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## SEC: thrilling final in Poland



For the third time in history the SEC series came to Rybnik, while for the second time the final round took place in this city. Before the competition, the top of the general classification became so tight that from the very beginning you could expect an extremely fierce battle for gold. Mikkel Michelsen and Piotr Pawlicki were ex aequo in the lead, followed by Leon Madsen with a loss of just two points. The fourth Patryk Dudek, who had six points less than the leaders, also wanted to look for a chance to fight for the highest place. It was also interesting to compete for a place in the top five, which was guaranteeing a stay in the SEC series for the next season. The sixth Robert Lambert and the seventh Bartosz Smektala could still attack the fifth Daniel Bewley, to which they lost five and six points respectively.



In the early stages of the competition, Madsen and Michelsen confirmed their high form. After two series of starts, the first was undefeated, while the latter lost only one point to his compatriot and main rival in the fight for gold. Dudek also looked well with five points on his account, but due to the excellent disposition of the Danes, it was difficult to make up for losses to the first place in the "general". After his second run, Pawlicki certainly felt a little relieved, because he scored a three after he reached the finish line in fourth place in the first race and seemed very slow. At this stage of the competition, Bewley was in big trouble. The Briton scored only one point in the first two heats and the chasing Smektała and Lambert looked much better and significantly nullified his advantage.

In the third series of starts, Dudek stole the first point from Madsen, while Michelsen recorded a victory after an impressive fight with Logachev. This meant that in the tournament standings the Danes equaled the points, but in the "general" it was Michelsen who regained the two-point lead over his compatriot. Pawlicki added a second consecutive three to his account and confirmed that after a poor start, he still didn't give up. It is worth mentioning that in his third run Bewley woke up. The Briton won three after the break. It should be noted that in addition to the exciting fight for points for the general classification, there was also an equally interesting fight for the highest position in the competition. After twelve runs Madsen, Dudek, Michelsen and Smektała had eight points each, followed by Pawlicki and Logachev with six points.

In the fourth series of starts Pawlicki lost a duel with Michelsen, which meant that the Dane increased his advantage in the "general" to three points. However, he did not come to the finish line in the first place, because he had to recognize the superiority of the Rune Holta, riding with a wild card. However, Madsen, who finished his fourth run at the last place and already had four points loss to the first place in the general classification, missed out on a minor stumble. This put him in a very difficult position in the context of the championship fight. After a one point win in the fifteenth heat, Dudek finally lost his chance for gold, while Bewley recodred a zero after a momentary awakening and again complicated his situation. Smektała benefited from the gift of the Briton, who won the



16th race and was promoted to fifth place in the "general" as well as to the position of the leader in the tournament standings.

The fifth series of starts began with Madsen's victory, which showed that he did not intend to lay down his arms in the battle for gold. In the nineteenth heat of the championships competition - and as it turned out later also for a medal - Pawlicki, who rode into the tape and had to come to terms with the fact that he will finish the competition after the main round, was definitively eliminated. In the 20th race, Michelsen had a chance to reach for the European Championship title, but needed three points to do so. In the end, however, he reached the finish line in second place, because he had to recognize the superiority of Dudek. The Pole thus suddenly jumped to the first position in the tournament standings and finally won the main round, which gave him a direct promotion to the grand final and a chance to fight even for silver. Smektala checked in next to Dudek in the most important race of the day, while Michelsen and Madsen and - quite unexpectedly - Logachev and Bellego freshly returned from an injury broke through to the play-offs. At this stage of the competition, Lambert lost his chance to advance to the top five "general", while Smektala equaled the points with Bewley and had to count on him to win at least one point in the final, which would allow him to avoid an extra run to stay in the SEC cycle.

There were no sensational decisions in the play-offs. Michelsen and Madsen best rallied from the start and were not threatened by their rivals, they came to the finish line in the first two positions. If Madsen had finished first and Michelsen had been fourth, we would have had an extra run for gold, but in the end nothing like that have happened. Madsen won the final and the entire round in Rybnik, but Michelsen finished second, which allowed him to get the second gold medal of the SEC series and advance to next year's Grand Prix. The third most important race of the day finally reached "Duzers", while "Smyk" had to say goodbye to the podium.

After the final, it was known that Michelsen had gold and Madsen silver, but this was not the end of speedway attractions in the stadium in Rybnik. After counting all the points, it turned out that we will witness additional runs for bronze between Dudek and Pawlicki

and for fifth place between Smejtala and Bewley. In the end, Dudek stood on the lowest step of the SEC podium, while Bewley secured the right to start in next year's edition of the European Championship. The extra runs did not provide much excitement and settled after the start.

### European Pairs Speedway Championship: Qualifying Round in Debrecen



Qualifying Round for the European Pairs Speedway Championship in Debrecen, Hungary. Great day for Great Britain, who won the meeting scoring 27 points with the team Adam Ellis, Chris Harris and Tom Brennan.

Second place for Denmark with 23 (Mads Hansen, Kevin Juhl Pedersen).

These both teams qualified to the Final which will be held in Macon, France, on July 24<sup>th</sup>.

#### Final QR results:

1. Great Britain (Adam Ellis, Chris Harris, Tom Brennan)
2. Denmark (Mads Hansen, Kevin Juhl Pedersen)
3. Slovakia (Martin Vaculik, Jakub Valkovic)