

Ursula Riha-Kocher, the mediator in search of the perfect balance

This is the international liaison who holds the valuable thread that runs between the teams and the organizers.

With more than 35 years of experience in professional cycling, Ursula Riha-Kocher is a true guiding star for the teams participating in the Tour de Pologne. Telling us about her passion for human relations, she explains what the really challenging part of her job is and the commitment involved in planning the teams' participation down to the smallest detail so that they can feel comfortable anywhere.

Tell us about your role in the organization of the Tour de Pologne.

I am responsible for the teams and international contacts. As I have been working in cycling for more than 35 years, I try to use my experience and my network of contacts every day. Often my work requires a good deal of mediation and the ability to find good solutions.

What is the most challenging part of your job?

Logistics is definitely a big challenge. For the entire duration of the race, only the teams alone require around 4,000 comfortable hotel beds. At each location you need a large space to park the vehicles, water and electricity, which are essential for washing machines and the various equipment for cleaning the bikes and cars.

The pandemic made the last two editions particularly challenging, compared to what we were used to in the past. Each hotel had to provide separate dining rooms and buffets areas for each team. Rooms could not be used in the 24 hours leading up to the athletes' arrival and there could be only one team per floor of the hotel.

Luckily for me, I work with a fantastic team. Anna Winogrońska and her colleague Katarzyna Lulka work around the clock to give us the support we need and are the definition of what they call "girl power".

How is the Tour de Pologne perceived internationally?

Apart from the three Grand Tours, this week-long race is one of the most important on the international World Tour calendar. It was the first stage race to be held in 2020 during the pandemic and has been an example for subsequent races to follow, suggesting how to deal with the new situation and the difficult - but necessary - conditions to be adopted.

What do you think are the greatest qualities of this race?

The whole Lang family has been closely involved in the sport for many years. Czesław Lang is an Olympic silver medallist in road cycling and still rides a bicycle every day. His daughter Agata grew up in the world of professional cycling and is active with many international bodies, such as the UCI

Management Committee Member. This really makes a difference, both in the way she approaches things and in her genuine understanding of the needs for a competition of this caliber.

What is your fondest memory of the Tour de Pologne?

I have many good memories! But the solidarity and availability between the teams is something unique, something which amazes me every time. In the race they fight against each other for the victory of their team, but if necessary they pass each other a water bottle as well as the mechanics help with any missing material after the stage. The organization of the Tour de Pologne stays in the same hotels as the teams to stay in touch and exchange information and I have seen a lot of interaction between the teams which shows what a wonderful sport this is in human terms.

I can't wait for the end of the pandemic, when there are no more bubbles to consider and we can all sit around a table together again in the evening after the stage, laughing and joking and sharing this great adventure.

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