



Kristian Egholm wins the opening stage of the ORLEN Nations Grand Prix

It was the breakaway riders who celebrated at the Bouzov finish, with Dane Egholm the race leader.

Dane Kristian Egholm won the first stage of the ORLEN Nations Grand Prix, ahead of Italy's Pietro Mattio and Britain's Matthew Brennan.

"I tried to join the breakaway in the first 30 kilometres. We were on the limit until I managed to get away, followed by a Luxembourg rider (Noé Ury) and then the Italian (Pietro Mattio)," said an enthusiastic Kristian Egholm at the end of the race. "We worked together a lot, which allowed us to gain speed and a good gap. I felt good on the climb and was alone in the breakaway.

The 135-kilometre stage from Prostějov to Bouzov, which took place entirely on Czech territory, was hilly and featured a final circuit that included the twice-repeated Hartinkov climb.

From the first metre of the race there were several attacks and counter-attacks in an attempt to create a breakaway, with European champion Henrik Breiner Pedersen proving to be the most active in the lead group. At the 30km mark, two riders - Dane Kristian Egholm and Luxembourger Noé Ury - managed to gain an advantage, while a number of riders, including Ville Merlöv, Clement Izquierdo and Pietro Mattio, tried to catch up with the leaders. The peloton reeled in all the chasers except the Italian, who was able to catch up with the escapees.

Halfway through the race, the breakaway was four minutes ahead of the peloton and the Slovenians and Swiss were in control of the race. Pietro Mattio was the first to cross the finish line, followed by Noé Ury and Kristian Egholm. Meanwhile, a number of riders were dropped due to the fast pace set from the start.

The breakaway riders rode together, but by the time they crossed the finish line, which marked the start of the final lap, the gap had been reduced to 2'30". At this point the Belgians took control and tried to close the gap on the breakaway, which continued to ride well and maintained a reassuring lead.

The Luxembourger lost contact on the first slopes of the second climb, but managed to limit the damage and finished 15 seconds behind the two leaders. Once again it was Pietro Mattio who won the second KOM and took the first green jersey of the sixth edition of the race. The peloton was one minute behind, but was forced to slow down due to a crash involving riders from France, Great Britain and Israel.

As the peloton approached the climb to Bouzov, Kristian Egholm attacked and immediately gained around fifteen seconds on his escape companion. By the final kilometre, his advantage had grown to 20 seconds on the Italian and 1'20" on the peloton, which caught Noé Ury as the stage approached the finish line.

Behind Egholm and Mattio, Great Britain's Matthew Brennan took the third step on the podium.

Tomorrow, the riders will set off from Přeřov at 12:05 to the ski resort of Kohútka on the border with Slovakia for a challenging 109-kilometre stage that will provide the first real insight into the general classification.