



The 10th anniversary edition of the Genghis Khan Festival starts tomorrow afternoon with the traditional opening ceremony followed by the first stage of the MTB Adventure. The three-day race sees a record number of registered participants (700) and promises to be as exciting as ever under the blue skies of the Xiwuqi Grasslands.

It has been raining all week in Xiwuqi, but with 24 hours to go the sun is fighting its way back through the deck of clouds. All weekends is forecast to be sunny with temperatures soaring to 30 degrees on Sunday, which will be an additional factor to count in for the 175 participants in the King of the Grasslands competition especially. Everyone is therefore kindly reminded to keep yourselves hydrated at all times. Xiwuqi is sitting on the Mongolian plateau 930m above sea level and is characterised by dry air, which does not always make you thirsty. Use our abundant drinking stations during the races, and protect your face, neck and skin with sun protection from our sponsor NAQI.

The 10th MTB Adventure will enjoy the return of last year's champions Tuguldur Tuulkhangai from Mongolia and Chiara Eberle from Germany. While they of course again start as race favourites, they will be challenged by the competition. In the men's, Tuulkhangai - riding for Team Chiru Magura - will have to deal with his compatriots from Team Attila, Team Aldar and Team Khuch. The biggest challenger will be the 2014 GKF champion Myagmarsuren Baasankhuu. The 25-year-old is a climber whereas "Tugu" is a time trialist. Key to victory for anyone in the field will be to withstand the expected early attacks from the defending champion. Last year, Tuulkhangai proved he can do the 65km of the first stage by himself. Give him a gap and he's gone. Apart from Baasankhuu, Sainbayar Jambaljamts is a Mongolian biker to watch out for. Challengers for the throne come from Team Specialized, Paul Diemer and Soeren Mueller, and Arnold Lozano from the Philippines, winner of the recent Cordillera Epic race. But there are some strong Germans as well, such as Bernard Uhl and possibly Philipp Bertsch. China's TREK has also entered several riders and is always a team to watch out for.

Chiara Eberle was unbeatable last year, beating a list of former GKF champions, but one recent champion was missing then. Enkhjargal Tuvshinjargal is the 2013 female winner from Ulaanbaatar, and has vowed to return to the Xiwuqi grasslands this weekend! Tuvshinjargal is an Asian TT champion and the fastest female Mongolian rider of the past years. A policewoman by profession, she has proven to be tough cookie on many occasions. Not in the least in Dali during the Granfondo Yunnan last November, when she recovered from a horrific crash to take the victory in the 5-day stage race. Chiara versus Enja will be an exciting dual to follow this weekend. Outsider for the female victory is Solongo Tserenlham, winner in 2012 but soundly beaten by Eberle a year ago. As usual in a non-professional event, not all participants are known so come tomorrow afternoon we may see the emergence of a new star in the history of the Genghis Khan MTB Adventure!



A rider from UB in yellow: a familiar sight in the Genghis Khan MTB Adventure