



## **Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026: Luke Mudgway Powers Through Mulshi–Maval in Thrilling Stage 1**

The **Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026** flagged off its first stage on Tuesday, the Mulshi–Maval Miles, from the TCS Circle near Hinjewadi. Over 87.2 demanding kilometres, riders were taken on a relentless journey through sweeping grasslands, twisting mountain roads and shimmering backwaters, setting the tone for a race that has wasted no time in baring its teeth.

By the time the peloton thundered towards the finish, it was **Luke Mudgway** of **Li Ning Star, China**, who emerged with arms aloft, stopping the clock at **02:00:21** after a breathless sprint finale.

Mudgway's victory did not come without resistance. **Andreas Matildas** of **Quick Pro Team, Estonia**, finished close behind in second place after clocking **02:00:27**, with **Yorben Laurysen (02:00:30)** of **Tarteletto- Isorex, Belgium** completing the podium.

Under **Union Cycliste Internationale** regulations for 2.2 stage races, the top three finishers earned time bonuses of 10, six and four seconds, respectively. In races of this level, where gaps are often measured in heartbeats rather than minutes, Mudgway's 10-second bonus may carry enormous weight. And the Li Ning Star rider was well aware of the significance of his effort.

He described the opening kilometres as brutally fast, explaining that staying near the front was essential as the race fractured over the first categorised climb.

*"Yeah, it was really, really fast from the start. I just stayed at the front, and then we went over the first categorised climb. After the climb, there were maybe two or three groups. I just sprinted for the finish. I had two teammates there who helped me, and yeah, I was just really happy I could finish it off for the team,"* **Mudgway said.**

**When pressed, which was the most difficult stretch, Mudgway opined:** *"Probably the descent off the first categorised climb. It was really, really steep, and it was really technical. But at the same time, that made the difference in the race, I think. That's where we got the gap. It was a really fast part of the race. I was really happy that we could finish it off."*

Earlier in the afternoon, the stage had already hinted at its volatility. Georgios Bouglas ignited proceedings by claiming the first intermediate sprint, ahead of Dutch rider **Tamar Spiero** of **Wielerploeg Groot Amsterdam, Netherlands** and India's **Vishwajeet Singh**.

However, just minutes after the first checkpoint, the race had to be neutralised for around 23 minutes due to an on-road incident involving riders in the second group of the peloton.



As a precautionary measure and in line with **Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI)** safety protocols, the race was temporarily suspended. UCI officials and the event medical team responded immediately. All affected riders received necessary medical checks, and technical teams attended to the affected bicycles.

Climbs became launchpads for attacks as the strongest riders asserted themselves. France's **Killian Larpe** of **Sélection Nationale Team France Défense** claimed maximum points at the first King of the Mountains checkpoint, but it was **Cristian Railaenu** of **Li Ning Star** who showed consistency across the ascents. Finishing among the top three at every mountain checkpoint, **Railaenu** collected **five points** to secure the '**Polka Dot**' jersey, emerging as the standout climber of the day.

Stage One also saw a spread of honours across the field. **Jambaljamts Sainbayar** of **Burgos Burpellet BH, Spain** claimed the **Orange Jersey** as the '**Best Asian**' rider. **Spiero Tamar** of **Team Wielerploeg Groot Amsterdam**, was rewarded with the **White Jersey** for best young rider, while **Harshveer Singh Sekhon, Indian National Team** topped the domestic contingent to earn the **Blue Jersey** as India's leading performer.

With Mulshi–Maval behind them, focus now turns to Stage Two, the formidable Maratha Heritage Circuit. Spanning 105.3 kilometres with a punishing elevation gain of 1,051 metres, the route through Purandar Fort, Sinhagad and the Khadakwasla Lake promises a bruising examination of stamina and climbing ability. After a dramatic opening day filled with speed, suspense and survival, the Pune Grand Tour has made one thing clear: this race will demand far more than fast legs alone.

### **Stage 1 Summary:**

#### **Podium**

- Winner - Luke Mudgway (Li Ning Star, China) – 02:00:21
- 2<sup>nd</sup> place - Andreas Matildas (Quick Pro Team, Estonia) – 02:00:27
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place - Yorben Laurysen (Tarteletto–Isorex, Belgium) – 02:00:30

#### **Jersey Leaders after Stage 1**

- Yellow Jersey (General Classification – Time): Luke Mudgway (LNS, China)
- Green Jersey (Points Classification): Luke Mudgway (LNS, China) – 22 points
- Polka Dot Jersey (Mountains/KOM): Cristian Raileanu (Bib 16, LNS, China) – 5 points
- Orange Jersey (Best Asian Rider): Jambaljamts Sainbayar (Bib 4, BBH, Mongolia)
- White Jersey (Best Young Rider): Tamar Spiero (Bib 263, WIG, Netherlands)
- Blue Jersey (Best Indian Rider): Harshveer Singh Sekhon (Bib 155, IND, India)

### **Information About Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026**

Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026 is India's first-ever UCI 2.2 category multi-stage, five-day Continental Cycling Race for Men, marks a watershed moment for the India's presence in the



global professional circuit. A gruelling 437-km route passes through the diverse terrains of Deccan Plateau and Sahyadri Ranges, the event has received an unprecedented field of 171 elite riders from 29 teams representing five continents and 35 countries. Organised by Pune District Administration, Government of Maharashtra under the aegis of Cycling Federation of India, the race combines high-performance sporting excellence, celebrating Pune's cultural heritage, historic landmarks and rural tourism through 9 talukas and 150 villages.

### **World-Class Infrastructure & Global Ambition**

Central to the Bajaj Pune Grand Tour's success is a massive infrastructure overhaul, highlighted by the rapid road construction, upgrades with safety protocols in just 75 days. This project is part of a broader district-wide initiative in upgrading the road infrastructure to meet stringent UCI guidelines, ensuring top-tier safety and ride quality. By delivering this world-class arena, Bajaj Pune Grand Tour not only reclaims Pune's legacy as India's "Cycle Capital" but also establishes a permanent blueprint for sustainable urban-rural development and positions India as a premier destination for international sports tourism and elite competitive cycling.

### **Race Stages:**

- **21 Jan 2026: STAGE 2: MARATHA HERITAGE CIRCUIT (105.3 KM, Elevation 1051 M):** Cyclists will ascend the challenging ghats, facing steep gradients of the Purandar Fort, Sinhagad and Khadakwasla Lake, making the Day-2 a true test of endurance.
- **22 Jan 2026: STAGE 3: WESTERN GHATS GATEWAY (134 KM, Elevation 1024 M):** Stretching across the Deccan plateau from Purandar to Baramati, Day-3 favours speed and tactical prowess, with crosswinds and rolling terrain to keep competitors on edge.
- **23 Jan 2026: STAGE 4: PUNE PRIDE LOOP (95 KM, Elevation 578 M):** The final phase winds through the urban sprawls of Pune, passing through modernity and historic relevance like Shaniwar Wada, featuring technical sections and a dramatic finish.

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