

## March 1st, the day when Aoba Street in Fuji City becomes an annual circuit



Hello everyone, it's been a while. My name is Kawakami, and I used to work in the Global Communications Department.

I was approached by Yama Yuka, editor-in-chief of My JATCO, and have been asked to write for this event. Thank you.

Now, every year from the end of February to the beginning of March, Aoba Street is completely closed off from Fuji City Hall to Central Park.

### **"Mount Fuji Cycle Road Race Fuji Criterium Championship"**

Do you know?

On the second day of the tournament, the final day, over 15,000 cycling fans and local residents gather, making this one of the largest bicycle races in the country.

JATCO, a representative local company, has been the title sponsor of the Mount Fuji Cycle Road Race since the first event. It is also the annual "home race" for Levante Fuji Shizuoka, a community-based cycle racing team that receives regular support from everyone at JATCO.

In fact, my love for bicycle racing has led me to currently be involved in the team's activities as an external advisor and official fan ambassador for Levante Fuji Shizuoka.

This time, "We would love as many JATCO employees as possible to come and

support us at the venue!"

With this in mind, I would like to introduce some highlights of the race that I can share with you as someone who knows the team well.



Mount Fuji Cycle Road Race 2025

**Cycle road racing is an overwhelming team sport, and victory is achieved by utilizing the strengths of each athlete!!**

Each cyclist has a different area of expertise, or leg style.

for example,

- Excellent maximum instantaneous power output: Sprinters
- Good at climbing: climber
- Strong against short ups and downs and acceleration/deceleration: Puncher

Levante Fuji Shizuoka participates in approximately 30 races a year, but the course characteristics of races held in city areas and races in mountainous areas are completely different.

**Fuji Criterium is an "ultra-high-speed race"**

This year's Mount Fuji Cycle Road Race, the Fuji Criterium Championship, is a speed race held in the city.

- 1 lap approximately 1.8km
- The final race also consisted of 30 laps and approximately 54km
- There are only two corners (180 degree turns)

Sudden deceleration from high speed, then re-acceleration.

Furthermore, there is a 150m uphill climb across the Junaigawa Bridge in front of the Rose Theater, and before you know it, your legs will start to feel fatigued.

The key to success for the team will be how well they can conserve their sprinters until the final lap, down the home straight.

Last year, Tokoi Ryota (retired in the 2025 season) took the lead from the beginning,

creating an impressive group performance, but in the final sprint, Siim Kiskonen (puncher) came in fourth place, narrowly missing out on the podium.

And this year, Natsume Takato (sprinter) has been working very hard to get in shape.



Ryota Tokoi, who continued to attack until the end, won both the "Lap Award" and the "Fighting Spirit Award"



Siim Kiskonen, who joined in 2025

On the other hand, it is not uncommon for road races to cover distances of 150 to 200 km.

In a tough game with many ups and downs, the roles of the coach and staff will be extremely important, including timing replenishment, assessing the players' condition, and adjusting strategies.

It might be easier to imagine this if you think of the scene at the Hakone Ekiden where the coach calls out to the runners from the team support car.

I hope that everyone who has read this far has gained a sense of the depth of bicycle racing.

### **A message from Levante Fuji Shizuoka's players to everyone at JATCO**

Now, let me introduce some comments that the players have shared exclusively for "My JATCO."

#### **Mario Takanashi: Captain for 26 seasons**

I have advanced to the finals of the Fuji Criterium four consecutive years since it began, so I would like to make it to the finals again this year.

The final race is often decided by a mass sprint every year, so I would like to provide good assistance to the sprinters on my team. I also plan to take advantage of my punching style and actively join the breakaway group, which will be decided around the middle of the race.

We will work hard as a team to show everyone in our hometown of Fuji City that we are on the podium. Thank you for your support.



**Saruma Kanta:**

Thank you for your continued support. This is Salma Hirohiro from Levante Fuji Shizuoka.

In the race held in my hometown of Shizuoka, I led the team to victory by breaking away. I trusted my teammates and prepared hard to fulfill my role. He keeps the race moving with his aggressive driving.

We will work as a team to achieve victory. Please come and support us at the venue!



**Yoshio Watase:**

Hello everyone at JATCO! My name is Yoshio Watase from Levante Fuji Shizuoka! This will be our home race, so we will deliver a passionate performance that will leave a lasting impression on everyone and help the team win! I will do my best to help Levante take the lead, so I appreciate your support!!



**Joel Segawa:**

Joel Segawa, a 20-year-old from Mishima City, has joined Levante Fuji Shizuoka this season. He usually trains on the mountain courses of the Izu Peninsula and excels at climbing, but in criteriums he excels at aggressive breakaways.

I will do my best to contribute to the team's victory. We look forward to seeing you there!



**Mori Ouga:**

I am very happy to be able to make my professional debut in my hometown of Shizuoka with my admired seniors.

As I am the youngest member of the team, I would like to give the team a boost with my aggressive and passionate driving. We will do our best to advance to the finals, put on an impressive performance, and aim to win as a team.

Just as Tokoi-san captivated us last year, this year I will captivate you! Thank you for your support.

**Narayama Yuki:**

My name is Yuki Narayama and I joined Levante Fuji Shizuoka this season.

He is a climber and excels at long climbs.

At the Fuji Criterium Championship, I will race aggressively at the front, join the breakaway, and run as hard as I can to stay ahead.

Please come and support us at the venue!



See you at the race venue on March 1st!

When it comes to watching sports, it's best to watch them in person. The sense of realism is completely different.

One of the great attractions of bicycle racing is the close proximity to the athletes. The voices of the athletes, the sound of braking, gear changes, the sound of the wind, cheers, and the sight of team flags fluttering.

All of these things contribute to creating the atmosphere at the race venue.

On the day, we will also be distributing free supporter T-shirts to all Levante Fuji Shizuoka fans (limited quantities).

If you would like to receive a T-shirt exchange voucher, please stop by Fuji City Cycle Station "Fujikuru."



See you at the venue on March 1st!