

The feast of Sant Miquel d'Engolasters is reborn as a symbol of local identity

The day brings together hopes for future consolidation

EL PERIÒDIC
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY

Escaldes-Engordany has once again celebrated the feast of Sant Miquel d'Engolasters on May 8th, a day that has served to reinforce the sense of community and highlight a local tradition with deep roots in the territory.

Although the day had already been commemorated in previous years, this year it has taken on new momentum following the popular consultation held in November 2024, in which the people of Escaldes voted overwhelmingly in favor of establishing this day as a local holiday.

On the occasion of the celebration, nearly 200 people, including residents and institutional representatives, gathered around the church of Sant Miquel d'Engolasters in an atmosphere marked by coexistence and a festive character.

The parish's mayor, Rosa Gili, stressed the importance of recovering this festival: «We are very happy to be able to recover a festival like this, because it is what gives identity, cohesion and makes a town», she said. Gili recalled that the initiative responds to a citizen demand, since «other parishes have their own festival, and in



The Consul General of Escaldes, Rosa Gili, with the Mayor General Deputy Sandra Codina at the sardana dance on the occasion of the festival.



ROSA GILI

CONSUL GENERAL OF ESCALDES

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RAMÓN TENA

CONSUL FOR CITIZENSHIP

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Escaldes it was also a demand».

The Minister for Youth and Citizenship, Ramón Tena, spoke in the same vein, remarking that «the festival itself has always had a gathering here because the Unió Pro Turisme has kept it alive». The minister insisted on the relevance of the popular consultation, which has allowed the day to be made official as a festival in the parish. As he explained, several previous activities have been carried out since Wednesday, May 7th, such as a legends session around the fire, which sold out all available places. A star-gazing activity was also sche-

duled, which ultimately had to be cancelled due to weather conditions.

The activities scheduled for May 8th included guided tours of the Engolasters Hydroelectric Path, orienteering tests, a medicinal plant workshop and, starting at noon, the most traditional events of the day. Among these, the sardana dance, the performance of the Esbart Santa Anna, and the solemn mass in the church of Sant Miquel, presided over by the Episcopal Co-Prince, Joan-Enric Vives. One of the most special moments was the blessing of the original bell of Sant

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Day mass and blessing of the bell of Sant Miquel d'Engolasters.

Miquel d'Engolasters, a piece dating from the 16th century that has been recovered and re-installed thanks to the collaboration of the Department of Cultural Heritage.

The Head of Government, Xavier Espot, praised the initiative of the Municipality and celebrated the involvement of the institutions: «We wanted to contribute to making this festival shine more by recovering the original bell of Sant Miquel d'Engolasters, which dates back to the mid-16th cen-

tury», he declared. As of today, the bell will return to its original place after more than 100 years.

Finally, regarding citizen participation, Gili remarked that «all those who are participating are happy», adding that «perhaps there are people who are not yet aware of it, but the festival must be consolidated». Overall, he assured that «everyone who came today is very satisfied that Sant Miquel d'Engolasters is being celebrated again». ●

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The Esbart Santa Anna dancing in front of the church of Sant Miquel d'Engolasters.

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el Periòdic News

Carlos Verona

PROFESSIONAL CYCLIST (LIDL-TREK) AND PROMOTER OF THE FIRST PROFESSIONAL CYCLING RACE ANDORRA MORABANC CLÀSSICA

«Why not dream of becoming a WorldTour event one day?»

EL PERIÒDIC

IRINA
Rybalchenko



On Tuesday, 6 May, Andorra hosted the presentation of its first professional cycling race, the Andorra MoraBanc Clàssica. The race is scheduled to take place on 22 June, just 13 days before the start of the Tour de France. The race in Andorra will span 147 kilometres and will feature 21 professional cycling teams, including four WorldTour teams: Arkéa-B&B Hotels, Movistar Team, Lidl-Trek, and EF Education First.

We spoke with Carlos Verona, professional cyclist for Lidl-Trek and promoter of the Andorra MoraBanc Clàssica, about the status of the upcoming event, the technical features of racing bikes, the broader landscape of cycling, and its evolution, including women's cycling.

—You are the promoter of the first edition of the Andorra MoraBanc Clàssica. What exactly do you do?

—As a professional cyclist, I was convinced that Andorra needed its own professional cycling race, and I had the idea to organise it. I decided to approach professionals, including the president of the Andorran Cycling Federation, who at the time was Gerard Riart (he remains the race promoter), to work together.

The truth is, we formed a great



team. Gerard is mainly in charge of the technical aspects, drawing on his extensive experience in cycling in within Andorra. I focus more on the sporting side—

seeking sponsors, networking, and promoting the event. We are also supported by the Occitana team, which brings a great deal of experience and helps us function

as a cohesive unit.

—The Andorra MoraBanc Clàssica will include 21 teams. Who do you think is the strongest right now?

EL PERIÒDIC



—My team is not the only big name participating in the Tour de France. We have about 5 or 6 teams that are in the Tour, including 4 World Tour teams that have an automatic invitation, and another 2 or 3 teams from the professional continental category that are eligible for invitations to both the Tour de France, the Giro, and the Vuelta.

But hey, for a first year, it's pretty good, and we're really happy with it.

—What are the advantages of the Andorra MoraBanc Clàssica? Any disadvantages?

—The cycling calendar is full of competitions, with major highlights like the Tour, the Vuelta, and the Giro, which are part of the WorldTour—the equivalent of the Champions League of cycling. However, there are many more races throughout the year. Right now, for example, the Tour of Turkey is taking place, among other events.

The Andorra MoraBanc Clàssica debuts in the third category, 1.1, with ambitions to move up to the provisional next level. And why not dream of becoming a WorldTour event one day?

—Cycling is a very difficult sport. In addition, the logistics and all the organizational work are very complex. It is very difficult to transport all the material to the finish line, prepare TV and media areas, VIP area, fan area, etc. Who will help you?

—In terms of logistics, as I mentioned, we have the support of Occitania, our French neighbors. They will organize their race from Wednesday the 18th to Saturday the 21st.

—How many riders are participating? What is their minimum and maximum age? How many members are there in each team? And how many journalists will participate?

—147 riders are participating,

with ages ranging from 18 years old for the youngest to 40 years old for the veterans. Each team will consist of 7 riders.

The event will have international television coverage in 60 countries. In France, it will be broadcast by France Télévisions, with commentary by Laurent Jalabert, while in Spain it can be followed live on Teledéporte, and in Europe and the US on Max, HBO Max, or Discovery+.

—Please name the main brands of bikes ridden by professional riders. What is the weight of a bike used in professional racing?

—The industry has grown significantly in recent years, and many bike brands have emerged, with the main ones being Specialized, Canyon, and many others. Bikes weigh at least 6.8 kg, which is the minimum weight set by the UCI (Union Cycliste Internationale). In general, most bikes weigh between 7 and 8 kg.

—What can you say about the safety of the event and the organisation of medical care, given the high injury rate in cycling?

—To guarantee safety, a comprehensive plan has been established that includes the Andorran Civil Protection and firefighters, as well as traffic routes. We can rest assured, as we have effective coordination from the Andorran Civil Protection to ensure that everything works properly.

—You are a professional cyclist with a lot of experience. What can you say about the development of cycling? Has the level of cyclists increased?

—I have been living in Andorra for over 10 years, and I have witnessed significant growth in cycling tourism. In addition to the presence of the Tour de France and the Vuelta a España, many professional cyclists have chosen Andorra as their residence, which has contributed to the rise in cycling tourism. As a result, during the summer, there are more and more cyclists in the area.

—Do you have plans to organize the Andorra MoraBanc Clàssica for women?

—Yes, professional cycling, especially in the women's category, has evolved significantly since I started to be interested in women's cycling teams. Nowadays, there are more and more of them. There were almost no women's teams, but now, more races are being organized that include categories for women. In Andorra, one of our medium-term goals is to incorporate women's races into our schedule. However, we have to take it step by step and find a spot in the calendar that allows us to align the women's competition with ours, so that we can organize both events simultaneously. ●