

## Polish national team prepares for Tour de Pologne

*Here are the names of the seven riders who will compete in the country's only UCI World Tour stage race in mid-August.*

There are less than two weeks to go until the start of the 81st edition of the UCI World Tour Tour de Pologne, the most important Polish race on the calendar, which gives Polish riders from continental teams the opportunity to compete against the best riders in the world.

For years, the Polish national team has worn the red and white on the Tour de Pologne course. "A good performance in this race can lead to the signing of a professional contract," says national team coach Tomasz Brożyna.

The squad will include Polish champion **Norbert Banaszek**, who was in the breakaways and led the PZU mountains classification last year. "Norbert is a fast rider, he can join the breakaways and fight for intermediate sprints and stage finishes. We will certainly look for opportunities for him," said Tomasz Brożyna, coach of the Polish national team. "Along with him will be **Marcin Budziński**, who did a great job in 2023 and achieved some interesting placings. A crash in the last stage unfortunately cut his dreams short, but he is back in good shape and will be the rider to fight for the GC," he explains. Then we have **Mazowsze Serce Polski** and two talented U23 riders: the dynamic **Radosław Frątczak** from Voster ATS Team and **Kacper Gieryk**, representing Lubelskie Perła Polski. Radosław has proven himself on many occasions, including finishing second in a stage of the Tour de l'Avenir. He is a fast rider who can also tackle short, demanding climbs, so we can count on him in stages that end in a bunch sprint and expect him to be able to compete with the best. Kacper is the Polish time trial champion and finished 12th in the Nations Cup race in the Czech Republic. He has made remarkable progress recently. There is a time trial stage in the Tour de Pologne, so we are counting on him. He has great potential. As for the seniors, **Piotr Pękala** and **Michał Paluta** from the Santic-Wibatech team will be there. Paluta is an experienced rider who has raced in the World Tour category, has a lot of tactical skills and is able to cope with different types of courses. Pękala rides very well on difficult terrain, won the Belgrade-Banjaluka and will be our man in the mountain stages. Finally, **Mateusz Kostański**, a rider who can ride in a breakaway and prefers time trials," concludes Tomasz Brożyna.

The Tour de Pologne is a real opportunity for continental riders. As the race is part of the UCI World Tour, only invited WT and ProTeam teams can take part. The Polish national team - made up entirely of third-tier riders - has been included as a wildcard along with Tudor Pro Cycling Team, Q36.5 Pro Cycling Team and Israel - Premier Tech.

"Racing at this level is an extra motivation, an opportunity to show off to the WorldTour team directors and their managers. A good performance here raises the level of the sport and contributes to the development of cycling in the country. The riders must see it as an opportunity to take a step forward," commented Tomasz Brożyna. "It is important for the team to get in touch with World Tour riders, it is a moment to showcase their qualities. Those who fight harder will have more arguments to support possible negotiations," explained Tomasz Kiendyś, the national team's sport director during the 81st Tour de Pologne.

"Last year Polish riders were the protagonists of various actions, with Patryk Stosz winning the Most Active Rider classification. This year the team is made up of riders who can sprint, participate in breakaways or fight for the general classification. I think the Polish team will present itself very well, fight in the stages and proudly wear the red and white jersey," says Tomasz Brożyna. "The team will not be able to control the race, every specialist - sprinter, climber, cronome - will get their chance. We will see how it goes," concludes Tomasz Kiendyś."

The 81st edition of the Tour de Pologne starts in Wrocław on 12th August and finishes in Kraków on 18th August.