2026 11.lv FIM SPEEDWAY WORLD CUP SEMI-FINAL 2 – RIGA – BURB'S BRIEFING

Hello and welcome to Burb's Briefing! Here is some information and a few talking points which may assist your coverage of 11.lv FIM Speedway World Cup Semi-Final 2 – Riga ...

SWC REVAMPED FOR 2026

- The FIM Speedway World Cup – the sport's original world team competition – returns to the calendar for the first time since it was staged in Wroclaw in 2023.
- Currently, the competition takes place every three years, with the FIM Speedway of Nations staged during the two seasons in between. The next SWC is therefore scheduled for 2029.
- The SON is a pairs format, featuring teams of two starters and one reserve rider. For the SWC, countries track four starters and one reserve – raising their teams from three riders for the SON to five for the SWC.
- A major change to the sport's world team championships for 2026 sees the SWC action take place across three different countries – Germany, Latvia and Poland.
- For the past four years, the SWC or SON was always staged across a single week at one venue, with Torun hosting both Semi-Finals, SON2 for the sport's under-21 teams and the SON Final last season.
- The new format ensures there will be a home team competing in every SWC event.
- Hosts and reigning champions Poland are seeded straight through to the BOLL FIM SWC Final – Warsaw at PGE Narodowy on August 29, where they are joined by 2025 FIM Speedway of Nations world champions Australia.
- WWK Schwaiger & Partner FIM SWC Semi-Final 1 – Landshut on May 1 saw Great Britain defeat Czech Republic, hosts Germany and Ukraine to join the Final line-up.
- The last Final place is up for grabs in Riga on Friday, as Latvia hosts Denmark, Sweden and Norway at Bikernieki – the nation's leading motorsport venue.

WHERE?

- Riga's Bikernieki Speedway Stadium made its debut on the FIM Speedway calendar in 2023, and this is the fourth straight season that it has staged Speedway GP action.
- The 2023 event was the first time Latvia had hosted a Speedway GP round since the 2017 FIM Speedway GP of Latvia – Daugavpils.
- The Riga Speedway GP rounds in 2023 and 2024 were won by Poland's Bartosz Zmarzlik, while the 2025 event was won by Australia's Brady Kurtz on his Bikernieki debut.
- In 2023, Riga also staged the FIM Speedway of Nations – SON2 event for the sport's top seven under-21 teams, which saw Poland win gold, with Denmark second and Latvia taking an historic bronze medal – their first FIM Speedway world team medal of any kind.

- Bikernieki is Latvia's leading motorsport venue, with the neighbouring tarmac track hosting a wide variety of two and four-wheeled sports.
- The speedway circuit there was first constructed in 1976, hosting rounds of the Soviet Union Championship before falling into disrepair. But it has been lovingly revamped for what is its 50th anniversary this summer.
- The track has undergone a major overhaul since the 2025 Speedway GP event. It has been resurfaced, with the corners widened and banking added on the corners and straights in an effort to improve the racing. The track was recently tested by members of the Latvian national side, who gave it the thumbs up.
- It was originally renovated in 2014 and was due to stage a round of the Speedway GP series that year. But the event was moved to Daugavpils – around three hours away – at the last moment, with the Bikernieki track deemed unfit for racing following weeks of heavy rainfall.
- The track has since proved itself by successfully hosting a number of FIM and FIM Europe events, as well as a regular speedway school – from which Latvian duo Francis Gusts and Ricards Ansviesulis graduated.
- Bikernieki notably hosted the 2021 European Under-19 Championship Final, which was won by Gusts on 14 points.
- A welcome addition to Bikernieki for 2024 was floodlights, meaning both of this weekend's events can get underway at 7pm local time – without any concerns over light later in the evening.

WHEN?

- Practice: Friday, August 7 - 14:00 local time
- 11.lv FIM SWC Semi-Final 2 – Riga: Friday, August 7 - 19:00 local time

FIM JURY

REFEREE: Jesper Steentoft (Denmark)

JURY PRESIDENT: Thierry Bouin (France)

FMNR REPRESENTATIVE: Vladimirs Ribnikovs (Latvia)

RACE DIRECTOR: Phil Morris (Great Britain)

PLENTY IN RESERVE

- Team managers have selected five riders for Friday's Semi-Final – four starters and one substitute at No.5.
- Teams can deploy their No.5 as a replacement at any time, handing them up to six rides – five regular races, plus one as a tactical substitute if the team falls six or more points behind the leading nation.
- While teams have the option to select their weakest rider at No.5, keeping them on hand to cover for injuries or riders struggling for form, some managers opt to track one of their strongest stars in this position.
- This gives them the option to call them into action when they feel it would be most advantageous – perhaps in a race they are likely to win or to replace a weaker teammate struggling for points.

- In Semi-Final 1, German captain Kai Huckenbeck, Czech skipper Jan Kvech and Ukrainian captain Marko Levishyn all took on this roving role.
- But only Swedish boss Linus Sundstrom has named one of his big-hitters at No.5, handing the job to new national champion Kim Nilsson.
- In contrast, Denmark picks Frederik Jakobsen at No.5, with Latvia choosing Olegs Mihailovs and Norway nominating Magnus Klipper. This indicates a desire to give their four starters a regular pattern of heats, rather than drop them in when they see fit,
- Which approach will pay off?

TEAM NOTES

DENMARK

- Denmark arguably starts Semi-Final 2 as favourites to progress with a side boasting four Speedway GP winners.
- Captain Michael Jepsen Jensen and Leon Madsen are the team's Speedway GP regulars. MJJ has reached four finals in the first seven rounds so far this year, while Madsen won the FIM Speedway GP of Czech Republic – Prague. Jepsen Jensen is fourth and Madsen is sixth in the World Championship with three rounds to race.
- Jepsen Jensen was part of the Danish side which won the 2012 FIM Speedway World Cup Final in Malilla – the same year in which he won the FIM Speedway Under-21 World Championship and the FIM Nordic Speedway GP in Vojens.
- Following that, he largely disappeared from the world stage – aside from one full-time season in Speedway GP in 2015. But MJJ has made an astonishing return to the top level and could compete for Speedway GP gold in the coming years.
- Speedway GP first substitute Anders Thomsen picked up the second win of his SGP career on July 11, topping the BST FIM Speedway GP of Sweden – Malilla podium, before celebrating with one of his trademark laps in his underwear.
- Madsen was part of Denmark's 2012 SWC winning squad but was dropped for the Final. However, he was part of their three FIM Speedway of Nations bronze medal winning teams in 2020, 2021 and 2025.
- Michelsen lost his spot in Speedway GP at the end of last season, but the record three-time European champion and 2024 FIM Speedway GP of Germany – Landshut winner adds real strength to the side.
- The five is rounded off by Frederik Jakobsen, who could become a familiar face in Speedway GP for 2027. He finished seventh at the FIM SGP Challenge in Terenzano on July 25. Should three of Robert Lambert, Kacper Woryna, Andzejs Lebedevs and Michael Jepsen Jensen reach this year's SGP top seven, Jakobsen will make his full-time Speedway GP debut next year.
- Danish team manager Nicki Pedersen was part of the side for all four of Denmark's FIM Speedway World Cup wins in 2006 (Reading), 2008 (Vojens), 2012 (Malilla) and 2014 (Bydgoszcz). MJJ joined forces with him in Malilla, while Madsen helped the team reach the Final that year, before being dropped.

LATVIA

- Latvia lines up in the country's first home FIM Speedway World Cup Semi-Final, having previously staged FIM Speedway of Nations Semi-Finals in Daugavpils in 2021.
- Their challenge is led by Speedway GP star Andzejs Lebedevs, a two-time European champion who finished a career-best sixth in the 2025 SGP World Championship.
- His SGP success has taken the sport in Latvia to new heights, with the Riga local organiser working hard to promote him in the national media – meaning he is no longer just a local celebrity in home city Daugavpils. He is known as one of Latvia's top sportsmen.
- Lebedevs has led the country to three SON Finals in four tournaments – in 2021, 2024 and 2025. His four teammates on Friday have all appeared in at least one.
- Francis Gusts and Olegs Mihailovs joined forces with him as Latvia finished sixth in Manchester in 2021. Daniils Kolodinskis and Jevgenijs Kostigovs were his teammates as Latvia finished seventh in Manchester in 2024 and sixth in Torun in 2025.
- Lebedevs started his career with Daugavpils, a Latvian club which competes in Poland's National League – the third tier – and previously staged the country's Speedway GP. Kolodinskis, Kostigovs and Mihailovs are all current Daugavpils riders.
- Gusts spent four seasons in SGP2, the FIM Speedway Under-21 World Championship – reaching a high of sixth spot in 2021.
- He is the only member of the team from Riga, and he learned his racing craft at the Bikernieki training school.
- With this Latvian team boasting plenty of international and league experience, they could push Denmark on a good day. And if they perform, the Riga crowd is sure to get involved in the meeting and offer some very vocal support.

SWEDEN

- Sweden's hopes of success in Riga have been hugely boosted by the return of national hero Fredrik Lindgren to FIM Speedway action.
- He has missed the last six Speedway GP rounds after suffering an ankle injury in a Polish PGE Ekstraliga match for Lublin in Leszno on May 17.
- Realistically, Lindgren is out of the race for 2027 Speedway GP qualification and must rely on a permanent wild card pick from the SGP Commission.
- He is a real talisman for Sweden on the world stage. He was part of their 2015 FIM Speedway World Cup-winning side with team manager Linus Sundstrom.
- Since then, he has won SWC silver (2017) and bronze (2016) medals, as well as bronze medals in the SON in 2022 and 2024.
- For Sweden to win, Lindgren will probably need to score big. But he has some back-up from Kim Nilsson.
- Nilsson comes into the SWC on a huge high after winning his first Swedish Championship in Karlstad, which earned him the BST FIM Speedway GP of Sweden – Malilla wild card. With Lindgren injured, he was the sole Swedish representative, but reached the last-chance qualifiers, scoring nine championship points.
- He followed that up by securing his place in the 2027 Speedway GP series by finishing fourth at the FIM SGP Challenge in Terenzano on July 25. This will be his second full SGP season after he won the 2022 FIM SGP Challenge in Glasgow to qualify for 2023.
- Lindgren and Nilsson are joined by double Swedish champion Jacob Thorssell and former Speedway GP star Oliver Berntzon, who raced in the 2021 SGP series.

- Thorssell won SON bronze in 2024, while Berntzon led Sweden to third in 2022 – finishing as the tournament's highest-scoring rider on 40 points from two events.
- The Swedish team is completed by Timo Lahti, who makes his SWC debut for the country. He's a dual national and represented Finland at the last SWC in 2023, before switching allegiances for 2024.

NORWAY

- Norway lines up in its first-ever FIM Speedway World Cup Semi-Final after securing qualification with fifth place at 2025 FIM SON Semi-Final 1.
- This monumental moment was largely thanks to their top gun Mathias Pollestad, who scored 19 of their 26 points. They will rely heavily on him in Riga.
- Pollestad raced to third place in the 2024 FIM Speedway Under-21 World Championship (SGP2) and he has established himself in Poland's PGE Ekstraliga with Stal Gorzow, as well as competing in Sweden's Bauhaus Elitserien for Smederna and the Danish Speedwayligaen for Grindsted.
- Even if Norway does not reach the BOLL FIM SWC Final – Warsaw, Pollestad could be a major thorn in the side of the other three teams, whose success could in part be determined by how many points they take from Norway.
- Aside from No.5 Magnus Klipper – son of team manager Kenneth Klipper Smith – the other Norwegian riders all compete in a professional league.
- Lasse Fredriksen is a regular in Britain's Cab Direct Championship, where he currently rides for Berwick. Meanwhile, four-time national champion Glenn Moi races for Ornarna in Sweden's Allsvenskan League. Norwegian captain Truls Kamhaug also races in the Allsvenskan League for Solkatterna.
- Norway may not win on Friday, but it's an event that will hopefully inspire a new generation of Norwegian riders to step forward.

WHERE TO WATCH

Fans can catch every moment of Speedway GP and SWC action live on global broadcaster Warner Bros. Discovery's streaming platforms HBO Max or discovery+. Coverage of every Speedway GP Qualifying session is also available on these platforms.

HBO Max is available across Europe, with FIM-MOTO TV providing coverage around the world.

ACROSS EUROPE: Live on HBO Max and discovery+

BRITAIN: Live on HBO Max and TNT Sports

POLAND: Live on Eurosport 3, HBO Max and Player

SWEDEN: Live on Kanal 9 and HBO Max

DENMARK: Live on 6'eren and HBO Max

AUSTRALIA: Live on Fox Sports

GERMANY: Live on HBO Max and discovery+

ACROSS THE BALTICS: Live on Go3, TV3 Sport and HBO Max

CZECHIA: Live on CT Sport and HBO Max

SLOVAKIA: Live on STVR Sport and HBO Max

USA/Canada: Live on Racer

REST OF THE WORLD: Live on FIM-MOTO TV