

KORA BOUFFLERT, WOMEN AND THE PARIS TO COLMAR CLASSIC

In this year's Paris Colmar classic, the men's Elite race saw a very rare thing – the participation of women Kora Boufflert and Sylviane Varin. What was even more amazing was that both women finished, Boufflert in 7th and Varin in 11th.

1.	URBANOWSKI Grégor-Adam	POL	57h04m	7,80 km/h	/
2.	RODIONOV Alexei	RUS	58h09m	7,65 km/h	1h 05m
3.	MOREL Philippe	FRA	59h05m	7,53 km/h	2h 01m
4.	COSTILS Alain	FRA	59h21m	7,50 km/h	2h 17m
5.	GILG Paul	FRA	61h34m	7,23 km/h	4h 30m
6.	FRECHENGUES Bernard	FRA	62h33m	7,11 km/h	5h 29m
7.	BOUFFLERT Kora	FRA	63h16m	7,03 km/h	6h 12m
8.	SIMON Zdenek	CZE	64h51m	6,86 km/h	7h 47m
9.	DUFRIEN Pascal	FRA	65h23m	6,81 km/h	8h 19m
10.	HEINRICH Thierry	FRA	65h29m	6,80 km/h	8h 25m
11.	VARIN Sylviane	FRA	66h24m	6,70 km/h	9h 20m
12.	GEORGELIN Serge	FRA		368,40 km	
13.	ALBRECHT Jacky	FRA		354,40 km	
14.	MARECHAL Pascal	FRA		328,70 km	
15.	GIROD Urbain	SUI		324,00 km	
16.	DVORETSKI Sergueï	RUS		215,10 km	
17.	REGY David	FRA		76,10 km	



Kora Boufflert and Sylviane Varin in action in 2007

The first woman to attempt the Elite race was **Annie Van Der Meer**. In 1982, she first tried but was forced to retire in 22nd place after completing 180 km out of 508 km. Undeterred by her failure, she returned the following year and finished the 518 km event in 77 hours and 40 minutes.

Three years later, **Edith Couhe** tried her hand at the Elite race, finishing 21st in 1986 (380 km out of 517 km) and 20th in 1987 (400 km out of 518 km). The efforts of these two pioneers saw a separate race finally instituted for women in 1988. On that occasion, Couhe was the sole participant but from then on, the women's race was able to stand in its own right. Couhe was dominant in those first few years, winning the ladies' event on the first 5 occasions.

Since then, the event has seen other outstanding female winners

1988	Paris – Contrexeville	376.0 km	COUHE Edith	FRA	52h59m
1989	Epernay – Colmar	368.0 km	COUHE Edith	FRA	55h29m
1990	Chalons – Colmar	340.0 km	COUHE Edith	FRA	50h30m
1991	Chalons – Colmar	340.0 km	COUHE Edith	FRA	50h15m
1992	Chalons – Colmar	334.0 km	COUHE Edith	FRA	47h38m
1993	Chalons – Colmar	334.0 km	DUCHENE Isabelle	FRA	42h59m
1994	Chalons – Colmar	335.5 km	LEFILLEUL Joelle	FRA	47h41m

1995	Chalons – Colmar	335.0 km	BOUFFLERT Kora	FRA	45h02m
1996	Chalons – Colmar	331.5 km	DUCHENE Isabelle	FRA	41h58m
1997	Chalons – Colmar	344.5 km	RADDER-WILLEMS Marlen	HOL	46h14m
1998	Chalons – Colmar	343.5 km	PAJOU Delcina	FRA	45h24m
1999	Chalons – Colmar	343.5 km	PAJOU Delcina	FRA	45h53m
2000	Chalons – Colmar	360.0 km	POUTINSEVA Irina	RUS	47h35m
2001	Chalons – Colmar	360.0 km	RADDER-WILLEMS Marlen	HOL	49h24m
2002	Chalons – Colmar	360.0 km	RADDER-WILLEMS Marlen	HOL	50h23m
2003	Chalons – Colmar	366.5 km	POUTINSEVA Irina	RUS	48h56m
2004	No Event Contested				
2005	Chalons – Colmar	291.5 km	MESMOUDI, Ann-Marie	FRA	35h20m
2006	Chalons – Colmar	293.3 km	BOUFFLERT Kora	FRA	37h09m
2007	Paris – Colmar	305.7 km	MESMOUDI Anne Marie	FRA	38h09m

But it was 2007 which saw two of the top women once again challenging themselves against the men. **Kora Boufflert** was a dual winner of the womens' event (1995 and 2006) and **Sylviane Varin** had finished 4th, 4th, 5th and 3rd in the last 4 editions of the womens' event. They were toughened veterans of the ultra distance walking scene and they were up to the task, both finishing this toughest of tough events.

Jill Green asked Kora to write a little about the 2007 Paris to Colmar race for us and I am really excited to be able to include it here.

In December 2006, the Director of the P/C Race, authorized me to take part in the “ELITE” Race as a man! Then we looked for money (around 3500 Euros) and people (12 friends) to constitute the TEAM and I started preparing seriously for my race with a particularly sustained training period (75 miles per week / 288 miles per month) over a 3 month period.

The race was a dream because I didn't have any mental pressure before, during or after it. As I always do, I started rather quickly. On Thursday 7th, I was pleased to discover the “Marne” and its vineyards. That day was so hot and very stormy and I developed deep blisters underneath the soles of my feet. But I was so determined that I found the strength to go on walking at a good speed lest I be late at the control points.

The second night was really terrible because I love sleeping in my bed and here, I couldn't sleep. I was obliged to walk and walk non-stop from Vitry le Francois (a town after Charlons sur Marne) to St Dizier where participants in the ELITE race were able to take an obligatory 2 hours rest. I arrived at 4:56AM, HAPPY TO SLEEP. Doctors checked my feet and my blood pressure (all was ok) and after a “delicious bye-byes”, I was ready to attack the next 145 km to Mirecourt, that last BIG rest before Colmar.

I was really fresh physically in spite of an undulating area and the weather again was very hot. Lots of walkers in the ELITE race had to stop as either their speed was too slow or because of injuries. I was happy when, a few miles after St Dizier, I caught up to two men, Zdenek Simon and Thierry Heinrich (French Senior champion over 200 km). My team was perfect and that helped me go so well.

The last night (the third and the longest) was very hard too. As soon as I arrived at 5:05AM in Mirecourt, my team took me directly to Corcieux, the last stop before Colmar, to sleep as long as possible (around 3 hours). On Saturday at 10 AM, there was one final start for everyone (ladies, promotion and elite). This consisted of 54 km with 2 ascents (the Plainfaing and the famous Col du Bonhomme, a 10 km hill. I kept up a good speed to the top of the Bonhomme and thanks to the music of Adam Urbanowski which was behind me, I went down very quickly as far as Kaysersberg and finally Colmar, catching a few men (Paul Gilg, Alexei Rodionov and so on) along the way.

I was really quite fresh despite the tiredness and I feel I could well have done 520 km like Annie van de Meer did. To finish, my feet suffered but what happiness when you cross the finish line. So emotional for your team. Once I endured a blood test for Doping Control, I felt I had given all!