

80.TourdePologne®

29.07-04.08.2023



The chequered flag waves for Tim Merlier in Poznań

Soudal Quick-Step rider wins the stage and wears the first ORLEN GC jersey

Tim Merlier unleashed all his horsepower at the end of the 183.7 kilometre first stage at the Poznan racetrack to take the win ahead of Olav Kooij (TJV) and Fernando Gaviria (MOV).

"I'm very happy with my victory, which is the first one here at the Tour de Pologne. In the last few weeks I have been training a lot with the team at high altitude in Val di Fassa to prepare for the last part of the season" declares Tim Merlier. "This victory shows that we have prepared well. The final was a bit hectic, but I managed to stay up front thanks to my team-mates. In the last corner we went up front as we had planned during the technical meeting in the morning. Bert launched my sprint and I managed to keep the speed as high as possible and in the end I was the first to cross the line. I think there will be a few more sprint stages where I would like to try again now that the pressure is off. But of course we have a good team here for the GC, so I will be ready to help my teammates if necessary."

The first stage of the 80th edition of the Tour de Pologne officially started this morning in Poznan, with a route that favoured the fast wheels and ended with a 4-kilometre lap on the racetrack circuit, the ideal scenario for a mass sprint.

"We controlled the breakaway because we knew it would be a sprint opportunity for us and a fast final." said Olav Kooij, 2nd, right after the finish. "The road was a bit slippery at the end with the rain, but we knew and managed to stay upright. We had to try. I lost a bit of momentum in the last corner, I did my sprint but couldn't pass Merlier anymore. The legs felt ok and we'll have more opportunities in the next few days."

Fernando Gaviria confirmed that he was happy with his third place, saying: "I haven't raced for a while. To come back and finish on the podium is very positive for me. Olav and Tim are fantastic drivers and have raced brilliantly. Now I'll look at the other sprinters' chances day by day. I want to enjoy the race and see how it goes. I'm happy with the way it has started and I hope it will continue in this way."

The stage started at a fairly fast pace with the breakaway of the day - consisting of Kamil Małeckki (Q36), Filippo Ridolfo (TNN), Norbert Banaszek (POL), Patryk Stosz (POL) - which kept the lead up to the 127 km mark. The three intermediate LOTTO sprints along the route were won by Patryk Stosz, Norbertas Banaszek took the third category. PZU KOM, in Suchy Las, and the Soudal Special Prize 95 years of Tour de Pologne, while Kamil Małeckki (Q36) got the Special Prize in Środa Wielkopolska.

Immediately after securing the special prize, the Q36.5 Pro Cycling Team Pole gained 30" on his breakaway's mates, an action that was immediately cancelled by the group, which caught the four escapees led by Soudal-Quick Step and Jumbo-Visma. The two teams set a high pace from the start and kept control of the breakaway, which reached a maximum gap of 2'50".

Tomorrow will be the longest stage of this edition, with 202.9 kilometres taking the peloton from Leszno to Karpacz.