

Great praise for the new Swissalpine K68 race in Davos, despite an unfortunate mishap

### **One actual winner and one moral winner**

On Saturday Riccardo Montani of Italy finished first in the new Swissalpine K68 race in Davos. With a finishing time of just over six hours, Montani delivered a head to head race with the Swiss Raphael Sprenger. Stephan Wenk of Zürich, third across the finish line, was declared the moral winner due to an unfortunate detour he ended up making while on the course. Marcela Vasinova of the Czech Republic won the women's category. The elite cross-country skier Jason Ruesch of Davos dominated the K23.

67 kilometers, 2606 m altitude difference, four mountain passes, one panoramic trail and eight alpine valleys, start and finish in Davos are the main details of the K68 race, which was on Saturday staged for the first time as part of the 35. Swissalpine event. Fastest on the trail was Riccardo Montani (27) of Italy. He finished the demanding course in 6:12:28,2 hours. Montani passed Raphael Sprenger, who long held the lead, only on the last flat kilometer. The Italian had the greater reserves leading up to the finish line. "On the last kilometers I could hear how the supporters were cheering the leader of the race on, and when I saw him in front of me it gave me renewed energy for the finish" said Montani. After more than six hours on the race course Sprenger was beat by only 16,4 seconds. Sprenger was satisfied with his strong performance, which compensated for the defeat late in the race. "Montani was in the end stronger", he stated, demonstrating good sportsmanship.

### **Wenk's long detour**

Stephan Wenk, who finished third was less happy crossing the finish line. 18 kilometers into the race at the Scaletta pass, Wenk and the American T-Roy Brown were leading the race with a good margin. They then unfortunately overlooked the trail towards the Panoramatrail stretch of the course and instead headed down the valley. Up to this point they were running faster than anticipated by the organizers, who had not yet finished marking this part of the race course. The two only discovered their mistake much later. Wenk later at the finish line estimated a detour of approximately 20 minutes on the course. While Brown decided to quit, Wenk took up the chase and was able to catch up with the leading runners at Fanezzfurrga. Due to this additional effort, however, he lacked strength on the final 10 kilometers and had to see himself beaten to the finish line by his rivals by more than eight minutes. The race directors reached a salomonic verdict: they confirmed Wenk's third position, declared him the moral winner of the race and awarded him the same prize money as the winner Montani, 2000 Swiss Francs.

## **Vasinova arrived late, ran fast and was invincible**

The women's K68 race was dominated by the Czech runner Marcela Vasinova, since four years domiciled in Salzburg (Austria). The 31-year old had only decided to sign up for the race last Tuesday. "Because of the uncertain situation due to the Corona virus I didn't want to risk paying the fee and then not being able to participate", she explained. Vasinova ran the 68 kilometers in 6:59:12,1 hours. At the finish line she stated that the race was "very tough" and unusually long for her. "I am more used to running shorter but steeper races." She beat second placed Kathrin Götz by a good 20 minutes. Third to finish was Luzia Bühler, who placed first in 2020. Last year the T88 race was, however, some 20 kilometers longer. Early on in the race, the seven time Swissalpine winner Jasmine Nunige from Davos had to quit the race due to severe hip pain.

## **Rüesch' successful revenge**

The elite cross-country skier Jason Rüesch won the K23 race from Klosters to Davos (23 kilometers +634m/-235m) in 1:31:00,1 hours, almost two minutes faster than the Liechtenstein runner Arnold Aemisegger. One year ago, Aemisegger beat Rüesch in the same race. Rüesch was able to distance his fellow competitors on the downhill towards the Lake Davos after the highest point in the race. "I knew I had to stay with the leading group in the ascent. Once on the downhill I attacked and was able to open up a gap", explained Rüesch. Donnino Anderhalden, who finished third was also part of the leading group for the better part of the ascent.

In the women's K23 race Shelly Schenk won in 1:47:36,3 hours, 45 seconds ahead of Austria's Lena Laukner and a good two minutes ahead of the Swiss Marketa Maly.