 56th Presidential Tour of Turkey.

"I'm very happy", Cavendish reacted. "Four wins is a lot more than I expected before the TUR. Ahead of the sprint I realised Israel had a full team there so they were gonna hit the front. But UnoX came and I went with them. I ended up in the right position. I was scared to be stuck looking at the barriers but it went well and I'm super happy to win again."

It was a very tactical stage with the intermediate sprint located only 23.4km after the start. Alpecin-Fenix had in mind to set it up for Vine again but Diaz's team-mate Mauro Finetto rode away solo to take three seconds away from the Australian. Diaz was safe after the bonus sprint and felt protected with one team-mate in the break that went away at half way into the stage, including Samuele Rivi (EOLO-Kometa), Stijn Steels (Deceuninck-Quick Step), Delio Fernandez (Delko), Sean De Bie (Bingoal Pauwels Sauces WB), Sergey Tvetcov (Wildlife Generation), Erik Resell (UnoX), Willie Smit (Burgos BH), Davide Cimolai (Israel Start-Up Nation), Alessandro Tonelli and Mirko Maestri (Bardiani CSF-Faizanè). They didn't get more than 1'10" lead but standing at 33" overall, Fernandez was the virtual leader and it forced Alpecin-Fenix and Androni to chase in order to defend the second and third places of Vine and Eduardo Sepulveda. Soon after the regrouping, Javier Romo (Astana), Danilo Celano (Sapura) and Jhojan Garcia (Caja Rural-RGA) rode away, the latter being another threat to the race leader as he was fourth on GC at 25". It was all together again in the last hairpin with 2.3km to go where Vine went down, so the overall win definitely went to Diaz.

"I'm very happy with this victory", the Spaniard said. "Today it was a pretty difficult stage with a lot of attacks. A breakaway of ten riders went up the road. My team-mate Fernandez was part of it so it was perfect for us. In the last climb, one rider from Caja Rural [Garcia] who was fourth on GC attacked. It's really important for me to win the Tour of Turkey. My career started five years ago with Israel Cycling Academy. I've made it step by step. This year I've made one step forward. At all riders are like Egan Bernal who wins the Tour de France at the age 21. But at the end, we arrive too. Turkey is a fantastic country. It's beautiful. The race was very well organised. I'll keep the souvenir of my first overall victory."

Vine, second overall, hinted his disappointment: "It was pure racing all the way today. I think at some stage it was every man for himself, trying to deal with crosswinds and get away with small groups. We couldn't get time bonus during the stage this time and I went down in the final corner. It's when the dream sort of died. Second overall, it'll take a little bit to sink in because it was all about trying to go for the win. After taking seconds yesterday, it was possible. But for my first pro race with a pro team, it's a pretty good result."

Sepulveda, third, added: "A victory would have been better than the third place but today was very hard. There were many attacks. Delko put one rider in the front so we had to chase them down to defend my position on GC. During the TUR, we also received the news that we're going to do the Giro d'Italia, which is very important for us."

Ivar Slik, the Beauties of Turkey prime winner, commented: "It's been a hard TUR. Out of eight stages, I didn't feel great during three stages but at the end I go home with a nice jersey. It's a good trophy for a team like us. It's an honour for a Continental team to get the possibility to compete with strong teams in such a big race like the Tour of Turkey. We are satisfied."

King of the Mountains Vitaliy Buts was possibly the most enthusiastic of the winners: “I managed to win the first KOM and seal the King of the Mountains. I’m happy that I did what I wanted to win this jersey. In the second KOM, I didn’t have to worry about Danilo Celano anymore. I believe he was targeting the stage when he attacked. I’m very satisfied with the TUR. Riding for a Turkish team, it’s beautiful to win a distinctive jersey in this race.”