

'Kaprun means a lot to me and has always done so' / Belgian mountain bike pro Roel Paulissen is looking forward to 'Bike Infection' on 8th July

Date: 06-09-2006 03:45 PM CET

Category: [Tourism, Cars, Traffic](#)

Press release from: [Europa-Sportregion Zell am See-Kaprun](#)

Agency: [knoefler-journalist](#) | media and communications



There are many athletes who, during their lives as sportsmen, have been luckier than Roel Paulissen: the mountain biker from the Belgian town of Hasselt is often not just fighting against his opponents on the course, but also mainly against himself. Falls and crashes, a serious hand injury, and excruciating stomach problems are just some of the negative highlights of his recent past. With a wink, Paulissen calls himself a 'natural born walking disaster area'.

Despite his problems, he has never lost the taste for his sport: Paulissen intends to attack for victory again in the first 'Bike Infection' in the 'Europa-Sportregion Zell am See-Kaprun'. 'This is a unique combination of cross-country and a road race. I am looking forward to it and I am going to do my very best', he says, showing some fighting spirit. The 'starting gun' for the big festival is being fired with a welcome party in Salzburger Platz in Kaprun on 7th July. The very next day Paulissen is going to hit the race course.

Despite the many injuries that have often caused him problems, the odds are in his favour – as a glance at his previous career shows: for many years the thirty-year-old pro has been counted among the elite of the mountain biking scene. He is at home on all the cross-country courses of this world - wherever you go, experts know his name. The sportsman from 'Giant Racing Team' moved into the limelight of public interest in the year 2004 when he won fourth place in the Athens Olympics.

However, the seven-time Belgian champion will meet with strong competition in the 'Bike Infection' in Kaprun: others, like the Austrian cross-country champion of 2004, Christoph Soukup, and the Dutch gold medallist Bart Bertjens, are also longing for victory. 'My team mate Bart is surely one of my strongest competitors. But of course, athletes like Soukup are also very dangerous.'

Only recently Paulissen showed in the renowned 'Glocknerkönig' race on Austria's highest mountain that he must be counted in for victory in the 'Bike Infection': he took second place among 2100 starters in a racing time of just 1:13:47 hours there. And last years results also give rise to optimism: in 2005 Paulissen headed the UCI world rankings of the most successful mountain bikers with the greatest of ease.

He now intends to achieve similar success in Kaprun. But the race course through the old town centre has its difficulties: 'After the climb you have to descend down a flight of stairs, then cross some tree trunks, make a double jump and cross a pool

of water. You need to hit this passage just right, ride through very elegantly and softly.' Paulissen thinks that this is the only way to succeed. And despite these tricky spots, he is convinced that he will finish among the first ranks: 'I really like the general idea and I think I will manage wonderfully in Kaprun.'

You can find more information on the 'Bike Infection' at www.mountainbike-kaprun.com on the Internet.

General Information:

With 13,500 beds and two million overnight stays per year, the 'Europa-Sportregion Zell am See - Kaprun' is one of the most important tourism centres in Austria. In winter as in summer, guests find all kinds of leisure activities to choose from. For ski fans there are 130 kilometres of finest pistes in thick powder snow. In the summer months Zell am See and Kaprun captivate with ideal conditions for more than 40 different kinds of sports - from hiking and golfing, cycling and all water sports to extreme sports like canyoning and, last not least, summer skiing on the glacier of Kitzsteinhorn. In recent years the region has also hosted many races of the Mountain Bike World.

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