



## **French one-two in the second stage of the ORLEN Nations Grand Prix**

*Stage and jersey for Mathys Rondel, Mattio remains KOM leader*

Frenchman Mathys Rondel triumphed in Kohútka ahead of compatriot Brieuc Rolland and Belgian Emiel Verstrynge.

Mathys Rondel (stage winner and GC Leader) *"It was a short stage but still a tough one with 5 climbs over at least 5 kilometres. The breakaway went quite fast, so it was also controlled fast, with a good pace. It was a good day for me and my teammate because we're climbers so the hard pace suits us. The last climb was perfect for us, so I tried to attack quite fast in the harder climbs. I think it was a perfect day, we finished 1st and 2nd. My goal was to attack with 2.4 kilometres to go on the steep part. The group caught me and the Spaniard attacked. Nobody followed him and I attacked. I set my pace and it went well."*

Emiel Verstrynge (3rd) *"It was certainly a very short stage, only 110 kilometres. Normally the distance is not a problem, but with the 5 climbs it was definitely tough, especially the last one which was maybe too steep for me. On a good day I know I'll be able to cope with it. We were in the front group with 4 guys on the last climb, so we were able to play that a little bit and I'm happy that I was able to finish the good work of the team. Every day is hard here, so we'll keep doing our best and maybe we can finish the race with a stage win."*

Today's stage started in Přešov and saw the riders climb over 2000 metres in 110 kilometres before finishing in Kohútka, a ski resort on the Czech-Slovak border.

After an initial attack from Ukraine at the 0km mark, which was quickly reabsorbed by the peloton, a series of sprints ensued, leading to the formation of the day's breakaway at the 10km mark: Michał Pomorski (Poland), Serhii Sydor (Ukraine), Jonathan Ahlsson and Ville Merlöv (Sweden), Nils Aebersold (Switzerland), Kacper Gieryk (TC Chrobry SCOTT Głogów), Sebastian Putz (Austria).

By the 20th kilometre, the escapees had built up a lead of 2' on the peloton, a situation that prompted the Danish, Italian and British national teams to take responsibility for leading the chase. The ramps from the first KOM of the day then helped to halve the gap on the peloton, while among the escapees Serhii Sydor and Ville Merlöv blamed the slopes and escaped with a 20' gap to Nils Aebersold, the first rider to pass the KOM of Dušná, but they were able to rejoin the peloton by taking advantage of the next descent.

The peloton - still led by Italy and Denmark - followed at 1". On the Hlaváčky climb, the British riders kept up the pace, opening up a gap of 45" to the leaders. The first rider to pass the KOM was Poland's Michał Pomorski, followed by Kacper Gieryk and Sebastian Putz. On the ramps of Hlaváčky the leader of the general classification, Kristian Egholm, was forced to chase due to a mechanical problem. On the subsequent descent the peloton, still led by the British team, caught up with the escapees.

With 15km to go, Jack Brough (Great Britain) tried to attack but was quickly caught by the group, which was around 70 riders by then. At this point it was Norway and France who were keeping up the pace. Despite a crash with 6km to go, the peloton, led by the French, maintained its pace. On the toughest ramps the Danes increased the pace and caused a split in the peloton. Mathys Rondel



(France) and Matthew Brennan (Great Britain) took advantage, while last year's ORLEN Nations Grand Prix winner Gal Glivar lost the wheels of the best riders. In the final kilometre, the Frenchman sprinted again and rode alone to the finish in Kohútka. Behind him, Brieuc Rolland managed to beat Belgian Emiel Verstrynge to the line, completing a perfect day for France.

The new leader of the general classification is stage winner Mathys Rondel, 14 seconds ahead of Brieuc Rolland and 20 seconds ahead of the pairing of Matthew Brennan and Emiel Verstrynge.

The KOM jersey remains on the shoulders of Italian Pietro Mattio, three points ahead of Swiss Nils Aebersold and four points ahead of Polish Michał Pomorski.

The team classification was led by France, one second ahead of Belgium and 54 seconds ahead of Italy.

Tomorrow's stage will be entirely on Slovakian soil. The riders will start from Tvrdošín at 12:45 and will have to tackle the longest climb of the sixth edition of the ORLEN Nations Grand Prix, which will take them to the finish line at 1,347 metres in Štrbské Pleso.