



Grand Prix of Europe – Men's Race Report

The TWA Grand Prix of Europe's 3-day challenge started at one of Europe's most historic races, with the 19th edition of the Donauturm Treppenlauf. The tallest building in Austria, and the longest of the three events, Piotr Lobodzinski (POL) showed he was the man to beat running a personal best 3:25.7, to shave 1.2 seconds from his 2014 time. Collecting valuable points, Tomas Celko (SVK) came in second in 3:29.7, and Tomas Macecek (CZE) ran a 6 second personal best to post 3:37.6. But it was only the start of a long weekend of competition and after arriving back at the hotel close to midnight, the athletes didn't have much time to catch up on valuable rest before embarking on the next event.

Saturday's race moved to the Czech Republic's tallest tower in Brno, the AZ Tower. After a strong first race, local hero Macecek was looking forward to another good performance, "After my race in Vienna, I was so happy and self-confident for my home race" he said, but was left disappointed with his eventual sixth place, and slipped to fourth place in the overall standings with 104 points. While the first and second places mirrored the previous day's results, Celko ran a personal best 2:58.0 to close the time gap and finish less than 2 seconds behind Lobodzinski's winning 2:56.1. Third place went to Jakob Mayer (AUT), who moved into 3rd place in the overall standings with 114 points. At the leaderboard, Lobodzinski's 2 wins from 2 races saw him extend his lead from Celko by 24 points.

As spectators huddled around the live results board, the final thrilling race up Bratislava's iconic UFO Tower played out. Celko repeated his previous winning performances in Bratislava to claim his 3rd UFO Vertical Sprint title, finishing almost 4 seconds clear of second place. "After two second places, I knew that I had to win UFO, and I am so happy to get my hattrick of victories here", smiled Celko, "But if I would like to win overall, the result did not just depend on me." Indeed, Lobodzinski needed to finish on the podium to ensure an overall Grand Prix win, and in the end only 0.4 seconds separated second from fourth, critically impacting the final standings. Lobodzinski clinched second place in 1:49.41, Macecek lunged at the line to claim third in 1:49.64 and secured his overall third-placed ranking, while Stefan Stefina (SVK) came in fourth in 1:49.80. The closeness of the finish was not lost on Lobodzinski, "I am very happy to with the overall Grand Prix, but it was very close. Luck was with me today."



The top 5 male athletes shared in a prize pool of EUR2,100 and the final men's standings saw Lobodzinski take the victory with 228 points, Celko second with 216 points and Macecek with 164 points. An indication of the closeness of the competition, only 10 points separated third from fifth, with Stefina coming in fourth with 156 points, narrowly ahead of Mayer on 154 points. Overall, six European nations were represented in the Top 10, and 46 athletes from 11 different countries scored overall Grand Prix points.

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