

WORLD CHAMPION, ALEJANDRO VALVERDE, WILL WEAR BIB NUMBER 1

The brilliant world champion, Alejandro Valverde, will be honoured in La Vuelta 19 by wearing bib number 1. The 22 teams that will commence the 74th edition of La Vuelta on the 24th of August at the Salinas de Torrevieja have already submitted their pre-registration forms to the organisation.

Alejandro Valverde won La Vuelta ten years ago. This year, he will start La Vuelta 19 as one of the **three ex-winners of the race competing for a new title**, along with **Fabio Aru** (2015) and **Nairo Quintana** (2016). The **Movistar Team** has a solid team – with several possible leaders in its midst – among them, the Giro 2019 winner, (**Richard Carapaz**) and the winner of the Paris-Nice 2018 (**Marc Soler**) as spearheads. They will ride supervised by an elite duo consisting of **Alejandro Valverde** and **Nairo Quintana**.

The Spanish Grand Tour's **74th edition** will also have an important list of **South-American candidates** with options to win the race: **Miguel Ángel López** (Astana Pro Team), 3rd in 2018; **Esteban Chaves** (Mitchelton-Scott), 3rd in 2016 and the potent **EF Education First** trident formed by the young **Daniel Martínez** and **Sergio Higuita**, who will ride with the experienced rider, **Rigoberto Urán**.

On paper, **Movistar Team's main threat came from Jumbo-Visma**, represented by **Primoz Roglic** and **Steven Kruijswijk**, third in the last editions of the Giro and the Tour, respectively. On flat stages, they will be protected by **Tony Martin** and in the mountains by **George Bennett**, **Robert Gesink** and **Sepp Kuss**.

Jakob Fuglsang, winner of the last editions of Liège-Bastogne-Liège and of the Critérium du Dauphiné, had to abandon the last Tour de France due to a fall, and is now seen as Astana's second card to play. **Rafal Majka**, 3rd in La Vuelta 15, returns with **Bora-Hansgrohe** accompanied by the Austrian Tour of Turkey winner (**Felix Großschartner**). **Wilco Kelderman** will lead **Team Sunweb**. **Pierre Latour**, best young rider in the Tour de France 2018 and practically absent this season following a long convalescence, will lead **AG2R-La Mondiale**. The **Team Ineos** opts for the British rider **Tao Geoghegan Hart**, who will have the opportunity to recoup following his Giro fall.

Tireless rouleur and stage winner in the three Grand Tours, **Thomas De Gendt**, prepares to face his 3rd three-week race this season following a spectacular stage win in Saint-Étienne in this past Tour de France

Highlights among the sprinters are **Sam Bennett** (Bora-Hansgrohe), **Fernando Gaviria** (UAE Team Emirates), **John Degenkolb** (Trek-Segafredo), **Marc Sarreau** (Groupama-FDJ), **Luka Mezgec** (Mitchelton-Scott) and the champion from the Netherlands **Fabio Jakobsen** (Deceuninck-Quick Step).

Last, but by no means least, is the presence of the Slovenian diamond in the rough, **Tadej Pogacar** (UAE Team Emirates), winner of last year's Tour de l'Avenir and of the Tour of California this season. La Vuelta 19 will be the first grand tour for this promising rider.