

## Thibau Nys opens the dance at the Tour de Pologne UCI World Tour

*Lidl Trek Belgian wins the first stage in Karpacz becoming leader of the GC.*

The first stage of the Tour de Pologne UCI World Tour with the finish at the Karpacz climb turned out to be fast and dynamic. The almost 160-kilometre stage was marked by attacks and breakaways. The winner Thibau Nys, the new emerging star of the cycling world, crossed the finish line with an explosive attack in the last 200 metres, leaving behind high-calibre names such as Matej Mohoric and Jonas Vingegaard. The Danish champion finished fourth today and the other GC favourites were all in excellent condition. Nys now leads the ORLEN general classification.

*“I love road cycling as much as I love Cyclocross. I think my heart will always belong to CX. I cannot see myself giving up CX in the next few years, I grew up with it with my dad. However, a victory on the road is something very special and is a great feeling for me.” declared a super happy Thibau Nys (Lidl - Trek). “Today I enjoyed the stage. I love these kinds of finishes, they suit me best and I think I've proved that in these months. I want to get better and better over the next few years. I've won a stage in all the stage races I've been to so far which is something I could only dream of before the start of the season. It's better than I thought. Wearing the leader's jersey is unbelievable. It feels great.”*

The 81st Tour de Pologne UCI World Tour kicked off in the iconic shadow of the Centenary Hall in Wrocław. The race officially began at 12:25 PM, with the peloton covering a 13-kilometre stretch to reach the starting point near Bielany Wrocławskie. The riders immediately set a high pace and the protagonists of the first breakaway were Poles Szymon Sajnok (Q36.5), Norbert Banaszek and Michał Paluta (Polish national team) and Dutchman Jan Maas (Jayco-Alula). At the front of the peloton, the riders of the UAE Team Emirates and Visma-Lease a Bike worked their way up to an average speed of over 50 km/h, but despite this the breakaway was able to steadily increase its advantage to a peak of 2' 50".

In the first LOTTO intermediate sprint, Sajnok proved to be the fastest and was awarded three points. Two points for second place went to Polish representative Norbert Banaszek and one point to Maas. Although the advantage of the breakaway started to diminish, the riders still managed to get ahead of the peloton on the third-category climbs of the Tąpadła Pass. Here Paluta got ahead of Maas and Banaszek without slowing down the pace. Just before the next climb, the lead of the breakaway increased from 1:30 to 1:45 minutes. Banaszek took the lead before the 70th kilometre and won the Soudal special prize.

At the entrance to Wałbrzych, the advantage of the breakaway was still around 2' and the Visma-Lease a Bike and UAE Team Emirates teams continued to lead the chase. In Czarny Bór, Sajnok won another intermediate sprint. Banaszek finished second and Maas third. The fierce battle between the two Poles drained them of a lot of strength and they fell behind. The breakaway at that point consisted of only two riders, Maas and Paluta. With around 40 km to go, Sajnok and Banaszek were caught up by the peloton. However, the lead of the breakaway dropped to 1:30.

As the lead of the breakaway continued to decrease, Paluta and Maas fought for victory on the second KOM in Kowary. In the end, the Pole managed to beat the Dutchman, taking five points. With less than 10 kilometres to go, the breakaway was neutralised. Before focusing on the finish, the entire peloton battled for the special prize of Lake Hill, which was won by Dutchman Pepijn Reinderink (Soudal Quick-Step).

Wilco Kelderman (Visma-Lease a Bike) and Thibau Nys (Lidl-Trek) were the stars of the challenge for stage victory. The Belgian shone in the finale, overtaking the Dutchman in the final metres of the iconic Orlinek climb in Karpacz. For Nys it was the seventh victory of the season. The podium was completed by Briton Lukas Nerurkar (EF Education - EasyPost), who finished third. The best of the Poles, Rafał Majka, took 9th place.

### **Szymon Sajnok**

*The feelings about today's stage were very positive. There were a lot of fans all along the route. They gave us a big welcome and cheered us on. I'm very happy because it's nice to race like this. Taking the blue jersey to the finish in Krakow will be very difficult. The plan for today was to get it and I succeeded. For sure in the fourth and fifth stages I will fight again in the sprints.*

### **Michał Paluta**

*The heat. That's the first thing that comes to mind after today's stage. And I know that temperatures are also expected to rise over the next few days. Almost from the start we managed to break away in a four-man breakaway. We worked in unison until the second sprint and then our breakaway split. I rode together with the Dutchman and still managed to win two KOMs, which was exactly the goal of this stage. I succeeded and I'm satisfied. I've tried many times to take the jersey to the finish on the last stage and I hope to do it again this time.*

### **Rafał Majka**

*It was quite a tough stage, I missed some climbs but it was fun. I hope the time trial and the next stages go well for me tomorrow. We have a very strong line-up. It will be difficult to repeat the success of 2014, but I will do my best. Today I gassed up too quickly, I could have slowed down a bit at the beginning. I'm 34 years old, I enjoy cycling and the fact that I'm still here, challenging the best. In the end racing should be about adrenaline and fun.*

Tomorrow the riders will face a 15.4-kilometre time trial from Mysłkowice to Karpacz.