



Age-Group delight in Asiago



The excitement of the early morning Elite & U23 and Junior Mixed Relays was still ringing around the venue as the Age-Group athletes, nearly 150 of them, checked their bikes in. Along with the lone Para-Athlete from Romania, we saw the uniforms of ten nations as well as one rather spectacular Südtirol uniform that has become a regular sight here in Asiago.

Conditions were completely different from the glorious sunshine that had bathed the venue for the Elite, U23 and Junior races. Saturday dawned with thick mist over the region.

The grey and damp conditions did not impact upon the shining examples that each and every one of the Age-Group athletes provided and the Technical Officials, led by Great Britain's Terry Race, were back, refreshed and ready to make sure the race was fair and safe for everyone.

The names of all the athletes were read out over the speakers, with messages of support in a variety of languages.





The atmosphere in the pre-start area was buzzing. It was so good to see so many athletes together once again.

It was truly a big “Hello!!” to the world of Winter Triathlon once more.



Rather than a mass start, the athletes were set off in three waves.

First off were the “young” men, then the “less young” men, and finally all the women with **Robert Tămîrjan**, the Romanian Para-athlete with a staggering 24 starts, 22 podium finishes and 18 victories. His power across the range of multisport events is outstanding.

As the women set off, he began to carve through the field on the churned-up snow.

He had overtaken most of the women by the time he entered T1 and then, with a 46:06 bike split, had only the women’s race leader ahead of him.

A finish time of 1:51:33 gave him yet another gold medal to add to his collection.





In the youngest category, 18-19, we had no men racing but the women's race saw a runaway victory for Italy's Iris Reif. The athlete from Südtirol ran well over the 5.7km, three-lap first leg and then continued to build her lead on the 9km bike course, which was again over three laps. The final 9km ski segment, once again over three laps, saw her home for the first of the Italian gold medals of the day. Silver went to fellow Italian, **Martina Biavati**.



In the 20-24 Age-Group, it was once again the host nation that got the podium places with gold going to **Camilla De Pieri**, who put in a powerful bike leg of 49:03, to pull ahead of **Sofia Dalla Libera** (wearing #242), who had led the run.

Marianna Angelica Gilioli was also comfortably ahead of De Pieri on the run but neither could match the pace being set by De Pieri, despite strong attacks by both on the final ski segment.

With this win, De Pieri upgrades her silver medals, won here in Asiago in 2019 and 2020 when she raced in the Worlds. On both occasions, her power on the bike was impressive.

Living in Aosta, she is well-placed for tough bike training and now, to the delight of GS Aosta, she is a European Champion in her Age-Group.

In the Men's race, it was again an entirely Italian turnout but it was late-entrant **Thomas Coradazzi**, who really stood out with his debut international race.

His opening run did not put him in the lead but once the Forni Di Sopra athlete was on two

wheels, then he was in command. A 32:46 bike split put him into just the right position to launch his attack on skis.

Moving easily, from all his training in the Dolomite Alps, he crossed the line after spending just 21:29 on the 9k ski segment to take the title of European Champion and to also have the honour of being the fastest of all the men on the day.

An outstanding performance that the Italian coaches will be looking at for sure.

Silve medal went to **Josef Trebo**.





For Team Italia, the medal count was beginning to look good, very good.

In the Women's 25-29 category, it was once again a fully Italian start.



In that group, the reigning Italian national Champion, **Elisa Presa** stormed into the lead on the run, with a 26:13 split. She lost time in T1 but then went out onto the bike course and looked good until **Viola Dorotea Gilioli** became a threat with an impressive 54:57 over the 9k.

Presa had a second slow transition and watched her lead disappear as Gilioli powered through transition and set off on the skis but soon enough, Presa had caught up, overtaken and regained her lead.

Coming over the finish line in 1:56:13, she was amongst the handful of women who smashed through the two-hour barrier and with her win was able to add the European title to her national one.

Her finish time was good enough to put her in 2nd place overall in the Women's Race.

Gilioli lost valuable time on the ski segment. She had to watch not only her lead melt away but also her chances of a silver medal as the 2020 World Champion, **Valentina Zanet** (wearing #249) showed great technique and posted the fastest ski split (27:32) amongst the female athletes, to claim silver.



Italy now held all the Age-Group medals and with the Men's 25-29 category made up entirely of Italian athletes, it looked certain that FiTri would easily be celebrating the biggest medal haul of the championships.



Luca Zanet looked strong on the first run, entering T1 with an impressive 21:37 opening run.

He was almost 90 seconds ahead of **Philipp Natzler**, who lost a bit of time in T1 but who then went out onto the bike course and snatched the lead with a 35:47 bike split.

Natzler was quicker in T2 and soon out onto the skis where Zanet did his best to catch up but the damage was done and Natzler came home first to claim the title.

Silver went to Zanet and bronze to **Filippo Parini** (wearing #109).

If there was a special prize for race uniforms, then we all felt that Parini should win gold.

He was easy to spot around the course with his distinctive display of Südtirol pride.



It was the women's 30-34 Age-Group that saw the fastest finish of the day. The honour went to **Helena Pretzl** GER, 2019 & 2020 World Champion, runner up in 2021 and an accomplished snowball biathlete. If you are not familiar with this exciting sport, then check out the Burglengenfeld Schneeballbiathlon: (<https://www.otv.de/burglengenfeld-schneeballbiathlon-411474>).



Pretzl paced her well on the run, coming into T1 in the top ten.

She took her time in transition before exploding out onto the bike course to blow the rest of the field away with an outstanding 47:28.

With nobody able to match her pace on two wheels, she was clear to ski home and cross the line, stopping the clock at 1:46:55.

Behind her, it was **Elena Caccin** who easily outpaced the reigning Italian national champion, **Margherita Norbiato** on the run, bike and in transition to claim silver. Norbiato's

skiing was good enough to take her to bronze.

Amongst the men, it was a battle at the front end between Italy and Germany. **Marco Panzavolta**, ITA (wearing #114) faced **Thomas Kerner**, GER once again.

The Italian came to this race as 2019 World Champion. The German came as reigning World Champion.

The pace set by both Panzavolta and Kerner, both athletes supremely strong on the off-road circuit was intense and so, with not much separating them on the first run, it was with a small lead that the Italian set off on the final discipline ahead of Kerner.





It looked set for a silver medal for the German but an impressive 22:33 on the final ski segment from **Matteo Carli**, ITA saw him move into silver, giving Italy the top two medal places on the podium and second-fastest time of the day to the gold medal winner.



After the race, Panzavolta had these words, *“Ringrazio 2022 Europe Triathlon Winter Championships and World Triathlon Cup Asiago. Per la bellissima organizzazione dell'evento. Come sempre impeccabili! E che sia 🇪🇺 Europeo. Matteo Carli in rimonta, ma no te me becchi 😊. Complimenti per la ottima frazione 🏃, sei un missile ! Thank you 2022 Europe Triathlon Winter Championships and World Triathlon Cup Asiago. For the beautiful organisation of the event. Flawless as always!*

And to become 🇪🇺 European. Matteo Carli on the chase but you didn't catch me 😊. Congratulations on the final split, you're a rocket!” Photo credit Panzavolta, Facebook.

Two Italian women went for the medals in the 35-39 category. **Serena Schievenin** faced the reigning Italian National Champion, **Lara Masperone**. The Turin-based Doctor of Biomolecular science could not match the running pace of Schievenin, who posted the fastest run split for all the women, entering T1 in 25:41 but a huge chunk of that lead was lost in transition and soon enough the Flying Doctor had caught and overtaken Schievenin.

Dr Masperone had to work hard for the gold, as behind her, the superior technique of Schievenin was eating into the lead. Gold and silver to Italy.

The medal tally would rise with the men's race, as once again it was Gold, Silver and Bronze to the host nation.

Wearing #122, **Paolo Maltauro** certainly wanted to make amends after suffering a DSQ in Cogne. He had a stride for stride run with **Luca Dalla Libera** over the first three laps.

They entered T1 almost together and sped through the transition area to mount their bikes pretty much side by side.



Maltauro then kicked on the bike and put in a powerful ride over the 9k to pull ahead and with close to six minutes advantage for the final segment. **Rocco Righetti**, making the short trip up from Venice, came home strong to fill the final space on the podium behind Dalla Libera.



Wearing #261, it was Italy's **Sandra De Luca** who clocked the third fastest overall time to win the 40-44 Age-Group.

Her run speed saw her enter T1 with **Serena Piganzoli** a couple of minutes back.

De Luca looked good for the win, coming here as reigning Italian National Champion and knowing the course well following her silver medal performance here in 2020.

When she raced the nationals in Cogne, she had a 4-minute lead over her challengers but would have to work hard on the bike to keep her lead.

Germany's **Pamela Mittermeier** had a superb ride and soon found herself overtaking Piganzoli, the 2019 European Champion. Once past her, the German set her sights on the lead and caught De Luca.

It was only in the closing stages of the 9k ski segment that De Luca caught and passed Mittermeier in the thrilling finish to secure gold. Piganzoli's bike and ski split ensured a bronze medal for her.

It was an entirely Italian line-up for the men's race. It was **Andrea Besano** who led them into T1 with a fast-paced 22:59 opening run. **Pietro Alberto Migliavacca** saved time in transition to ensure that Besano was in sight as they set off on the bike. This looked set to be a revenge race after Migliavacca missed out on the national title in Cogne recently by just 51 seconds.

The pace out on the bike was intense and soon enough Migliavacca had pulled ahead. He knew from his experience in Cogne that he would have to build a lead on the bike. Besano's power on the ski segment would be a real threat to any title chance.

Entering T2 with a clear lead and surely enough to win, he took his time, made sure the skis were well fitted and, using the three-lap course to keep a close eye on the chase, came home with over a minute between him and





silver-medal winning Besano. Behind them both, **Alessandro Orsato** (wearing #134) to claim bronze and another clean sweep for the Italian Team.



The Men's Race saw close competition between **Michele Bellemo** and **Matteo Bonifacino**, with them establishing a solid lead on the run and scoring matching splits as they entered T1. The clock stopped at 24:01 and then the pair ran together to the mount line.

Some way behind them, Race Director and head of the Local Organising Committee, **Leonardo Franco** (wearing #141), had handed over control of today's racing to one of his team so that he could join in the fun. He came in to transition alongside Russia's **Viacheslav Krupko**. The Moscow-based Yaroslavl athlete lost time in transition and Franco set about chasing the leaders.

A strong bike leg from Bellemo saw him take control of the race and it looked certain that he would take the win. Behind him Bonifacino, the reigning Italian National Champion in this age-group, lost no time in getting out onto the skis and was soon in attack mode. Despite an impressive 26:24, over two minutes faster than Bellemo, he could not quite get to gold and had to settle for silver.

Behind them, Franco had a nightmare as he left for the ski segment, with a malfunction of his ski pole. He struggled with the strap for long, long minutes before being able to set off and chase.

Once again only two women faced off for the medals. The 45-49 Age-Group would once again be a chance for Italy to improve its medal count. **Cristiana Barotti** and **Laura Ravelli**.

Wearing #266, Cristiana Barotti had company around the run and with stronger splits for run, bike and ski, took the European title comfortably ahead of Ravelli.

With a coach like Alberto Quarello, it is little surprise that she looked so relaxed around the course.

A gold medal, a title and of course, a smile.

Photo credit – Loredana Tamas (Facebook)





A gold medal was out of the question for him but his ski skills could have given him a bronze.

Instead that medal went to Krupko whose bike leg had been just enough to take him away from the Italian challengers.

Franco had spent many, many months working closely with his team to make sure the 2022 Asiago Winter Triathlon European Championships and World Cup would be a showcase event and it was a real shame that an equipment

failure should rob him of a medal chance.

He took time after the medal ceremony on Saturday to thank his team but to remind them that Sunday was a big day with the Winter Duathlon races for all age-groups.

Moving up now to the Women's 50-54 Category and we were to see the first podium shared amongst three different nations.

An opening run of 28:47 saw **Roberta Fedeli** raise Italian hopes for a medal.

The Italian had won gold here in 2019 but was up against the 2016 European Champion from Estonia, **Livian Laaneots** and Germany's legendary athlete, **Beate Pelani** who came to the race as 2022 World Champion.



Before the race started, there was a mix between relaxation and sharp focus, with Estonia and Germany clearly leading the relaxation race.

Laaneots was some way off the pace but in second place after the run. Pelani, in third, had the pedigree to make a difference out on the bike and ski section but was not having a good day



at the “Winter Triathlon Office” and soon both of them had to accept that Fedeli was the strongest.



Gold went to Italy with Livia Laaneets adding the silver to her collection with an impressive closing ski split. Pelani added to the German medal collection coming home in a comfortable bronze medal position.

It was in the Men’s 50-54 category that we saw a stand-out performance from Italy’s **Guido Ricca**. Number 165 was very evident at the start of the race. He had every reason to be confident. Reigning Italian National Champion, gold medal-winner here in 2020, gold at the Etna Championships in 2018 and at the Worlds in Cogne in 2013.





Not only did Ricca win the category but he also came 2nd in the overall Men's classification with a truly impressive 1:20:19.

He led from the start with a 23:17 run to take him clear into T1. No threat so far but with a potential challenge from Russia's **Andrey Chekunov**, who had been seen on Friday looking after the young son of Pavel Andreev and Daria Rogozina.

His chip had failed but lap on lap, he was looking strong and with only him and **Giovanni Bertagnin** ITA close to Ricca, it was a thrilling race to see who would get silver.

The Russian Triathlon Federation has invested much in delivering Winter Triathlon events across the nation.

We heard from **Andrey Gudalov**, the

National Coach, during the action on Friday that prior to coming to Italy, there had been ten Winter Triathlon cups. With the long snow season and clear support for the run, MTB and ski format, it was little surprise that the team was so strong.



But, once he was through T2, it was Ricca all the way with a closing split of 22:42, the great Italian athlete, born in 1972, stormed home to take yet another title.

His finish time was just a minute off the overall winning time, set by Coradazzi.

With no chip to record his finish, it was the team of Officials responsible for the Manual Timing backup that captured the finish of Chekunov.

It was a finish that gave him a silver medal ahead of Bertagnin (wearing #156) to give us an Italian, Russian, Italian podium.

The Women's 55-59 race proved to be a cat and mouse chase between the Italian National Champion, **Giuliana Marten Perolino** and Austria's Multisport expert, **Sabine Greipel**. The Italian had won silver here in 2019 but faced not only Greipel but also **Elena Garagnani** who had delighted the Italian coaches with her gold medal here in 2020.



The Austrian had sharpened up her performance with two silvers in Andorra; one for the Winter Duathlon and one for the Winter Triathlon Worlds. She was also the defending European Champion from her back-to-back wins in 2019 & 2020 in Cheile Grădiștei.

Greipel found herself playing catchup amidst the Italians as **Paola Goldoni** set the pace with a pounding 30:14 to open the race.

The Italian led by almost a minute but soon began to fade on the bike.

Attacking now were **Virna Stavla** and Greipel, with Stavla leading by some 20 seconds. A long transition by the Austrian ensured everything was just right for the attack on the bike and pretty soon she had caught up with and passed both Goldoni and Stavla to edge into a title-winning position.



Despite her best efforts, Marten Perolino (wearing #279) was too strong on the bike and it was the Italian who led into T2.

Even losing 30 seconds to Greipel in T2, Marten Perolino was still ahead as she set off on the skis.

Greipel now had to dig deep but her final split of 36:19 was not good enough to catch the leader and it was a silver for her on the day.

Bronze went to Garagnani, whose 33:48 was the fastest of the category.

For the Men, 14 athletes toed the line. All Italian apart from 2 athletes; one from Estonia and one from Slovenia.

The early pace was intense with three athletes coming into T1 in under 25:30. The reigning Italian National Champion, **Aldo Frigo** looked impressive as he led them into the first transition. **Ivano Malini** was close behind in a neck and neck race with **Stefano Zamboni**.

Frigo wasted no time in changing to bike mode and was soon out on the tracks making headway and pulling away from any threat behind him. The Asiago-based athlete was looking good for gold but behind him **Flavio Zanet** was working the wheels well and catching up the faster runners. 2nd fastest bike split of the category was by Estonia's **Aivar Veri**, part of that



incredible team who drove all the way from Estonia to Andorra to race the Worlds and then across the warmer parts of Europe to get to Asiago before their long-haul home.

Veri's double gold in Andorra was a clear sign that he was in good form but time lost on the run could not be made up.

Frigo was now out on the skis and nobody could match his 24:52 split.

Zanet's strong run and powerful bike riding had put him out of reach of the Estonian.

Italy took gold and silver.

Bronze went to Estonia.

Perhaps fatigue from the long car journey had denied another victory to the Estonian athlete.



Out of interest, we had a look at the distances involved.

From Estonia to Andorra is an easy 3,300km.

From Andorra to Asiago is about 1,200km and then to get home is another 2,300km.

It has been fascinating to watch the progress of Veri with his teammate, Anti Oot as they made their way literally from one end of Europe to the other and if we gave medals for the team that had travelled the greatest distance, by car, then Team Estonia would most certainly win GOLD.
Photo credit Aivar Veri



Into the 60-64 age-group and there were three women on the start line. Great Britain's **Frances Hooper** was forced with withdraw on the run after losing a contact lens and being unable to safely navigate the course.

A real shame as she had been working so well on her skiing and had picked up a silver in Andorra over the Winter Duathlon course.

Pulling out of the run and the race for gold was now on between Germany's **Dr Angela Boczek** and the Italian National Champion, **Maria Vittoria Marocco**.

With 24 podiums, 14 wins and being the reigning World Champion in both Winter Triathlon and Winter Duathlon, the German athlete certainly had the advantage.



Keeping the Italian in her sights, Dr Boczek tailed her into T1, wasted no time there and set off on the bike to pull easily away and establish a lead that could not be matched.

Her ski technique has been improved in the past couple of years and in 2022 we can see that she has the power and technique across all three disciplines now.

The Men's 60-64 race was 13-strong and with athletes from Italy, (of course), Austria, the Czech Republic, Russia, Slovenia and Great Britain, we had a great range of skills and some real legends to watch over the testing course.



Some joked at the start that with the legendary Czech athlete, **Ivo Grabmüller**, the race was pretty much decided.



Six World and European titles, he took a year off to climb Mt Everest, came back to take the European title in Cheile Grădiștei and then a collection of silver medals in Andorra in 2021 and 2022.

From the start, it was the gold medal winner from the 2020 Asiago World Championships, **Urbano Ferrazzi**, who set the pace.

An opening 24:00 run left everyone wondering how

they could catch him.

Grabmüller was some way back but with the bike leg coming up, things were going to change. Ahead of him, Austria's **Günter Kern** had entered T1 over a minute behind Ferrazzi. Kern began to apply the power and soon sped past the Italian. Grabmüller worked through the pack and caught Ferrazzi, using his superior ski skills to edge further ahead into silver but neither of them could match the supreme pace of Kern, who added this European title to his 2016 Zeltweg gold.

In the final Age-Group that would see women winning medals, 65-69, there were three Italians and one Austrian vying for the medals. Four athletes; three medals.

On paper, the favourite was Austria's **Marianne Hergouth** (wearing #292). The reigning World Champion and defending European Champion was in great form but each of her opponents had tasted success and **Luisella Iabichella** (wearing #290) had raced here, showing great power on the bike and ski segments. As two-times World and two-times European champion, Hergouth would have to work hard.

It was in fact **Rossella Carletti**, runner-up in Cogne, who led into T1 with a lead of almost three minutes over the chasing athletes. 35:42 was her run time. As an indication of just how strong this category is, the remaining run splits were all between 38:30 and 38:45.





None of them spent more than a minute in transition but it was out on the bike that Hergouth began to apply the power to edge ahead and catch Carletti.

Having taken the lead on the bike, the Austrian then put in a winning ski leg to take gold ahead of Iabichella and Carletti. Gold to Austria and just a little bit of pressure on her husband who was also racing.



For the Men, **Wolfgang Leonhard** was a medal and title favourite. The German athlete has dominated his age-group over the years and came to Asiago with 9 World and 3 European titles dating back to 2001.

He knows the Asiago course and venue well, having raced here in both 2019 and 2020.

He wasted no time and raced into t1 in just 27:11 with only Austria's **Franz Gruber** anywhere near.

Having just missed out on the national title in Cogne, **Benedettino Bettoni** was not only racing for a European medal but also to try and beat **Aldo Nobili**, the reigning champion.

Coming off the run only 6 seconds behind him, Bettoni had a great bike ride to overtake his national teammate and to

spin past Gruber. Silver medal in his hands, could he catch Leonhard?

Well, with a 26:42 ski leg, the German made certain that the gold medal and European title was his, leaving Gruber to ski to the max as he chased Bettoni.

Despite a great effort over the final three laps, the Austrian (wearing #220) could not quite catch Bettoni and so the final podium was gold to Germany, silver to Italy and bronze to Austria.



The 70-74 Category would usually show Germany's Hans-Peter Grünebach on the start list. Andorra saw him take gold once more but sadly on his drive back from the south, he was caught by the Covid bug and sadly had to withdraw.



This left just three athletes to fight for the medals. Estonia, Italy and Germany were represented by **Anti Oot**, **Valter De Rossi** and **Reinhardt Engert** respectively, with Oot (wearing #226) certainly looking the stronger of the three.

All three of them broke 35 minutes for the run, with De Rossi having just a slight advantage over Oot.

The Estonian lost time in T1, allowing De Rossi to escape and build a lead of a minute by the time the skis needed to be used.

Engert was dropping off the pace, to leave the battle for the gold medal between De Rossi and Oot.

Onto the final segment and again the Italian was quicker through transition and onto the 9k ski course.

It was here that Oot dug deep into his reserves and pulled out a truly impressive performance that was three minutes quicker than De Rossi.

Overtaking him in the closing stages of the race, Oot scored a massive victory under pressure to add the 2022 European title to the one he won in Otepää in 2016.

The supporters out on the course were doing a great job cheering loudly for their favourites. If anything, they got louder as the day went on and as the older athletes made their way towards the finish line.

Into the penultimate age-group and we get to meet some real legends. Austria and Germany fielded **Curt Maier**, **Anton Hergouth** and **Steffen-Luis Neuendorff**.

Between them, these Elder Statesmen of the sport have amassed a vast collection of medals and it was always going to be a tough call to predict the winner.





By the time they all got out on to the bike course, the conditions were really very tough, with the soft snow now swallowing the bike tyres and forcing some to push their bikes along greater and greater sections of the course.

The German, Neuendorff (wearing #232) led and with Hergouth (#230) came into T1 ahead of Maier (#231) but only 20 seconds separated them. Wasting no time, Neuendorff headed off on the bike and built a good lead, with Maier overtaking Hergouth to move into silver medal position.

Out onto the final leg and it was here that Meier was supreme. A 40:35 split saw him storm into the lead, overtaking Neuendorff to claim gold medal and the title, with bronze going to Hergouth.



If these performances were not enough, we still had one more Age-Group racing. Born in 1939, **Gherardo Mercati** is a relative late-comer to international Winter Triathlon racing but in a very short time (he began in 2021) his ten races have seen him appear on the podium ten times and win 7 of those races.

He might have been the only one in this 80-84 category but his finish time was not the slowest of the day.

We spoke to him the next morning at breakfast. No signs of fatigue. Every indication of an athlete who is full of life, ready to race and enjoying the wonderful sport of Winter Triathlon.



Asiago
2022





So, with Asiago now a couple of weeks behind us, the volunteers, organising committee and of course the Italian Federation can look back and see that once again, Asiago promised and once again Asiago delivered.

The hosts cheered with medal after medal being presented to Italian Age-Group athletes and now that restrictions on travel are being relaxed all over Europe, it finally looks as if our sport is getting back on track after two very difficult years.



2022 UPDATED MEDAL TABLE

Country			
Italy	17	17	11
Germany	3	2	3
Austria	3	1	2
Estonia	1	1	1

The Media Team in Asiago were busy for the whole festival and we have to say a very big **THANK YOU** to [RunnerShot Italia](https://www.runner-shot.com/italia) for the wonderful photos! You can find the whole album here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/271yZR1mLNeaEKDd8>

All results can be found by following this link:

<https://www.competitions.com/2022-world-triathlon-winter-cup-asiago>



Three Cheers for Asiago



The Saturday races can be seen by clicking the following link: <https://fb.watch/bh4yMUDHOg>



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