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Alejandro Valverde reaches seventh heaven

Spanish veteran claims first World title ahead of Romain Bardet and Michael Woods.

30.09.2018 Innsbruck Events, Sport - Bike Innsbruck-Tirol Rad WM 2018 GmbH

Innsbruck-Tirol hosted a fantastic week of races.

After six times finishing on the podium of the Men Elite Road World Championship, Alejandro Valverde claimed the gold medal for Spain for the first time at the age of 38. He rode away up the Höll, the gruelling climb at the end of the race, along with France's Romain Bardet and Canada's Michael Woods to beat them in a four-man sprint after the return of the Dutchman Tom Dumoulin. The final event crowned a wonderful week of sport in Innsbruck-Tirol.

MEN ELITE ROAD RACE PODIUM

1 – Alejandro Valverde - 258km in 6h46'41", average speed 38.064km/h

2 – Romain Bardet s.t.

3 – Michael Woods s.t.

QUOTES

The winner, Alejandro Valverde said in the press conference: "The World Championship and the Tour de France were the races I dreamt of

winning. It didn't work out at the Tour but finally, I'm the World Champion. It's not the first time I've cried after winning a bike race but this is the most emotional because many times I've been afraid that I'd never get the Rainbow Jersey. The weather, the team, the race… everything played in my favour to make my dream come true today. The fantastic crowd in Tirol has been a motivating factor also. It was impressive to ride in front of so many enthusiastic spectators. I would have preferred to launch my sprint in second or third position but not knowing who was coming behind, I had to take my responsibilities. When Tom Dumoulin came across, I thought now that we're four, one of us won't get a medal. Once I reached the 350 metres to go, that was my perfect distance for launching my sprint.

"I didn't know that I was the second oldest World Champion but that means old cyclists can still win. I believe Il Lombardia will be my first race in the Rainbow Jersey."

Romain Bardet, second, said: "On a flat finish, it was hard to beat a guy like Alejandro Valverde. Earlier, I was hoping for Julian [Alaphilippe] or Thibaut [Pinot] to come back but once it came down to a sprint on the flat, I knew I'm not faster than this guy. Unfortunately, Julian wasn't able to follow us in the last climb because he had cramps. I had a mechanical at the top and I was afraid to lose everything at that moment but everyone's legs were burning and I didn't lose ground."

Michael Woods, third, said: "It's certainly a slight surprise for me to make the podium but I was hoping for this. It was my goal coming into this race. When we did the course recon, I realized this last climb was for me. When drafting isn't important, I'm pretty good. Up the Höll, my ears were ringing because the people were so loud and I could hear their cow bells. Even before the race, I told myself I'd try to get inspiration and energy from what the fans bring to the race. There were so many fans today! Coming from another sport, it's been hard for me to believe that I could win when so good riders are in the field but my stage victory at La Vuelta helped me boost my confidence. Now I'm starting to believe in myself."

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Audio

Alejandro Valverde - Spain

Photos, 300 dpi

Innsbruck-Tirol hosted a fantastic week of races.

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Keywords: 2018 UCI Road World Championships

Romain Bardet, Alejandro Valverde and Michael Woods formed the winning move up the Höll.

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The World Championship is probably the most colourful event in cycling.

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After three straight victories, Peter Sagan greeted his successor Alejandro Valverde on stage.

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Bravehearts from Scandinavia Kasper Asgreen and Vegard Stake Laengen surrendered only in the last 20km.

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The Rainbow Jersey took some tears out of Alejandro Valverde.

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Amazing mood in the fan zone near Ambras castle.

Innsbruck-Tirol 2018 / Jan Hetfleisch

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Fans cheered for the stars of cycling.

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Austrian lead in the peloton.

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Riding through Innsbruck's historic city centre.

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Start in Kufstein.

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Amazing view in Kufstein.

Innsbruck-Tirol 2018 / Benjamin Hundsbichler

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Keywords

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