

Philipsen ends drought with stage win

Belgian sprinter moves within seven points of green jersey leader Mads Pedersen

- Philipsen wins reduced bunch sprint in Alps
- Van der Poel delivers perfect lead-out
- Schmid and Kooij finish several lengths back
- Pogacar finishes safely, still in yellow

AFP | Voiron

Jasper Philipsen took a dominant victory in a reduced bunch sprint at the end of the Tour de France's Alpine 17th stage yesterday to end a "horrible" run of near misses. Set up by a strong lead-out from his former world champion team-mate Mathieu van der Poel, Philipsen finished several bike lengths ahead of Mauro Schmid and Olav Kooij, who had each already won a stage at the Tour. It was an 11th Tour stage victory overall for the 28-year-old Belgian, who won the sprinters' green points jersey in 2023.



Alpecin - Premier Tech team's Belgian rider Jasper Philipsen cycles to the finish line

It meant that he has won at least one stage in each of the last five editions of the Tour. He had come close on several other sprint stages this year, finishing five times in the top five already.

And he admitted that it had been frustrating. "I was prepared very, very well, I was in the shape of my life," said Philipsen. "The first stage (of the race) was horrible, I couldn't find myself, I couldn't find the form I

was hoping for. "After 17 stages... we won for the team." In several of those near misses, Van der Poel had tried to lead him out but often a fraction too early, with Philipsen being caught and passed before the

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Tour stage victories have been achieved by Jasper Philipsen

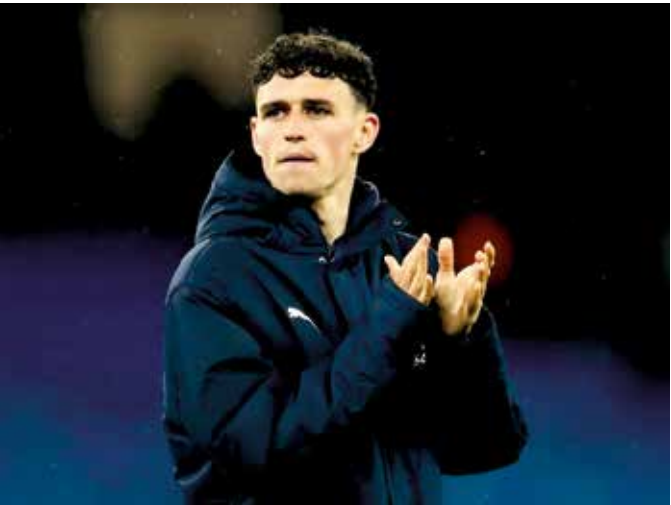
finish -- usually by compatriot Tim Merlier. But Merlier had dropped out of the Tour a few days earlier, unable to keep up on a tough mountain stage, and this time, Philipsen proved the quickest at the end of the 174.7km stage from Chambéry to Voiron. "I think it was a very hard day all day and I just tried to be in the front, (to) be in each important group and then everything came together," said Van der Poel. "And then Edward (Planckaert) was in the front group, so in the end you always had somebody in one of the groups and that was what made the victory a bit easier to achieve."

Frantic, hectic day

The 50 points Philipsen earned for winning the stage

also moved him to within just seven points of another former world champion, Dane Mads Pedersen in the green jersey competition. Race leader and defending champion Tadej Pogacar came home safely in the main peloton just under nine minutes later. But there was one concern for Pogacar, whose UAE Emirates-XRG team-mate Adam Yates -- a crucial mountain lieutenant -- struggled throughout the stage after suffering from a stomach problem the previous night. He eventually came home more than 26 minutes after Philipsen. It was a day of frantic, hectic bike racing. It took more than 100km for a breakaway to stick and eventually a six-man group opened up a lead at the head of the race. Amongst them was Pedersen, who was eying maximum points at the intermediate sprint 27km from the finish. He duly won that but almost immediately, Jasper Stuyven attacked and went clear of his breakaway companions. Behind them, a larger group including Philipsen and Kooij was gaining steadily and they soon caught the other five riders.

Man City's Foden signs four-year contract extension



Phil Foden reacts after a match (file photo)

AFP | London

Manchester City forward Phil Foden gave a boost to new boss Enzo Maresca by signing a four-year contract extension yesterday. Foden's deal provides the England international with much-needed stability after a turbulent period. The 26-year-old had struggled for form during an injury-plagued period that included being left out of England's squad for the recent World Cup. He would have been out of contract at the end of the coming season, but his new deal, which contains an option for a further one-year extension, resolves his long-term future. "Committing my future to City means everything to me. Playing for this club is all I've ever wanted to do and it's always an honour to wear the shirt," Foden said.

"It's not lost on me that I've been lucky enough to be part of a historic period with so many titles won, but we're always looking to the future and trying to win more. "I can only thank the club, staff, team-mates and fans who continue to put their faith in me and trust that I give everything I can for City and I hope I'll be able to repay you for years to come." Foden has won six Premier League titles, the Champions League, two FA Cups and five League Cups with City since graduating from the club's youth academy. He is the most decorated player in City's history alongside Bernardo Silva and John Stones, who both left in the close-season. But a year ago, after struggling to replicate his form of previous campaigns, Foden opened up on his battles off the pitch with his mental health.

Italian FA chief says in touch with Guardiola over coaching vacancy

AFP | Rome

The head of Italy's football federation has confirmed he held discussions with legendary coach Pep Guardiola over the vacancy at the Italian national side but added he was "not sure that this will come about". Giovanni Malago revealed the talks had taken place in an interview with the website Cronache di Spogliatoio (Dressing Room Chronicles) published yesterday. Asked whether the budget for the coach's salary could be increased in the case of Guardiola, he said: "Yes, and that is the exception for obvious reasons". "I won't go into detail here but it's not sure that this will come about. "However, I still believe it was



Pep Guardiola reacts after a match (file photo)

the right thing to do. It was important to open a dialogue and keep it alive," he added. Guardiola has first hand

knowledge of Italian football having played for Brescia and AS Roma (2001-03). Already at a low ebb, Italian

football was sent into a tailspin in March after the men's national team failed for a third consecutive time to qualify for the World Cup. Italy has won four World Cups. Guardiola, 55, stepped down at Manchester City at the end of last season after winning six Premier League titles and the Champions League in his glittering decade at the Etihad Stadium. According to Italian media reports, former Italy internationals Andrea Pirlo and Roberto Mancini -- who guided the Azzurri to the Euro 2020 title -- are also being considered as candidates to coach the national team, which faces Belgium on September 25 in the Nations League.

Chelsea sign Rogers from Villa for reported UK record fee

AFP | London

Chelsea signed England midfielder Morgan Rogers from Aston Villa on Tuesday in a deal British media valued at £117 million (\$157 million), a price that smashed the transfer record for a British player. "The 23-year-old forward has signed a contract at Stamford Bridge until 2033," the London club posted on their web site. Rogers passed a medical on Monday following his return



Morgan Rogers reacts during a match

from the World Cup in North America.

"I'm so excited," said Rogers. "For me, Chelsea are the biggest club in London and a club I've always admired since I was a kid," Rogers was quoted as saying by the club. "I'm really excited about the project with the new manager, the players we've got and where the club is heading. That's why I'm here and I can't wait to get started." The transfer surpasses the previous record fee for a British player set by Manchester City when they signed England

midfielder Elliot Anderson from Nottingham Forest for £116 million earlier in July. Rogers is the most expensive signing in Chelsea's history, eclipsing the £107 million paid to sign Enzo Fernandez from Benfica in 2023. The swoop is a significant statement of intent from Chelsea, who convinced Rogers to leave Villa even though -- unlike his former club -- the west Londoners will not play in the Champions League in the coming season.