



## Interview with Andy Schleck (President of the Škoda Tour de Luxembourg) on the individual time trial on September 20th

On Saturday, September 20th, the commune of Niederanven, in collaboration with neighboring communes Junglinster and Betzdorf, will host the individual time trial of the Škoda Tour de Luxembourg. Ahead of this major sporting event, we spoke with Andy Schleck, former Tour de France winner and current president of Luxembourg's biggest cycling race.

**This is the first time the commune of Niederanven is organizing such a large sporting event. Although it was already a “ville de départ” in 1996 and 1997, what can residents and spectators expect on September 20th?**

Andy Schleck: Niederanven is not new to us, partly due to organizing youth races like the “Critérium européen des jeunes.” The desire to host such an event has been there for a long time, but we were contractually bound. Now, the Škoda Tour de Luxembourg has grown significantly compared to 5–6 years ago. We're now actively going to places where we can offer a return on investment—not just showcasing the commune or region to the world, but also involving the residents. Today, the Škoda Tour is the biggest cycling event in Luxembourg.



left to right : Christophe Junker (Coordinateur sportif) & Andy Schleck

For example, the Tour de France was watched 3.5 billion times worldwide this year. Cycling is gaining popularity, especially among the youth, and we aim to be more interactive. It's important for us to have a commune that wants us there and wants to turn the day into a big celebration.

**The Škoda Tour de Luxembourg is moving closer to the highest international level. What does that mean in terms of organization?**

Andy Schleck: It's a bit hard to explain in cycling, but we're operating at a very high level. If you exclude the World Tour races, we're right behind them. Globally, there are only about 20 races at our level. Even a broadcaster like Eurosport doesn't air our race as a favor—they do it because people are genuinely interested in who's racing and what's happening. We want to improve even more and maybe enter the World Tour circuit in a few years.

**The situation in the commune of Niederanven on September 20th is special because it's an individual time trial, which affects residents more directly. What message would you like to share?**

Andy Schleck: An individual time trial is often a highlight of the Škoda Tour. I warmly invite people to come and watch the spectacle. Since everyone knows well in advance that we'll be there, they can plan ahead—like where to park their car—so they don't face issues on race day. Communication between organizers, the commune, and residents is key. There will always be some who are unhappy, but we invite them too to come watch the race and be understanding.



## How was the collaboration with the commune of Niederanven over the past 12 months?

Andy Schleck: For a time trial, collaboration must be excellent because there are many more details to sort out than with a regular stage finish. It's a different scale. We have to be very strict with road closures because we're dealing with the lives of riders and spectators. I must say, if discussions with everyone were as smooth as with Niederanven, our job as organizers would be much easier.

## Let's not forget the sporting aspect. The time trial is about 26 km long, spread across three communes with some elevation—so it's a challenging course. How could this affect the outcome of the 2025 edition?

Andy Schleck: We wanted a longer time trial—initially 15 to 20 km. But when we visited the site, we realized we could go even longer. If the weather is dry, we expect average speeds of 52 to 54 km/h, meaning about half an hour of full throttle for the riders. This could be the decisive moment of the race. We also consider the stages before and after. Friday's stage in Vianden is tough, but the stage in Niederanven could be the game-changer.

## Let's talk about your personal journey. You're a Tour de France winner, one of the best professional riders in the world, and now president of the Škoda Tour de Luxembourg. What are the biggest differences for you between then and now?



Andy Schleck: I've experienced everything in cycling—from a young rider with ambitions entering the Škoda Tour de Luxembourg, to a professional winning Tour de France stages, retiring young, and then seeing the business side. Now, I also have a role in the Tour de France, focusing on hospitality and understanding what's needed—without forgetting the sporting side. The safety of riders and spectators always comes first. I've lived the show for years and can now bring my experience into this role.

## Finally, what do we wish for on September 20th?

Andy Schleck: I'll start with good weather, because cycling doesn't take place in a stadium or hall. It relies on the understanding of the public, and we hope they'll be proud to host this event in their commune. And above all, that everyone gets through the day safely.