

Nikias Arndt sprints to his first seasonal victory in Bielsko-Biała

Joao Almeida maintains the leader jersey ahead of the decisive Individual Time Trial.

Stage 5 of the Tour de Pologne ended with Nikias Arndt (Team DSM) making his way through a group of around 20 riders and winning his first race of the season in a thrilling finale after 172.8km at an average speed of 42.784 kph beating in a close sprint Matej Mohoric (Bahrain - Victorious) and Stefano Oldani (Lotto Soudal).

"It's a really nice feeling. The sprint was hard but I felt good. The team helped me a lot. They believed in me, they put me in the perfect position and I was able to finish it off. It was really close in the end with Matej Mohoric as he came on the right. I was on the left already fighting for a long time and luckily it was enough to claim the victory home for the team. It's the first time this season. I am honestly not winning much but big ones, and I am super happy now. The Tour de Pologne is a great race and I like it and I actually rode a lot in Poland as a Junior and U23. I feel comfortable, I am happy." said a super excited Nikias.

It all started in Chocholów at a high pace when the peloton lined up heading to Bielsko-Biała, the last chance for the GC leaders, not time-trial specialists, to gain good positions in the overall ranking. Several attacks took place turning into a 6-man breakaway immediately reabsorbed by the group. Shortly afterwards a new group of six riders broke away and within it were Evgeniy Fedorov, Daniel Arroyave, Robert Power, Emils Liepins, Jonas Rickaert and Łukasz Owsian. This time it was let go and reached a maximum gap of 4'20" throughout the race while INEOS Grenadiers, Movistar, Bahrain-Victorious, Astana-Premier Tech and Deceuninck-Quick-Step set the pace in the peloton.

With just under 40km to go another small group counter-attacked while Arroyave was dropped from the front group and Jonas Rickaert (Alpecin-Fenix) went off on his own, gaining 10" from his previous breakaway companions. More attacks took place in the bunch. Larry Warbasse (ACT), Tomasz Marczyński (LTS), Sean Bennett (TQA) bridged to Rickaert maintaining a 40" gap from the peloton led by Ineos - Grenadier as they entered the circuit.

The four riders at the head of the peloton entered the final lap with a 10-second gap, resisting and working together until less than 5.5km from the finish when the teams again lined up to tackle the final decisive metres and put team strategies into practice. However, Jonas Rickaert didn't want to be left behind and went off on his own again. Ineos regained his position and set the pace, catching up with Jonas at the 3.5km mark.

At the end of a tough race Almeida maintained the GC lead and stated: "I was boxed in at 350 to go I was feeling good, I had a good sprint but I started too late. but it was good as I was looking for some seconds because Mohoric could grab the jersey with a victory. In the end I kept the jersey another day and tomorrow it just depends on me.

OTHER QUOTES

Matej Mohoric 2nd - "It's a bit frustrating to be second again. I was really boxed in in the last 400mt and I couldn't find my way out. When I did it was too late, if the stage was a bit longer I could push a bit more but that's cycling and that's what also makes it exciting. In the end it could also be a lot worse so tomorrow it's another day. Almeida is a big favorite to win but I'll do my best to defend my podium position."

Stefano Oldani 3rd - "My team has been working great since the beginning of the Tour de Pologne. We were actually working for John Degenkolb but just like Champs do, he was honest and said he didn't feel quite good. He told me to trust in myself and then helped me to get the right mood so I could fight for the sprint. I really have to thank him and the entire team for the trust. I was in a good position when Wellens went for the sprint. I followed him and did my move, maybe a bit too early and in the last 20mt I was a block, I sat on the saddle pushing on all my energy and the 2 guys passed me."

Michal Kwiatkowski - "I didn't win this year and it's a real pity. I was trying hard, we chased the breakaway the whole day but they were pretty strong. Moscon and Golas controlled the gap, I had a perfect position for the sprint but I didn't have the legs. That's sport, we'll see tomorrow. I'll go full on and see."

Łukasz Owsian - "I was in the key breakaway attempt and fought hard at any PZU KOM finishes. I am very happy that I secured the jersey. I have to thank my team, they worked flawlessly and now we just need to ride safely until the last stage of the Tour de Pologne."