

João Almeida: "Here are all the emotions I experienced at the Tour de Pologne"

The warmth and spectacle of the Polish race seen through the eyes of the winner of the 2021 edition.

His first victory in the World Tour, his triumph on the iconic Bukovina climb and then the GC and the sprinters' jersey. In the 2021 edition, João Almeida literally dominated the competition, triumphing in his first career stage race. Nine months from his victory, the young Portuguese rider tells about how the Tour de Pologne left a lasting impression on his season.

What is the most intense emotion you remember from last year?

The stage wins, of course. They were fantastic. I still have goosebumps when I think about the first stage and the final head-to-head I went through to win it. It was an incredible feeling that I can't explain.

When did you realise you could win the general classification?

After the time trial I was more confident I could keep the lead. Until then I had always been very cautious, you never know what can happen and cycling is such an unpredictable sport. A puncture or a crash can turn everything around in a matter of seconds.

For the Tour de Pologne, the Bukovina climb is an iconic ascent and you won on this finish line last year. How would you define it on a technical and emotional level? What's special about it?

It's a tough climb which is perfect for a stage race. It was definitely a day I will remember for a long time. I had good feelings throughout the race, so it was almost natural to have the right legs to cross the white line first.

What impressed me most about the day was the enthusiasm of the fans on the road, there were so many of them and they were fantastic. In Poland cycling is really loved and that is an absolute value. The fans give you an extra boost, especially when you are suffering on the climbs.

What is essential to win a race like the Tour de Pologne?

We are talking about a World Tour race, so from the start you are conscious that the level of competition will be very high. The key is undoubtedly good preparation but also having a strong team able to help and support you every day.