

Beat: Sports

Aru and Astana execute master plan to perfection to make Dumoulin crack

Italian cyclist overturns classification

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USPA NEWS - Italian Fabio Aru, Astana, was poised to win the Vuelta after Astana's perfectly-executed plan ended the hopes of Tom Dumoulin as Ruben Plaza Molina claimed an impressive solo win on home soil in the 20th stage.

With only tomorrow's procession to Madrid left, Aru, who was six seconds down at the start, leads Joaquim Rodriguez (Katusha) by 1:17 and Majka (Tinkoff-Saxo) by 1:29 after the Pole attacked with Quintana (Movistar) in the last climb to the Puerto de Cotos. Quintana is fourth (+2:02) ahead of Chaves (Orica Green EDGE, 3:30) as Dumoulin slipped to sixth (3:46).

The Giant-Alpecin rider, who had looked solid all week, cracked when Aru attacked in the penultimate climb and the Italian, helped by a few team mates, crushed the pedals to make sure his main rival would not see him again. Coppel (IAM Cycling) did not start the stage, which got off to a fast start. An early crash involved Sicard and Rolland (Europcar), Torres (Team Colombia), Gerrans (Orica-GreenEDGE) and Danny van Poppel but all were quickly back on their bike.

Shortly afterwards, Plaza Molina (Lampre-Merida), Le Gac (FDJ), Hansen (Lotto-Soudal), Venter (MTN-Qhubeka), Warbasse (IAM Cycling), Navarro (Cofidis) McCarthy (Tinkoff-Saxo), Gonçalves (Caja Rural), Vorganov (Katusha), Rubiano (Team Colombia) and Arashiro (Europcar). Le Gac, however, was quickly distanced. Plaza went solo in the ascent to the Puerto de Navacerrada, the first of four category-one climbs.

The group were joined by a larger pack to form a 38-man breakaway (after Gougard was dropped): Reza and Elissonde (FDJ), Amador, Visconti and Ventoso (Movistar), Zubeldia (Trek), Quintero and Cano (Colombia), Dombrowski and Howes (Cannondale-Garmin), Henao and Roche (Team Sky), Zeits and Sanchez (Astana), Bennett (LottoNL-Jumbo), Rojas (Movistar), Bilbao and Arroyo (Caja Rural), Oliveira and Conti (Lampre-Merida), Losada (Katusha), Montaguti (Ag2r-La Mondiale), De Marchi and Moinard (BMC), Verona (Etixx-Quick Step), Vanendert and De Buyst (Lotto-Soudal), as well as Sicard (Europcar).

Dumoulin looked in trouble when Landa and Aru upped the pace in the ascent to the Puerto de la Morcuera and when Aru followed up with an attack, the red jersey was dropped as only Quintana and Majka could follow. Landa, Rodriguez and Chaves made it back to the Aru group right before the summit. Dumoulin and Nieve (Team Sky), who was helping the Dutchman, could not follow. Zeits and Sanchez were here to help Aru and Dumoulin and Nieve lost ground, with the Dutchman crossing the line almost four minutes behind Aru. Plaza Molina had long raided his arms, beating fellow fugitives Goncalves and De Marchi by over a minute.

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