

## **Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026 – Stage 2: Mudgway Rules the Maratha Heritage Circuit, Extends Yellow Jersey Lead**

**Pune, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2026:** The **Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026** delivered exactly what its billing promised: a bruising examination of endurance, teamwork and nerve.

The Maratha Heritage Circuit, stretching 105.3 kilometres across Pune district, took the race deep into a landscape shaped by forts, steep gradients and unforgiving descents.

Starting from the Ladies Club in Camp at 12:30 pm and finishing along Sinhagad Road at Nanded City, the stage was designed to stretch the peloton physically and mentally.

At the end of another relentless afternoon, it was once again **Luke Mudgway** of **Li Ning Star, China (02:31:49)**, who stood tallest. Having claimed Stage One, Mudgway doubled down on his authority by winning the Maratha Heritage Circuit and retaining the **Yellow Jersey**.

The back-to-back victories have placed him firmly at the top of the general classification battle as the race moves deeper into Maharashtra's demanding terrain.

Mudgway did not have it all his own way. **Alan Carter Bettles** of **Roojai Insurance Winspeed, Thailand**, produced a composed ride to finish second, while **Yorben Lauryssen** of **Tarteletto-Isorex, Belgium**, claimed third. For Lauryssen, it marked a second successive podium finish, underlining his consistency after also finishing third on the opening day.

On virtue of claiming the top spot, Mudgway was handed a 10-second bonus, Beetles earned a six-second bonus, whereas Lauryssen was rewarded a four-second bonus.

It was an intense battle, and the top six riders finished with the same time of 02:31:49. **Clement Alleno** and **Jambaljamts Sainbayar, of Burgos Burpellet BH, Spain**, finished fourth and fifth whereas, **Stefan Benetton** of **Eurocyclingtrips – CCN, Guam**, stood sixth. The ranking has been awarded based on a photo finish.

Speaking after the finish, Mudgway acknowledged the severity of the challenge as the combination of heat and constant climbing turned the stage into a survival battle long before the finish line came into view. *"It was a hot day, lots of mountains, but yeah, I survived to the finish, and again I got to do a sprint from a small group. So, that's what suits me well. I'm glad I could execute it again today,"* **Mudgway said.**

Mudgway's victory was as much about collective effort as individual strength. Two teammates committed themselves to chasing duties, allowing the climbers to conserve energy before the decisive phases of the race.

*"My teammates did an amazing job today,"* **Mudgway observed.** *"We came here with one less rider; we only had five riders, so, we knew today was going to be tough to control. We had to control our two sprinters, so that we three climbers could, could rest and then they brought it back to a close enough time before the second-to-last climb."*

The defining moment came on the final climb, a brutal second-category ascent that proved the steepest of the day. Attacks flew as riders fought to stay in contention. From the crest, the road plunged into a fast, narrow and highly technical descent that offered little room for error and almost no opportunity to regroup before the finish.

It was here, on what many described as the queen stage of the race, that the strongest riders asserted control, and Mudgway confirmed his growing reputation as the rider to beat.

*“Teams started attacking us, but I managed to keep it under control, and then we just followed and followed. I had one of my teammates with me after the first climb, he rode me to the finish, and then I got to sprint again and happy I could finish it off for my team,”* **Mudgway added.**

While the yellow jersey remained with Mudgway, other classifications shifted after a demanding day in the hills. **Stefan Benetton** of **Eurocyclingtrips – CCN, Guam**, dominated the climbs to claim maximum points in the **King of the Mountains** competition, earning the **‘Polka Dot’ Jersey**.

The **orange jersey** for the **Best Asian rider** stayed with **Jambaljamts Sainbayar** of **Burgos Burpellet BH, Spain**, whose consistency continued to impress. Dutch rider **Tijssen Viego** of **Wielerploeg Groot Amsterdam, Netherlands**, was rewarded with the **White Jersey** as the **‘Best Young Rider’** while **Sarda Manav, Indian Development Team, India**, topped the domestic contingent to take the **Blue Jersey** as **‘India’s Leading Performer’** on the day.

With the Maratha Heritage Circuit now complete, the Bajaj Pune Grand Tour moves into its longest and most tactically complex phase.

Stage Three, the Western Ghats Gateway, stretches 134 kilometres from Purandar to Baramati and climbs to an elevation of 1,024 metres. Rolling terrain, exposed roads and the threat of crosswinds promise a different kind of challenge — one that could reshape the race once more.

After two days of attrition, one truth is clear: the Bajaj Pune Grand Tour is demanding far more than speed alone. And for now, Luke Mudgway is answering every question it asks.

### **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 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 rapid road construction and safety upgrades 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

- **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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