



Alessandro Zanardi wins the gold medal in the time trial at the Rio de Janeiro Paralympic Games*.

Rio de Janeiro (BR), 14th September 2016. Perfect start for Alessandro Zanardi (IT) to the Paralympic* para-cycling competitions at Rio de Janeiro (BR): In today's time trial, the 49-year old Italian raced to gold in the H5 category with his handbike. For Zanardi this is the third Paralympic gold medal of his career after winning twice gold and one silver medal at the London games in 2012.

The time trial saw athletes tackle two laps of a ten-kilometre course along the coastline of Pontal near Rio de Janeiro. Zanardi completed the distance of 20 kilometres in the fastest time of 28:36.81 minutes, securing gold in the first of the three races he is competing in in Rio. He had an advantage of 2.7 seconds over silver medallist Stuart Tripp (AU). The bronze medal went to Oscar Sanchez (US).

“It has been a long journey, which basically started the day after the London games, when I decided that I would focus on a new horizon in my life and that this would be Rio,” Zanardi said. “You also need to know that the stadium and the facilities in Rio are built where they used to have the Indycar circuit. I have always been fast on that circuit, but never won a race. So deep inside I thought that this would be another opportunity to correct this and to finally do something in Rio de Janeiro. After the exciting years of preparation and coming here to a course that was not really my kind of course, it is just fantastic to finally enjoy the taste of gold once more.”

“I knew that the course in Pontal was, technically speaking, not in my favour, for many reasons. As such, my trainer and I made a detailed plan of how I should tackle the race and how to pace my effort, and I stuck rigidly to that plan,” Zanardi continued. “I have to admit that it was hard when I realised after the first lap that I was only third and almost 20 seconds behind Stuart Tripp, who was leading at that time. But nevertheless I kept cranking, following my plan, executing my project. And I really pulled off a miracle on my second lap: not only I did not slow down, but I actually managed to increase my average power and sprint towards the end. So to win a gold medal by just 2.7 seconds like this is even more tasty than otherwise. I am very, very happy. I am very grateful to all the people who helped me to be here and to enjoy this great achievement today.”

Next up for Zanardi is the road race tomorrow, Thursday 15th September. “This race will be a gamble,” he predicts. “I am pretty sure that all will be decided in a sprint towards the finish. We have a very tight hair-pin, actually a ‘u-turn’, only 200 metres before the finish. If I manage to come out of this final corner in a good position, I know that I have a very good sprint. So I have a great chance. But this is what everybody is thinking. So everybody will try to enter this corner ahead of the rest of the field. As such, there is even the possibility of an accident. It will be a thrilling race. I will do my best and the key will be to stay out of any trouble.”

The third and final competition will be the team relay with the Italian national team on Friday 16th September.



*Note:

BMW is not a sponsor or partner of the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

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