

The Binda trophy: Pooley is invincible

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Warning to the more attentive readers: this is not the article that we published after the "Binda trophy" in 2008, even though it might seem so. **After three years**, in the long-awaited cycle race in Cittiglio, the first in the Women's Cycling World Cup, **the Briton Emma Pooley has again been crowned victor**: the captain of the Garmin-Cervelo team demonstrated her sensational ability (and strength), just as she did in 2008; she broke away after the first third of the race, soon after crossing the line for the first time, then opened up a huge lead and crossed the finishing line in Via Valcuvia, to win without any apparent effort, after 121 Km.

Her **domination was absolute**, even though (as often happens on these occasions) one wonders what her rivals, and above all their sports directors, were thinking. Because, although it is right and proper that the strongest should win, **the conduct of the other teams was incredible**, as they failed to keep pace with Pooley on a light slope, and could not even manage to follow her.

Journalists' opinions of who the best cyclists were were not expressed; to all intents and purposes, the large group that followed Pooley (or rather, that should have followed her) remained together, almost afraid to make a wrong move. **The only action worth mentioning** came during the last lap, when two cyclists made a burst for the podium, the French cyclist Ferrier-Bruneau, and the Australian Corset, but they were caught.

When she crossed the line, Pooley had opened up a 1'32" lead over the main group, which had been reduced to fewer than 15 cyclists. A sprint was made by the other cyclist who had been favourite to win on the eve of the race, **the Swede Emma Johansson** (Hitec), who arrived ahead of **the Dutch cyclist Annemiek Van Vleuten**, who confirmed the Dutch cyclists' love for the Cittiglio race (Vos, who did not participate today, won on the last two occasions). The Italians failed to shine: **the best was Elena Berlato** (12th), with Tatiana Guderzo (19th) after her, while **Noemi Cantele** (a team mate of the winner) had to remain behind, coming in **22nd place**, after Johansson.

The prize for **bad luck**, went, **on the eve of the race, to the other cyclist from Varese, Valentina Carretta**, who was prevented from taking part by a health problem, and was forced to follow her team, the Top Girls Fassa Bortolo, in the team car.

Despite the intermittent rain, **there was a good crowd in Cittiglio, but also along the course**, where many waited to applaud the cyclists as they passed. It is a pity there was such a great difference in level between the first and the final groups; dozens of cyclists were left behind at the first difficulties, and, as a result, the roads of the "Binda" trophy had to be kept closed for a prolonged period of time. Maybe the international cycling union, UCI, and its judges, should **assess participants in the World Cup trials more thoroughly**, in order not to avoid great differences in ability.

THE WINNER – Emma Pooley, who is from London and who was born in 1982, is a tiny

woman, but she has an iron physique; **she has already had almost thirty successes (including the World time trials)** since she started racing in the Elite group. Her move might have seemed daring, but, like in 2008, she proved she was right. “Three years ago, I won also thanks to the surprise factor; today, I tried long before the finishing line, and it came off. Maybe I was taking a risk, but **I knew I had a very strong team behind me**, and if I had been caught, my team mates would have prepared a new attack. It’s also for this reason that our rivals were afraid, and so I managed to gain ground.”

Pooley has dedicated her victory to her Garmin-Cervelo team, and she does not forget her closest team mate. “I would have been **just as happy, if Noemi had won** on the streets of her home town. Winning the Cittiglio race is important, because you get to wear the cup leader’s jersey; this race is well organised, and it seems to suit me perfectly.”

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