

Mark Padun: Tour de Pologne's affection for Ukraine moves me *#RaceForPeace*

There is one rider in the Tour de Pologne peloton for whom the race has special significance. We are talking about Mark Padun, EF Education-EasyPost rider and the only Ukrainian athlete at the start of the Tour de Pologne. This year's slogan is 'Race for peace' as a sign of solidarity and support for the Ukrainian people. A motto that once again underlines the values of the event based on brotherhood and peace.

"In the group there are only two Ukrainian riders," explains the 26-year-old from Donetsk, "it's me and Andrii Panomar from the Drone Hopper - Androni Giocattoli team. Sometimes we talk to each other even though with racing it is not easy."

"The race this year made an effort to pass close to the border with Ukraine," he continues. "It is a nice gesture by the organisers at a difficult time for my country. Fortunately my family is fine, we speak often with each other. When I saw the Ukrainian flag bracelets and the Ukrainian flag on the cover of the road book, I thought it was something fantastic. Honestly, for me it is a moment of nostalgia, both for the support the race shows to the Ukrainian people and for the good times I had in Poland in my youth. I actually know the finish town, Zamosc, well as I lived there for some time and I also know the region.

What do you think of the Tour de Pologne?

"It's a race I always try to participate in. Every time I come here it is exciting, Poland is the first country I visited when I came out of Ukraine as a young man. I will always have a special connection with this land."

And from a technical point of view?

"From a technical point of view I have to see how my body will react after being a month away from racing. I will do my best to honour the jersey I wear and the race. I will certainly experience great emotions day after day."