

Team Stradalli – Bike Aid to Participate at Tour of Eritrea 2016

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(L-R) Amanuel Mengis, Meron Amanuel and Meron Teshome are the 3 Eritrean Pro riders that will represent the German Continental Professional Team Stradalli – Bike Aid at the Tour of Eritrea from April 19 – May 24th, 2016.

By **Stradalli – Bike Aid,**

The UCI 2.2 Tour of Eritrea begins April 19th and Stradalli – Bike Aid will be bringing a full team to compete at a race in a country that sits close to the heart of the team's mission.

Eritrea, due to its Italian influence, is a cycling crazy country. Cycling is less of a hobby and more of a way of life for many Eritreans. Historically the country has been torn by war, disease and poverty. However, that hasn't stopped Eritrea from ascending into the higher ranks of cycling.

Stradalli – Bike Aid will be in attendance with a full team of **6 cyclists**, half of which are from Eritrea. Stradalli – Bike Aid has had several success stories of bringing riders from Africa and elevating them to the World Tour level. Past riders such as **Mekseb Debesay**, Eritrean professional rider for World Tour team Dimension Data, found their feet at the higher level with Stradalli – Bike Aid. Educating, training and

providing opportunity for the African people was once a dream and is now reality for the German Continental Professional Team.

Meron Teshome, Amanuel Mengis and Meron Amanuel are the 3 Eritreans that will represent Stradalli – Bike Aid at the Tour of Eritrea. Of all the talent coming from Eritrea in the past few years, these few star riders are showing they are most exciting. Daniel Bichlmann, Dominik Merseburg and Matthias Schnapka will all be present to make up a top level team to compete for victory.

Amanuel Mengis, 21-year-old from Eritrea, began his season at the Challenge Mallorca racing against teams of the highest caliber. Trek – Segafredo took a win with Fabian Cancellara. Lotto Soudal took wins with Andre Greipel. Movistar, Team Sky and Francas de Jeux all were present showing off their early season form. Mengis was one of the youngest riders in the race and still proved he could perform with the best.

From Mallorca, Mengis travelled immediately to Vuelta a Andalucia Ruta Ciclista Del Sol where he was a constant presence in breakaways for Stradalli – Bike Aid. Mengis then brought his early season form to the Tour of Cameroon where finished in the top 10 in every stage, led the youth classification and took home the green points leaders jersey after 8 days of racing.

Amanuel Mengis is the first Eritrean to bring the Stradalli Carbon Aversa to a first place finish in a leader's jersey competition.

The Tour of Cameroon is one of the most prestigious races on the UCI Africa Tour, but Eritrea is home for Amanuel Mengis and several Stradalli – Bike Aid riders. The riders will have extra motivation to dominate their home race and show Eritrea is ready for the highest echelon of cycling. Cycling is the most watched sport in Eritrea. Weekend races have standout numbers in terms of attendance. Fans line the road for local races and beginner riders just entering the sport.

The accomplishments of Stradalli – Bike Aid have attracted attention internationally prompting everything from invites to larger races to television coverage in multiple countries. The Tour of Eritrea will be televised in several countries. Cycling aside, television networks in Germany will be broadcasting a human interest piece on Stradalli – Bike Aid and its riders, showing the genuine interest the public has in the mission behind the cycling team.

Eritrea, despite being a very small country, has already found its way to the top level of cycling. The Tour de France for many is the end goal of their cycling careers. Daniel Teklehaimanot of Team Dimension Data was the **first Eritrean** to achieve this goal, finishing 51st in his first Tour de France and wore the **polka dot climbers jersey** for several stages during the race. For a small country, this is a huge achievement.

The question for the future will be whether Eritrea can make an even greater impact on the sport. The highest point in Eritrea sits at 2600 meters altitude and with Eritrea being such a cycling crazy country, it seems Eritrea is poised to begin producing top athletes.

They may lack in resources, but they do not lack heart. Stradalli – Bike Aid's mission is to give people such as these opportunities they otherwise wouldn't have. All the African riders on Stradalli – Bike Aid have been top performers this year and Tour of Eritrea is the next stop on the journey to success in 2016.