

Tour de Pologne, Czeslaw Lang brings the curtain down on the 79th edition

Budget time for the Lang Team, which closes another year amid public enthusiasm and unprecedented routes that saw the first Briton in the history of the race triumph.

The 79th edition of the Tour de Pologne ended a few days ago with Ethan Hayter (INEOS Grenadiers) leading the general classification. It was this year, in addition to the undoubted technical aspects linked to a route with some novelties compared to what Team Lang has proposed in recent years, that was also an important moment for the message of peace that the race wanted to convey in order not to forget the conflict in Ukraine. *"The slogan of our race was 'RaceforPeace'," Lang recalls. "The first three stages were ideally run along the border with Ukraine. We wanted to make our proximity to the Ukrainian people felt at a difficult time and to raise awareness among cycling fans about a topic that is unfortunately still highly topical. It's a small contribution but we felt we had to do it. The arrival of refugees in Poland during the conflict is something that really touched us."*

The winner of this edition, Hayter, took the jersey at the end of stage six, the 11.8km time trial from Nowy Targ to Stacja Narciarska Rusiński.

"We knew that the time trial, as in the past, would make a difference, and in fact Ethan with his third place, behind team-mate Sheffield, and the winner Arensman (Team DSM), took the yellow jersey until then in the hands of Sergio Higuita (BORA-hansgrohe)," says Czeslaw Lang, General Manager of the Tour de Pologne. I very much wanted this time trial on roads that I know very well and which I chose personally. On this type of course complete and strong riders like Arensman and Hayter were able to show their worth."

It was a race that saw different teams and types of riders on the podium. Pure sprinters, passers and all-rounders had the chance to express themselves and fight for victory, bonuses and jerseys.

"We witnessed a very interesting spectacle. As per tradition in our race there were many young talents who chose the roads of POLonia to establish themselves. I'm thinking of Olav Kooij (Jumbo-Visma) who surprised us with his sprint to Lublin and the winning of the first yellow jersey. To Ben Tullet (INEOS Grenadiers) who again won the Bjorg Lambrecht prize as the best U23 finish in the general classification. To Thymen Arensman who won the time trial and remained just 11" behind winner Hayter. And yes, Ethan too, was the first Briton to win our stage race. With these athletes our sport has a bright future" explains Lang. "We saw how cycling can give you the strength to overcome difficult moments with Jarrad Drizners, a 23-year-old from Lotto-Soudal who is returning to racing after a bad injury and wearing the leader's jersey in the mountain classification. And how a recognised talent such as Arnaud Demare (Groupama - FDJ) can take on a mighty sprint alone, giving the audience a lesson in technique, tactics and a lot of heart, as only great champions know how to do. Or how Ackermann was

able to come back after injury and put everyone behind him on the finish line of Sanok, one of the most iconic of the race along with Przemyśl, where Higuita won, taking full advantage of the only finish really available to pure climbers. The Tour de Pologne is always open to different scenarios and rewards those who dare. That is probably one of the main characteristics of our race."

Over the course of the 79 editions, the starting and finishing cities have cyclically returned to the route. *"The territories involved believe a lot in the development of cycling, not only world cycling but also Polish cycling. "We have had many champions in the house, Kwiatkowski, Majka, Poljański... Marciński, who this year was a commentator for TVP and Niemiec, who has been part of the organisation for years now, and many others," says Czesław. "As a former rider and organiser I am certainly more involved, but to see that sponsors and administrations follow us with passion and constant support fills me with joy. This year our riders have shown once again that they are good examples to look up to. Patryk Stosz and Jakub Kaczmarek, both from the Poland National team, maintained their leadership from the start of the race and Kamil Malecki (Lotto Soudal) also did a great job in the peloton. We are proud of how cycling is growing."*

"Another strong signal related to the growth aspect is the increasing participation of young riders in the Tour de Pologne Junior, an event that allowed boys and girls aged 11 to 14 to have a unique experience on the roads of the TdP a few hours before the arrival of the professionals, The ORLEN Tour de Pologne Amatorów, dedicated to amateurs, was also a success involving XX athletes, demonstrating how cycling is and is growing in Poland," says Lang.