

Rwanda's 29 riders open their campaign at the African Cycling Championships in Kisumu, Kenya, today, with the individual time trials (ITT) and the juniors first on the road. They will have to get past South Africa, Eritrea, Algeria and Morocco to reach the podium.

The five-day championships run from October 21 to 25. According to the start lists, 282 riders are competing in the ITT, a mixed team relay and road races across several age categories. The Confederation of African Cycling (CAC) says they come from 33 countries. The Rwanda Cycling Federation (Ferwacy) confirmed Rwanda's squad of 29, from juniors to elite, which wants to improve on last year's showing in Kwale, Kenya.

Coach Félix Ssempoma said the large selection was deliberate. "Our goal is to win medals. We selected a large number of riders because having more competitors gives us a better chance of winning," he said.

The riders made the long bus journey from Musanze over the weekend and rested on Monday. On Tuesday, those racing today's ITT rode the course on their time-trial bikes to learn the route.

Defending junior women's champion Akimana Donatha leads the challenge. She won the junior women's ITT in 2025 and has since taken gold in both the time trial and the road race at the 2026 ANOCA Zone Five Youth Games. Yvonne Masengesho, a bronze medallist last year, rides alongside her.

In the elite men's road race, Moise Mugisha, third last year, heads an experienced group. The man to beat is Eritrea's Merhawi Kudus, the defending champion, who is in Kisumu to hold on to his title. On the women's side, South Africa's Hayley Preen defends her elite crown. Rwanda will also rely on Diane Ingabire, Claudette Nyirarukundo and its under-23 riders.

Senegal's Meunier Sow is one to watch in the men's juniors. He recently signed with Bike Aid and was the best African junior rider at the UCI Road World Championships in Montréal, Canada.

Kisumu is flat, but it is a hot lakeside city, and the heat could weigh heavily on riders in the longer road races, especially the 175.2km elite men's race on the final day. The CAC medical team says riders must keep rehydrating. Organisers have put 20 medical personnel and three ambulances in place, each with a doctor and an

attendant. Three emergency doctors from Aga Khan Hospital are on standby, and water points are set along the route.

The championships follow Rwanda's 15-rider trip to the 2026 UCI Road World Championships in Montréal, where Kevin Nshutiraguma was 53rd in the under-23 ITT but did not finish the road race, and junior Pacifique Byusa was 64th in the junior men's ITT. The results showed how hard it is to post strong finishes against the world's best, and Kisumu is a different test.

The ITT opens the championships today, with the juniors on the course. The elite and under-23 mixed relay (40.8km) and the youth road races follow, with the men over 58.6km and the women over 38.2km.

The junior road races come later in the week: 68.8km for the women and 119.8km for the men. Saturday brings the women's elite and under-23 road race (122.2km), and Sunday's men's elite and under-23 race (175.2km) closes the championships.