

Beat: Sports

Purito edges closer to Aru with stage 15 victory

Only one second of difference

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USPA NEWS - Joaquim Rodriguez narrowed the gap to Fabio Aru to just one second at the Vuelta after his late attack earned the Spaniard an impressive victory in the 15th stage. The Katusha rider made his move in the steepest part of the final climb.

One km from the finish of the 175.8 km ride between Comillas and Sotres, beating Rafal Majka (Tinkoff-Saxo) by 12 seconds and his team mate Dani Moreno by 14 seconds. Purito collected a 10-second time bonus that helped him almost annihilate Aru's advantage after the Italian Astana rider finished fifth 15 seconds off the pace, just behind Nairo Quintana. Tom Dumoulin was distanced in the finale but he paced himself to the top. The Giant-Alpecin rider slipped to fourth overall, 1:25 behind Aru and one second adrift of Majka.

The start was given to 167 riders at 1:30 pm. After 35 km, the day's breakaway finally took shape with Kadri (AG2r-La Mondiale), Viela (Caja Rural), Rollin (Cofidis), B. Ramirez (Colombia), Maes (Etixx-Quick Step), Berhane (MTN-Qhubeka), Rolland (Europcar), Tjallingii (LottoNL-Jumbo) and Zubeldia (Trek Factory) covering 49.4 km in the first hour. They enjoyed a three-minute gap over the Movistar controlled peloton at the feeding zone in Prestin (km 94.5). At the foot of the Alto del Torno (2nd category), the fugitives had a four-minute lead.

Rollin was the first at the top (km 115.1) ahead of Rolland and Tjallingii as the nine-man group extended their advantage to five minutes 50 km from the line. Maes won the intermediate sprint in Posada (km 132) ahead of Rollin and Vilela. The pack was strung out as three Movistar riders (Sutherland, Erviti and Ventoso) set the pace to reduce the breakaway's lead.

In the final climb to Sotres, where gradients reached 13 per cent in the final section, Kadri was the first to attack but it was Zubeldia who in that group had the best legs, going solo with just under 11 km left while the rest of the breakaway group was being picked up by a thinned-out peloton. Quintana attacked 10 km from the line but he was marked out by Luis Leon Sanchez as Astana took control of the pack with Dumoulin struggling at the back.

Zubeldia still held 1:03 over the peloton with 7.5km left but Movistar upped the pace at the front again and the Spanish veteran's lead had melted down to 43 seconds with 5 km left. Dumoulin was distanced with just over two kilometres left but he stayed composed and finished 51 seconds off the pace. With 1.9 km remaining Zubeldia was caught and dropped. With one km left in the punishing 13-km final ascent, Purito pushed harder on the pedals and took a solo win. Quintana, who was initially distanced by Aru and Majka, hung on for dear life after all and stayed three minutes behind Aru in the GC.

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