



The wait is over. The names of the men and women who will take on the Red Bull X-Alps, the world's toughest adventure race, have been revealed – and it's quite a field of athletes and adventurers.

After a demanding selection process, 31 athletes from 18 countries have been hand-picked to take on the famous race across the Alps, in which competitors must cover approximately 1,000km of straight-line distance either by foot or paraglider over wild and mountainous terrain. An additional wildcard entry will be announced in the coming months.

For the first time since 2005, two female athletes will be at the start line, Dawn Westrum, a former US soldier and adventure racer and Yvonne Dathe, a four-time German long-distance paragliding champion.

Says Dawn: “I want to prove that women can be competitive on a race of this length. Paragliding and long distance trekking are two sports where men and women can compete almost equally and I believe that women can have as good or better endurance than men over long distances.”

To be selected, athletes must have undertaken numerous adventures and have a proven paragliding track record to take on the demands of the race.

Says Race Director Christoph Weber: “The criteria for selection is very simple: you have to be a brilliant all-round mountain athlete with an incredible level of fitness and skill, and a sixth sense for reading the weather, the terrain and the competition. It's not just about being a great paraglider – but you do need to be an outstanding and safe pilot!”

He adds: “It was very hard selecting the athletes. Normally we only choose two to three athletes from any country but this would have excluded many promising candidates who show a lot of potential. For this reason we have four athletes each from France, Germany and Austria. I'm also excited that we have two women taking part. They are both very talented and promise to make the race even more gripping. 2015 will be a fantastic showdown of talent.”

The talented lineup includes legends from the race's history, athletes like the Romanian Toma Cocone, who has taken part in every Red Bull X-Alps and of course the three-time winner

Christian Maurer (SUI) who has dominated the race to date. Could 2015 be the year his reign comes to an end?

With 19 new athletes taking part, there is no shortage of candidates. Could it be the American Gavin McClurg? He currently holds the North American foot launch record (387km), which is all the more impressive for taking place across the remote mountains of north-west America. Or could it be a young challenger like 22-year-old Frenchman Nelson de Freyman, who despite his youth, has already clocked up an impressive number of adventure flights and is a national youth champion? Then there are previous competitors like Paul Guschlbauer (AUT), 3rd in 2011 but a disappointing 9th in 2013. He is hungry for a podium. For Tom de Dorlodot (BEL) ambitions are more modest. Just making it to the start line will be an achievement for the Belgian – earlier this year he suffered a serious paragliding accident.

The epic duel between the Frenchmen Clément Latour and Antoine Girard, which saw the pair arrive within an hour of each other after battling for nine days in 2013, also promises to make a return. Both men are in, along with two other Frenchmen, Gaspard Petiot and de Freyman.

Comments Gavin McClurg: “The Red Bull X-Alps is the definition of true adventure. It's something I've dreamed of doing for years and I'm just so stoked to get the chance to take part. I can't wait for the race to finally begin!”

Full route details will be announced in the spring. Until then, let the training begin!

The 2015 lineup is listed below. In addition, there will be one wildcard entry announced in the coming months. Stay tuned...

1. Paul Guschlbauer (AUT1)
2. Gerald Gold (AUT2)
3. Stephan Gruber (AUT3)
4. Pascal Purin (AUT4)
5. Thomas de Dorlodot (BEL)
6. Alex Villa (COL)
7. Stanislav Mayer (CZE)
8. Ivan Colás (ESP)
9. Clément Latour (FRA1)
10. Antoine Girard (FRA2)
11. Nelson de Freyman (FRA3)
12. Gaspard Petiot (FRA4)
13. Steve Nash (GBR)
14. Michael Gebert (GER1)
15. Yvonne Dathe (GER2)
16. Sebastian Huber (GER3)
17. Manuel Nübel (GER4)
18. Aaron Durogati (ITA)

19. Chi-Kyong Ha (KOR)
20. Ferdinand van Schelven (NED)
21. Nick Neynens (NZL)
22. Pawel Faron (POL)
23. Toma Cocone (ROU)
24. Stephan Kruger (RSA)
25. Christian Maurer (SUI1)
26. Samuel Vurpillot (SUI2)
27. Michael Witschi (SUI3)
28. Erik Rehnfeldt (SWE)
29. Honza Rejmanek (USA1)
30. Gavin McClurg (USA2)
31. Dawn Westrum (USA3)
32. Wildcard

For further updates and stories, check out the Red Bull X-Alps on www.facebook.com/redbullxalps and www.twitter.com/redbullxalps

RED BULL X-ALPS IMAGES

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ABOUT THE RED BULL X-ALPS

The 2015 Red Bull X-Alps will be the seventh edition of the world's toughest adventure race in which athletes must hike or fly approximately 1,000km across the Alps from Salzburg to Monaco in the fastest time possible. The race takes place in July 2015. It's an epic undertaking that can involve hiking up to 100km of mountain terrain in a day – or flying at altitudes in excess of 4,000m. The race demands not only a very high level of endurance fitness but expert paragliding experience. The 2013 edition was the fastest on record with 10 athletes reaching Monaco. It was won by Christian Maurer (SUI) in 6d 23hr 40m.