



PRESS RELEASE

Equal prize money for women in all Flanders Classics spring cycling races

Flanders Classics Women takes next steps in the Closing the Gap project with the support of KPMG

Brussels, 23 February 2023 – **After last year’s Tour of Flanders provided equal prize money for its male and female winners, all Flanders Classics 2023 spring classics will now offer identical prize money for men and women. Thanks in part to the renewed partnership between Flanders Classics and KPMG, the project takes a next step in closing the gender gap and professionalizing women’s cycling. For the first time, the opening spring classic Omloop het Nieuwsblad will now also be a top-level race for women, and there is a continued focus on broadcasting and paving the way for more growth opportunities for youth cyclists.**

In 2022, Flanders Classics and KPMG as presenting partner made the first breakthrough by offering equal prize money for female winners for the Tour of Flanders as their male counterparts. This year, they take another big leap forward by guaranteeing equal prize money in all Flanders Classics’ spring classics. This new milestone reaffirms Flanders Classics and KPMG’s joint commitment to the Closing the Gap project. Flanders Classics is proud to see the partnership evolve from strength to strength.

*“Last season, we expressed our ambition to offer equal prize money for all races in 2023,” says **Flanders Classics CEO Tomas Van Den Spiegel**. “Today, we can already confirm that will indeed be the case this spring. As of the season’s opening classic, this will no longer just be an ambition but a concrete achievement. The fact that the Omloop het Nieuwsblad is also joining the UCI Women’s WorldTour means that we can well and truly look forward to a comprehensive start to the cycling season for all riders. Together with the new initiatives in 2023, the total investment in the project already amounts to some €1.6 million.”*

With the Closing the Gap initiative, Flanders Classics, KPMG and other partners are building a sustainable business model for women’s cycling, bringing the companies’ purpose and mission to the racetrack. The investments in the project go beyond the prize money alone; they include several other initiatives aimed at building a better and more professional framework for all female riders.

*“Equal recognition for women is more than just about the money,” says **KPMG Head of Sales & Marketing, Stefanie Pauwels**. “It has enormous symbolic value as well. Extra investments are a step towards creating the best possible conditions for female cyclists, both financially and in terms of sports performance. It gives them the chance to realize their ambition of improving their performance and skills full-time, to fully aim for an athletic career. The initiative is already triggering a snowball effect: we are seeing other organisations around the world following Flanders Classics Women’s example, including the Tour de France, thanks in part to our support.”*



Youth also one of the important pillars for Flanders Classics Women

Flanders Classics Women is also heavily invested in young people, to develop the sport from the ground up. In this context, U17 and U19 female riders have a chance to compete in the Tour of Flanders Youth Day, on the 21 of May. U17 and U19 riders will be on the program during the Gent-Wevelgem race on the 26 of March.

*“Up until a few years ago, those races were simply not accessible to young female riders,” says **Tomas Van Den Spiegel**. “Last year’s Tour of Flanders Youth Day, however, paved the way for tomorrow’s talent to ride their first ‘Ronde’. And we are continuing that momentum this year. Investing early in the careers of young riders will have a systematic and generational impact in the world of cycling,” states Tomas.*

*“The impact of the Closing the Gap project will therefore reach way beyond the current generation of riders alone,” adds **Stefanie Pauwels**. “The considerable investments and systemic changes to further professionalize women’s cycling, making it more attractive as an occupation.”*

More live media coverage takes Flanders Classics Women to a higher level

More extensive broadcasting, yet another focus point for Flanders Classics, will also help create more cachet for individual races and the sport as a whole. This year, the Omloop het Nieuwsblad, Gent-Wevelgem and Tour of Flanders races will be broadcast live on TV. Across Flanders, the Scheldeprijs and DeBrabantse Pijl will also be livestreamed and internationally in high definition via Proximus Pickx.

The new season starts on Saturday, February 25. The first race will not only signal the start of Flanders Classics’ spring season in ‘t Kuipke, but also the beginning of a new era for Flanders Classics Women. The national and international channels where the female races will be broadcast will be announced in the lead-up to each race.

Quick facts:

- The Closing the Gap project was launched in 2020. Since then, approximately €1.6 million has already been invested in women’s cycling.
- Thanks in part to the collaboration with KPMG, the Tour of Flanders was the first Classic to offer equal prize money for female riders.
- KPMG is powered by young people and continually invests in their learning and development. Now, it is applying the same mindset at Flanders Classics Women. The youth races will ensure that young female riders get the support they need to grow, train and race at their levels, increasing their chances of building careers in the sport.

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About KPMG in Belgium

With 1,900 employees across the country, KPMG Belgium offers your company personalized and multidisciplinary support in audit, accountancy, tax and legal advice. We also support a wide range of management services: from operational efficiency and cost management, to digital transformations, risk management and deal advice. Our local consultants will support you thanks to their knowledge and through the use of innovative tools to help you face each of your challenges.

About Flanders Classics

Setting the pace, that is what Flanders Classics does every day. In the rapidly evolving world of sport, Flanders Classics aims to be the most progressive organiser of cycling events while respecting the rich traditions of cycling. Which is why inclusivity, sustainability and innovation are among the organisation's most important values. Their mission is to improve its events, step by step while making them even more attractive for participants and fans.

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