

German classic stars meet new challengers - many favorites for May 1

May 1 will be a reunion of all active German classic winners. No less than five riders are aiming again for another title at Eschborn-Frankfurt. John Degenkolb (2011 winner), Alexander Kristoff (2014-2018), Pascal Ackermann (2019), Jasper Philipsen (2021) and Sam Bennett (2022) want to cheer again in front of the Alte Oper. Whether the course update of the Sport Director Fabian Wegmann (2009, 2010) will suit them or a new name will enter the list of winners of the German WorldTour race remains open.

One thing is already certain: Eschborn-Frankfurt 2023 will have a noticeably more classic character. The 200-kilometer classic distance will be reached again and there will be more altitude. The focus of the course update is the Feldberg. The highest mountain in the Taunus region will be climbed twice this year, as it must be conquered again halfway into the race - plus from the more difficult, southwestern ascent. After the pros already have the second crossing of the Mammolshainer in their legs, it goes directly on for them over the Billtalhöhe to the Feldberg.

With the new climbing part and a shorter route from the last Mammolshainer climb to the finish, the chances of success for Taunus attacks increase. This route update and previously offensively ridden spring classics guarantee excitement on May 1.

Defending champion in focus

As many as five German classic winners are at the start in Eschborn. **Jasper Philipsen** (Alpecin-Deceuninck) comes out of a three-week break from racing with momentum. With victories at the WorldTour classic in De Panne and at the Scheldeprijs, the unofficial sprinters' world championship, as well as a 2nd place at Paris-Roubaix, the 25-year-old is one of the stars of the spring.

For **John Degenkolb** (Team DSM), too, it was a special week of classics in top form. The disappointment of Roubaix will no longer play a role in the home race. Fans can look forward to a "local hero" who will continue to actively shape the German classic in his 13th professional season. In his 1st professional year there was the home victory - perhaps the 13 in two weeks brings luck. **Alexander Kristoff** (Uno-X Pro Cycling Team) has also set his sights high. With great experience, the German classic series winner has also celebrated a successful start to the season in his new team. However, the veteran looks at the new Feldberg climb with respect and hopes to be able to fend off attacks.

Pascal Ackermann (UAE Team Emirates) was the last German to celebrate in Frankfurt. The 29-year-old is still waiting for his first win of the season and would like to give a finetuning on the German classic before his start at the Giro d'Italia. For defending champion **Sam Bennett** (BORA - hansgrohe), the season has been a roller coaster so far. Starting the year with a win and good stage sprints, the classics weeks fell through. Motivated by the start number 1, Eschborn-Frankfurt should become a successful racing comeback.

Is a new German classic name riding into the spotlight?

The only German team in the UCI WorldTour, BORA - hansgrohe, will go into the home race with the defending champion as well as German champion **Nils Politt** and **Max Schachmann**. Both can handle the new demands in the Taunus and make the race very selective.

Also, for **Jonas Rutsch** (EF Education - EasyPost) the more demanding course could pay off. The 2nd of the U23 German classic of 2018 wants to be on the podium in Frankfurt after a very good spring also in the pros. Last year he unsuccessfully sought an early decision in the Taunus, now there are new opportunities.

With **Max Walscheid** (Cofidis) and **Georg Zimmermann** (Intermarché - Circus - Wanty), other Germans have announced their participation. The 29-year-old Walscheid still has a score to settle with the German classic. He was only once at the start in Eschborn but could not finish the race in 2018. After his strong 8th place at Paris-Roubaix, he now comes to the Taunus with confidence. Zimmermann will celebrate his German classic hat trick on May 1. After serving his sprint captains in the previous two years and successfully piloting them to or near the podium, the extra altitude might now suit the winner of the Deutschland Tour junior classification.

Arnaud de Lie (Lotto Dstny) could steal the show from the German fans' favorites. The top talent, who is only 21 years old, already made an impression at his German classic premiere last year, when sprinting straight to 7th place. With this result, three victories this season and a successful classics campaign under his belt, the end-fast Belgian is no longer considered an underdog.

"There is no clear trend to be seen in the teams' preliminary rider nominations. Pure sprinters are just as much part of it as the mountain-proof and classics-tested names. I'm curious to see how the riders take to the new course. A look back at the spring classics shows that many races were very open and early attacks often brought a preliminary decision or even the decision. We have prepared the right course for this - now it is up to the attack-minded riders to take advantage of this opportunity," says **Fabian Wegmann**, Sport Director of Eschborn-Frankfurt.

The elite race starts on May 1 at 12:05 p.m. in Eschborn. After the neutral start, 203.8 kilometers have to be completed. After a first finish in Frankfurt at race kilometer 15, the peloton heads into the Taunus Mountains. It will first go on the usual route over the Feldberg (KM 46.5) and then via Eppstein for the first time over the Mammolshainer Stich (KM 92). After the second Mammolshainer crossing (KM 107.9), the route leads over the Billtalhöhe to the southwestern ascent of the Feldberg (KM 117.8). Via Kittelhöhe and Glashütten, the Mammolshainer (KM 167.8) will be approached again before the final to Frankfurt. After the riders in the finale have passed the finish once, the final lap is rung in.