The 17th Tour du Rwanda 2025 edition is coming to an end, according to latest classification results. French rider Joris Delbove of TotalEnergies retained the yellow jersey heading into Stage 6, but other riders look to impress going into the final two stages with most of the climbing still to come.

The 2025 Tour du Rwanda began with a short 3.4km prologue in Kigali, where first-year under-23 rider Aldo Taillieu of the Lotto Development team claimed victory. The first road stage saw a thrilling photo finish between Henok Mulubrhan and Rotem Tene, with the Eritrean reigning champion edging out the young Israeli rider.

As the race entered the big hills on stage two, the peloton certainly felt the challenge. In a reduced finish, with just 29 riders remaining in the front group, Australian Brady Gilmore of Israel-Premier Tech claimed his first professional victory, edging out his teammate Itamar Einhorn for the win.

Brady Gilmore doubled his success on stage three, racing into Rubavu with a reduced group of 19 riders, which saw small splits within the pack. Gilmore was dominant in the sprint, finishing with bike lengths to spare over young Eritrean Yoel Habteab, who took a strong second place for Bike Aid.

Tour du Rwanda 2025 returned to Kigali on Saturday, March 1, for Stage 6, a 131.1km route from Nyanza District to the finish line at Canal Olympia in Rebero.

In the previous stage, which covered 144 km from Rusizi to Huye, UAE Team Emirates' Gen Z rider Duarte Marivoet claimed victory with a time of 4 hours, 5 minutes, and 1 second. Despite losing their dominance in Stage 5, TotalEnergies' French rider Joris Delbove retained the yellow jersey heading into Stage 6. With only two stages left in the 17th edition, no Rwandan rider has yet secured a stage victory.

The Tour du Rwanda is Africa's premier cycling race, and its importance will grow even further in 2025, as it precedes the World Championship in Kigali later this year.

As the race was about to begin, safety concerns were raised by several federations in light of the ongoing conflict in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Tensions had escalated after M23 rebels, seized control of the border city of Goma, casting a shadow over the event.

The raised concerns served as a litmus test for the upcoming first African UCI Road Championship, scheduled for September this year. With the situation in neighboring DRC still uncertain, the safety issues brought to light the potential challenges that could arise as Rwanda prepares for such a major event.

Despite the initial concerns, the latest reports from Gisenyi, in the Western Province, have confirmed that the Tour du Rwanda has remained a completely safe event. This assurance comes even as riders crossed the finish line in Gisenyi on stage three, a town situated right on the Rwanda-DRC border.

In particular at the Tour du Rwanda, Wednesday's stage three finish into Rubavu and subsequent stage start from the same town just 14km away from Goma, was a clear indication to Rwanda's ability to put on a safe major event as the conflict rolls on. Five civilians have been killed in Rubavu over the last month in fighting between Rwandan and Congolese military.

Amidst the excitement of the Tour du Rwanda this month, tensions between the DRC and Rwanda have been simmering in the background. Allegations that Rwandan-backed rebels have seized control of the border city of Goma have heightened the strain between the two nations, casting a shadow over the region's stability.

As the race unfolds, the UCI is closely watching the situation, aware of the potential impact on regional peace. While in Kigali, during the official flagging off of the tour and campaign for the International Olympic Committee (IOC) job, UCI President David Lappartient reiterated that there is no 'Plan B' for the Rwanda World Junior Championship, despite the calling for its cancellation if Rwanda "does not change course" on the ongoing conflict in the DRC. Lappartient announce announced a new UCI World Cycling Centre regional satellite center being launched in the country.

Simultaneously, reports indicated that the European parliament is calling for the World Championships in Rwanda to be moved due to the Rwandans' role in the eastern DRC conflict. It's unclear how much direct impact the European parliament can have upon the UCI, but its significant pressure for Lappartient as a candidate for the top job at the International Olympic Committee.

National federations have spoken about issues with the cost of participating in the World Championship, with hotel prices said to be sky-high. An assessment of the

Championships' viability will be made after the Tour du Rwanda concludes, according to Tuttobiciweb.it, with mitigations such as charter flights and specified team hotels being considered. The UCI Board will meet with representatives of several national federations in the coming weeks.

Rwandan Sports Minister Nelly Mukazayire said, "Safety is our top priority. We are fully aware of the situation in the border region and are working closely with all relevant authorities to ensure the safety and protection of all participants and spectators during the Cycling World Championships…We are certain that the situation in the border region will not affect the championships."

Mukazayire went on to describe the significant impact that the Worlds in Rwanda will have on the country and the sport across Africa, emphasizing the importance of keeping the event in Kigali.

"The Cycling World Championships will have a transformative impact on the future of cycling in Rwanda. They will inspire a new generation of cyclists, increase the sport's impact within the country, and provide valuable experience for our athletes…This championship will be a catalyst for the continued growth and development of cycling in Rwanda, and we believe it will contribute to the overall development of sports in our country and Africa as a whole."

"We are confident that the benefits of hosting the Championships, including promoting cycling in Africa, showcasing Rwanda's beauty and progress, and boosting our economy, far outweigh any potential risks," Mukazayire added.

The Minister went on to describe the significant impact that the championship will have on the country and the sport across Africa, emphasizing the importance of keeping the event in Kigali. However, several European countries including Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands have already declared that they will send reduced delegations to the Championships due to the high costs involved. This raises concerns about the event's global participation and prestige.

Mukazayire said that the government and event organizers are working with national teams on this. "We have been in contact with various national federations regarding participation in the World Championships. We understand that cost considerations are an important factor for many teams. While we have worked to provide a range of accommodation options, including more affordable alternatives, we also recognize that participating in a global event involves costs. We are

committed to transparency in our pricing. We are open to discussing any specific concerns federations might have and will continue to work with all participating nations to make this championship a success. It is important to note that we have received strong interest from many other nations and are confident of strong participation.”