

**SHORT AND INTENSE COURSE, HIGH PACE, A BATTLE FOR THE OVERALL
LEAD AND HAPPY WINNERS
PLAYTIKA EPIC ISRAEL STAGE 3 HIGHLIGHTS**

The final stage of 2016 Playtika Epic Israel sealed Jiri Novak and Hans Becking overall victory. After a super tough 2nd stage, the riders were treated with a short final stage, although quite 'thick' with 1,350 meters of total vertical ascent.

The course took the riders to the Ramot Naftali ridge, north from the race village, on fast dirt roads, but within 7 Kms from the start, the climbing began. A sequence of dirt roads and singletrack took the riders to Kibutz Kefar Giladi through mild gradients. From the 1st feeding zone the riders started climbing towards the town of Metula, but nothing was mild on this climb, that made even the strongest riders walk and carry their bikes.

The downhill toward the finish line included some super steep traction-less dirt roads that made the responsible riders within the race walk, and some flowing singletrack that made the same riders happy. A fast flat road took the riders back to the race village, which was very crowded with lots of supporters, fans and families that came over for the race finale.

The race started with a gap of 3:28 minutes to the leaders Becking and Novak over the 2nd place team. That forced the competition to start with a murderous pace, that looked like a XCO race start. The four leading teams quickly opened a gap from the rest of the field, and stayed together for the first 20 Kms. The first hike a bike segment saw the Belgian duo dropping from the leaders group, but when the singletrack section began, on the way back to the race village, the Dutch/Czech duo has dropped the hammer, and none of the other two teams couldn't react and follow their high pace.

Becking and Novak crossed the finish line at 2:28:17 hours, won 2 stages out of 3, and took the overall victory at 2016 Playtika Epic Israel. On their tail, Sarai and Deho tried to pass Haimy and Gluth through a wild field, only to get blocked by barbed wire, the gamble didn't pay off, and the disappointed Italians finished in third place, 44 seconds after Haimy/Gluth, and 1:32 minutes after the winners.

The steady women category had no surprises and no change in the general order. Moran Talpaz and Megan Beltzer took the 1st place, Canadians Melanie Chambers and Karen Duff took the second spot and Sharon Shachar and Beth Christiansen from the U.S took another third place, and that was also the order of the overall winners.

The Masters Category saw a switch between yesterday's 1st and 2nd place: Lior Zach Maor and Gali Ronen took the 1st place today, and Lior Zehavi and Raz Jacobson took second, although the four of them had the same time. Third place today were once again Noam Schiler and Erez Shaked. Overall winners were Zehavi and Jacobson. 2nd overall were Zach-Maor and Ronen, and 3rd overall were Schiler and Shaked.

The mixed category has also no change in the leading three teams with Naama Noyman and Erez Eisenberg at 1st place today and overall followed by 2nd place today and overall Spanish Juan and Canadian Patricia, and 3rd place today and overall Yulia and Dima Ripkin.

Grand Masters category saw 2014 and 2015 overall winners Oran Uzrad and Amos Geri taking the day's top spot and also the overall win. Rami Yaron and Rami Zamir took 2nd place at the last stage and Liron Sarusi and Amit Levin took third. 2nd place overall went to Yaron and Zamir, and 3rd overall went to Zohar Galili and Erez Weisbord.

The Playtika Epic Israel race is in memory of Giora Tsachor, a high ranked commander in the Israeli Mosad, who got killed in an accident by a truck while training on his mountain bike.

Giora lived his life by the values of conquering tough challenges, professionalism, the love of nature and the love of Israel, and he spent many days in cycling challenges abroad, supporting his son Gal, who was participating in them. Together, the father and son dreamed of organizing such a huge international event in Israel. When he was killed, Gal knew that the way of commemorating his father will be through organizing a top mountain biking event in his memory, with the same values, and so Playtika Epic Israel was born.

A lot of sponsors and organizations joined this vision and helped Playtika Epic Israel to reach it's fourth year, among them: Playtika, Trek Bikes, Subaru, K.K.L (the Israeli forest service), Gu, Shimano, Mario Center, Romah, Rudy Project, Funkier, the Israeli Cycling Federation, The Ministry Of Culture and Sports, Hapoel, Arctic Cat, Gravity Check, Neviot, The Galil Elyon Regional Council, and Mevo'ot Hahermon Regional Council.