



Nikolaj Mengel wins the first stage of the ORLEN Nations Grand Prix.

The Dane also becomes the race leader while Michał Żelazowski - second today - is the best Pole in the top ten.

Nikolaj Mengel (Denmark) won the first of five stages in this year's ORLEN Nations Grand Prix. Michał Żelazowski (Poland) and Cole Kessler (USA) completed the podium.

"It's a great feeling to win a stage and to be first is even more exciting because I get to wear the leader's jersey, which is fantastic," said Nikolaj Mengel immediately after the win. "I felt good all day and we worked well together in the breakaway. Then I still had a good feeling and my legs still had enough energy to get away from the other guys with about 3 km to go. So I'm very happy with the way today went. After last year and the good work we did, we are back here with a strong team. We will do our best to keep the leader's jersey."

The 132-kilometer race, featuring several short climbs in the second half of the route, took place entirely in Hungary, from Kaposvár to Balatonföldvár and started at 11 a.m.

Immediately after the start many riders tried to break away, but after several attacks three riders - Michał Żelazowski, Nikolaj Mengel, Cole Kessler - managed to gain an advantage, which quickly increased to a maximum of 8 '20" with 60 km to go. Behind them, Portuguese Pedro Silva tried to join the breakaway while distancing from the peloton, but was reeled in by the peloton.

In the last part of the race, the advantage of the three riders gradually decreased, also due to the strong headwind. Nevertheless, the gap to the peloton was big enough to allow the three of them to fight for the win. At the foot of the final climb, 800m with an average gradient of 4.5%, Nikolaj Mengel struck the decisive blow. He took the lead from his escape companions with a determined sprint and instantly gained 20 seconds, which was enough to win the first stage of the ORLEN Nations Grand Prix. Michał Żelazowski was second and Cole Kessler third, with the peloton crossing the line 1'30" behind the winner.

The second stage is scheduled for tomorrow and will still take place on Hungarian territory, covering 152 kilometers from Hatvan to Bükkszentkereszt, with a challenging climb at the end.

Will Nikolaj Mengel, who will wear the leader's jersey in the general classification, be able to defend it?