

Ackermann back to victory in Sanok

As Pascal Ackermann gets his 5th win in Poland, Sergio Higuita maintains the lead of the Tour de Pologne despite a crash in the final

The 179.4-kilometre-long fourth stage, from Lesko to Sanok, ended with Pascal Ackermann (UAE Team Emirates) skilfully winning on a course particularly suited to puncheurs, finishing ahead of Jordi Meeus (BORA - hansgrohe) and Jonathan Milan (Bahrain Victorious).

"This is my fifth victory at the Tour de Pologne but I think it is the most beautiful. The team did a great job keeping a perfect pace on the last climb before the finish." confirms a super excited Pascal Ackermann. "The finale was technical but Molano did a great job leading me perfectly. I trusted him and followed him. I then sprinted for the win. I had the best lead out possible. It's a good team victory. This year, because of the injury, I wasn't always able to express myself at my best but now I'm fine. It's a great satisfaction. Tomorrow's stage is similar on paper. It won't be easy but I will certainly try."

It was a relatively quiet first part of the stage, featured by a few attacks and counter attacks to form the day's breakaway including Nans Peters (ACT), Mads Schmidt (LPT) Kamil Małeckı (LTS), Rui Oliveira, (UAD), Andreas Skaarseth (UXT). While the breakaway maintained a gap of just over 1' from the peloton, Remi Cavagna (QST) and Mike Teunissen (TJV) launched themselves in pursuit of the head of the race without success. With about 5 km to go, as INEOS Grenadier pulled ahead and bridged the gap metre by metre, the breakaway was caught. Shortly afterwards, at -3km sign, Zdenek Stybar (QST) launched an attack worthy of a classics specialist. While the Czech maintained his lead, a crash in the bunch involved current General Classification leader Sergio Higuita (BOH). With just 200 metres to go, the brilliant attempt by the Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl Team rider came to an end when Pascal Ackermann launched his sprint to cross the finish line first.

"I was on the wheel of Jordy Meeus" declared Sergio Huiguita, "and we were in a good position to tackle the finale when, entering a right-hand bend close to the finish, a Cofidis rider fell. Inevitably the riders behind him braked. I was among them. I braked and my front wheel slipped. I lost control of the bike and fell. After the fall my knee hurt and I was struggling to pedal. Now it's a matter of going back to the hotel, resting, and figuring out how to deal with it tomorrow."

Kamil Małeckı (LTS) is the new leader of the Mountain classification, after winning all three mountain finishes on today's stage. He said: *"I am happy with my race and especially with this jersey, which is a real reward for the day spent in the breakaway. I had already tried the breakaway in the first stage but without harvesting much. For me this is an important moment, as I come from two difficult years and racing in Poland in front of my home crowd is the best. Now I will try to defend the jersey. I think the KOM classification will only be decided on the last stage with the last three mountain stages. I will do my best to defend the lead."*

Tomorrow at 12:30 the peloton will set off from Łańcut in the direction of Rzeszów for a 205km stage that promises to be quite demanding with 2970 metres of elevation gain, several climbs and a 20km finishing circuit around the city.

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