

el Periòdic News

INTERVIEW

Joaquim 'Purito' Rodríguez

CYCLIST

«La Purito takes place in Andorra, because that's where I became a professional cyclist»

IRINA RYBALCHENKO / ANASTASIA SAVATEEVA
ESCALDES - ENGORDANY

On the 11th of August, Andorra will host the "La Purito Andorra" cycling tour, which is being held for the eighth time this year. Its exciting feature and focus is climbing the six highest points of Andorra (La Rabassa – La Peguera, el Coll de la Gallina, la Comella, la Collada de Beixalís, el Coll d'Ordino – els Cortals d'Encamp). We spoke with the main organiser of the race, Joaquim "Purito" Rodríguez, ex-captain of the Russian cycling team Katusha, about cycling and its development during these eight years.

—Eight years ago, we spoke to you on the eve of the first La Purito race, and at that time 3 different difficulty courses were proposed: 30 kilometres, 85 kilometres and 145 kilometres with 1,300 participants, including professional and amateur cyclists. What about this year?

—The course points remain the same, but we have changed the itinerary because the infrastructure of the whole country is so crowded a huge number of cyclists for the event.

We will start from the lower elevation locations so that we can be in the upper ones by midday in order to relieve the traffic.

We have reduced the kilometres of the route a bit. We have reduced the most difficult one from 145 kilometres to 115 kilometres. However, we have increased the number of participants from 1,300 to 2,000.

—Although the shortest itinerary is only 30 kilometres, which is hardly suitable for debutants, right?

—Yes, all the routes are very difficult. But after all, it's not a race...It's more of an overcoming circuit than a competition. La Purito has made a name for itself as a hard cycling tour, not only in Andorra but also internationally.



ANASTASIA SAVATEEVA

—What can you say about the development of cycling in these eight years? Has the level of cyclists increased?

—Andorra is a country of cyclists and it has evolved a lot in the last 5-6 years. There are now more than 130 professional cyclists living and training in Andorra, and that's great!

There are also several new teams, such as AndDona for example, which are attracting more cycling events to the country.

—Has the ratio of men to women in cycling changed?

—Yes, there are significantly more women – the ratio is about 50/50 nowadays.

—How much does it cost to participate this year?

—There are three options. The first one is 60 euros and the most expensive is 80 euros. We are interested in cyclists registering as early as possible, so we offer a discount. It would be optimal for us if all 2,000 participants registered for 60 euros. A cycling suit is a must for participation and we need time to prepare the right number of sizes.

—What is the economic impact of

this event?

—It is difficult to say what the profit will be because I am not in the business of estimating how much we earn. Let's say a participant pays 60 euros. If we calculate all the costs, it turns out that we spend more than the cost of registration. We have sponsors who make a significant contribution. Andbank, for example, has been and still is our main sponsor since the first year of the event, and there are other sponsors among the sports brands.

—Are you planning to organise La Purito in Spain, France or other countries?

—No, La Purito takes place in Andorra, because that's where I became a professional cyclist.

—Any advice on how to get better prepared for La Purito?

—Obviously, you need regular hours of training because we have a very, very long and difficult course. It doesn't seem like that in kilometres, but in hours it will probably work out to be about six and a half or seven. There is no flat terrain in the mountains, the whole itinerary is either up or down.

—How do you plan to further develop cycling in Andorra?

—I have a cycling school in Escaldes with about 145 children at the moment. It's a difficult sport for young people because of the terrain, but we're doing our best. In this sense, if the cycle paths near the schools were all safe, flat, well-lit, and met the needs of the youngest ones, it would be very useful. Terrassa or Sabadell are good examples: there are two-kilometer cycle paths where children can be trained. A velodrome would also be very useful, especially because



«La Purito has made a name for itself as a hard cycling tour, not only in Andorra but also internationally»

«The cycle paths near the schools safe, flat and well-lit would be very useful»

we would be opening up another form of cycling in Andorra.

—What is the best age to start cycling?

—There are no age limits or requirements to start cycling. My son and my daughter started very early. But they didn't like it, and that's okay! It is a very challenging and beautiful sport, but you have to enjoy it!

—How popular is cycling in general today, from your point of view?

—The profession of cycling used to look a bit strange. Now there is a global cycling community that is growing strongly, which is very positive. And here in Andorra, I've noticed it too.

—And in terms of materials used, how advanced are the bike brands?

—I ride on a bike whose brand is my sponsor. But I think it's very difficult to distinguish one brand from another now because they are all at a very high level.

—Do you follow any kind of sports diet?

—Not anymore. Cycling is not a profession for me anymore – I just do it for fun.

—Do you do practice other sports?

—I swim, I go to the gym, I like to do a little bit of everything.

—What are your favourite cycling routes in Andorra and Spain?

—Here in Andorra, I really enjoy Vall d'Incles because it's a very quiet and calm area, without steep climbing, so it's not too difficult. I think this is where you can enjoy the most beautiful views in Andorra.

As for overall in Spain, since we don't have a beach here, I like to ride along the coast. For example, the road around Tossa del Mar, where you pedal and look at the sea that is close by. It's not like the mountains – these roads are different and in their own way very beautiful. ●

ALL PYRENEES



Interview with 'Purito' in 2016, when he was a captain of the Russian team Katusha.

EVENT CANCELLED

The risk of storm cancels the expected David Guetta concert

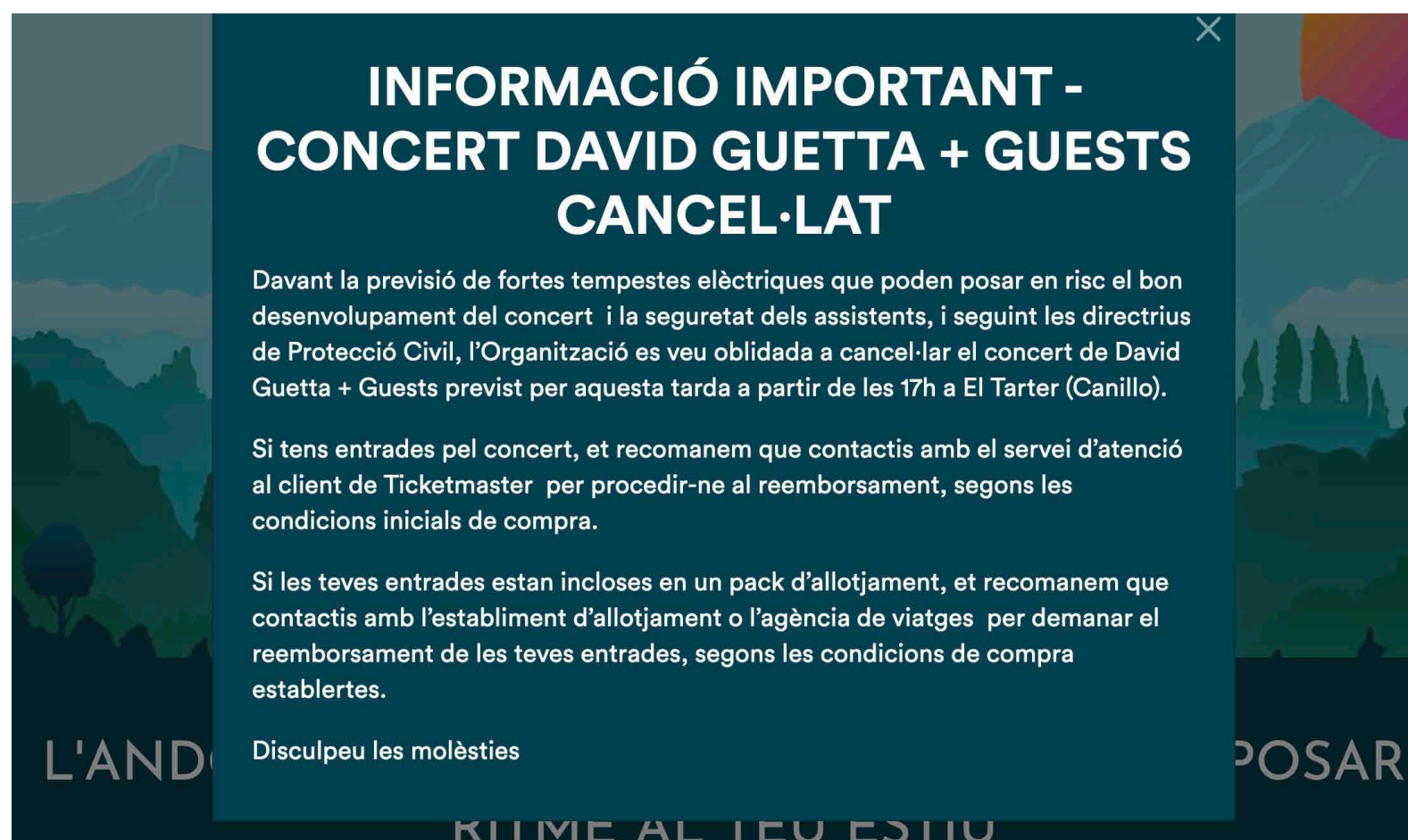
The government decides to cancel the second day of the Andorra Mountain Music 2024 due to the yellow storm warning

EL PERIÒDIC
ANDORRA LA VELLA

What was expected to be the most crowded concert in the history of Andorra was cancelled. David Guetta did not go on stage at the Andorra Mountain Music 2024 last Sunday, after the Government decided to cancel the event in consideration of the report issued by the technicians of the Department of Civil Protection and Emergency Management of the ministry of Justice and Interior. They who warned of the security risks due to the active storm warning from 8:00 p.m. (scheduled time for the start of the concert) until 12:00 midnight.

So, the 10,000 people expected to gather in the el Tarter area were unable to experience one of the most anticipated events of recent months. A fact that the organization regretted, but which they also thanked in a certain way: «Nobody likes the cancellation of what you've been working on for a year to make the biggest in the history of the country, but security is first [...] No one wants to repeat a Madrid Arena», said Brian Cross, head of LiveNation Spain's Electronic Music Department, stressing that, for his part, all they had left was «comply with Government regulations. We are no one to evaluate the work of Civil Protection or meteorologists.»

Hopeful of being able to relocate Guetta's concert at another time, Cross pointed out that «today is not the time to make an assessment of the economic impact», making clear that the organization «will assume what must be assumed» as promoters



The notice that was placed on the Andorra Tourism website.



BRIAN CROSS
ORGANIZATION

«Nobody likes the cancellation of what you've been working on for a year, but nobody wants a Madrid Arena either»

EDUARD VERGARA
CIVIL PROTECTION

«We have made a report recommending cancellation by yellow warning and the Government has taken the final decision»

of the event. However, what Cross is clear that this situation like this will not affect relations with the Executive and Andorra Tourism, which have been «perfect» for years. Similarly, it will not imply a deterioration in relations with the French DJ: «We have been working together for 20 years and there has always been a good understanding».

On the other hand, the head of planning and emergencies of the Department of Civil Protection, Eduard Vergara, repeatedly emphasized that the will of his team has always been able to guarantee the safety and integrity of 10,000 attendees scheduled for this second day of the Andorra Mountain Music: «We have made a report recommending the cancellation of the event due to a yellow storm warning and the Government

has taken the final decision», he emphasized. A warning that, it seems, was already on the table since Saturday, monitoring it every six hours to have as accurate information as possible when making a decision. «If there's a chance of lightning, we can't put people's safety first.»

Attendees who have purchased tickets for the concert can request a refund in the system through the shopping platform or at the hotel or agency where they purchased them. Even so, Cross pointed out that all those who have purchased their tickets through Ticketmaster will be refunded directly. «There are many people who have come from abroad and have spent money on transport or accommodation, but what we want is they are able to return home», he concluded. ●

PARISHES

The Andorra Comapedrosa Astronomy Festival gathers 700 visitors

The Municipality of La Massana revalidates the success of the first edition and celebrates the influx of the public

COMÚ DE LA MASSANA

EL PERIÒDIC
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY

The Andorra Comapedrosa Astronomy Festival has revalidated the success of the first edition and has gone ahead maintaining the entire program in its entirety, welcoming around 700 people between Friday night and Saturday night. During the blackout in the town of Arinsal, the sky was partially covered, but it gradually opened up, which made it possible to do both the observation with telescopes and the routes guided by the constellations and their mythology, with several sessions in both Catalan and Spanish. Among the audience were many people who had already attended the first edition and wanted to repeat the experience of delving into the fascinating stories of Vega and Altair or Hercules, as well as discovering the forms of the Swan, the Dragon or the Great Bear.

As for the observations with the telescopes, the attendees were able to see different objects in the deep sky, specifically, multiple star systems.

On the one hand, the double star Albireo, one bluish and the other yellowish; and, on the other hand, Mizar, a star located within the constellation of the



Moment of the Andorra Comapedrosa Astronomy Festival 2024.

Attendees observed different deep sky objects, such as multiple star systems

Big Dipper, next to its companion Alcor. These observations were made with starlight guides who explained to the public the physical properties of the stars. The evening was enlivened by the musical show of Gerard Marsal, who invited everybody to enjoy the spectacle of the night sky.

Apart from the organizational team, the Festival has had 25 volunteers. Some of them were accredited as Starlight monitors, through the course organized

last year by the Municipality of La Massana and taught by the Starlight Foundation. It should be noted that on Friday there were two junior observation activities, especially aimed at families, and an astrophotography session, with the collaboration of AFAVAN, aimed at people with an interest in night photography.

Around forty people attended

The Festival has had 25 volunteers, some of whom are accredited as Starlight monitors

the cycle of conferences, with scientific popularizer Aleix Roig, who offered a spectacular tour of the beauty of the Universe; the director of the Starlight foundation, Antonia Varela, who spoke about the importance of protecting the dark sky, and the physicist and aeronautical engineer, Miquel Sureda, who is passionate about the possibilities of expansion through the solar system. The program has been completed with two children's workshops, a solar observation and the performance of Ishtar Ruíz. ●

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