



## Who will succeed Michael Valgren Andersen in Ninove?

*Saturday 2 March marks the start of the Flemish spring, with Omloop Het Nieuwsblad. Anyone wanting to greet the top racers like Van Avermaet, Matthews and European champion Trentin for the first time in Flanders this season, is best advised to make their way to 't Kuipke. These riders are joined on the provisional list of participants for the first European WorldTour race of the season by a host of the world's top cycling names.*

For Belgium's leading stars, the opening classic on home roads has for many years now been an early season goal and Deceuninck - Quick-Step selection for the race to Ninove boasts, amongst others, two-time winner of Dwars door Vlaanderen Yves Lampaert along with Philippe Gilbert and Zdenek Stybar.

The other Belgian WorldTour team racing on home soil, Lotto Soudal, have had their eye on victory in Omloop Het Nieuwsblad for several years. They're sending some firepower to Ghent including Tiesj Benoot, Jens Keukeleire and Tim Wellens. Winner in 2016 and 2017, Greg Van Avermaet leads the new CCC Team, supported by last year's runner up behind Michael Valgren Andersen, Lukasz Wisniowski.

AG2R La Mondiale brings a popular name to Ghent with Oliver Naesen looking to improve on a string of strong performances over the past seasons, whilst 2012 winner Sep Vanmarcke will be looking for repeat success, now with EF Education First, counting on the support of former winner Sebastian Langeveld. Trek-Segafredo bring Belgians Edward Theuns and Jasper Stuyven on their provisional start list, together with their young talented Dane, Mads Pedersen. Another Belgian youngster to watch is Jasper Philipsen, with the UAE Team Emirates ready to tackle the Haaghoeek, Molenberg and Muur van Geraardsbergen in his first season as a pro.

Jürgen Roelandts and Jens Debusschere transferred teams in the winter. For their new teams, Movistar Team and Team Katusha Alpecin respectively, they are at the top of the first selections. Wout van Aert's first classic adventure with Team Jumbo-Visma awaits at Omloop Het Nieuwsblad. Jan Bakelants is also kicking off the season at his new Sunweb team alongside fast man Michael Matthews.

In addition to the Australian, more fast legs are present on the provisional list of participants in the opening classic: European champion Matteo Trentin (Mitchelton-SCOTT) and Frenchman Arnaud Démare (Groupama-FDJ). At Team Sky, they are currently counting on the strong man Ian Stannard, winner of the 2014 and 2015 Omloop Het Nieuwsblad, and Luke Rowe.

Some interesting names can also be found among the seven wildcards, including Niki Terpstra, who this winter made the switch to ProContinental team Direct Energie. Stijn Devolder brings his experience to the race with Corendon-Circus, while classics rider Lars Boom leads his Roompot-Charles team.

The final team selections may be subject to change in weeks leading up to the race, and Flanders Classics will be sure to communicate every important change.