

They learned the qualification criteria only on the day of the competition.

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"It's a bit like playing indoor soccer with five players on each team to determine who will start the FIFA World Cup." The manager of the USA Speedway Team, Steve Evans, does not hide his dissatisfaction with the lack of space for his team in the Team World Cup and in our pages in an extensive statement he points out the shortcomings of the current elimination system.



Photo:

From our interview with Steve Evans

Let us remind you that at the end of July (25-29) Wrocław will host the Team Speedway World Cup. It is a return to competition after a five-year break. In 2018, the DWP was replaced by the Steam Speedway of Nations, but now it is partially back in favor and will be held every three years. The remaining seasons will still belong to SON.. Nine teams will participate in this year's Cup. Poles as hosts were seeded in the finals, while the other teams start the competition from the semi-finals. The winners will advance directly, while the second- and third-placed teams will play off in a play-off for one more place in the finals.

The crew of the SWC in Wrocław was selected on the basis of places in last year's Speedway of Nations in Vojens. Participation in the team competition was awarded to the nine best teams. However, information about the elimination system for the SWC was given only at the last moment.

"Last year at Speedway of Nations, we were informed on the morning of the race that the positions in the evenings event would determine which countries would participate in this year's World Cup. This was the first time we were informed of the exact eligibility criteria," says Steve Evans.

The American team's manager also criticizes the elimination system itself.

"The Speedway of Nations pairings and tournament are very different and using one competition as a qualifier for another is completely wrong. The two systems require very different strategies, and some countries specialize in one or the other. It's a bit like playing indoor soccer with five players on each team to determine who will start the FIFA World Cup. The nine top-ranked countries from last season's SoN are taking part in the SWC this year, with us finishing 10th last year. Of course, if we were to qualify, I would be happy, but I would still consider the qualifying criteria incorrect."



Photo:

From our interview with Steve Evans

"Pairs is a strange format because you don't start every race, so you can only control part of the meeting. In DŚ you have your competitor in every heat, so your fate is truly in your hands. In duos, literally one referee error or unfavorable starting position against a team of comparable strength can decide whether or not to advance.

"The United States, starting with my involvement with the team in 2012, has always been ranked fifth through eighth in the World Cup. It's true that we had the great Greg Hancock, but in 2017 he wasn't in the team and we still started and even made it to the race off. Also in 2013 we qualified without Hancock when the qualifying event conflicted with the SGP in Prague. In the past, there have always been heats to determine the unseeded rest of the Semi-Finals, and they've always been run using the same race format. The current situation is happening for the first time. I don't remember anything like that ever happening."

Our interviewee is also not satisfied with the fact that the SWC is held so rarely and the number of places in it is very limited.

"It used to be that the Speedway World Cup was held every year, now it's only every three years. Naturally, leading countries like Poland, Great Britain, Sweden, Denmark and Australia are strong enough to be seeded in the semi-finals, but otherwise we are dealing with a very even and competitive group of about eight teams. Given that the tournament now only takes place every three years, it shouldn't be a closed shop. The tournament should be expanded to more countries. Twelve teams would be easy to achieve. There should be more countries and more events."

Steve Evans also points to the issue of seeding the tournament organizers in the final.

"The host team should also earn their way to the final, not be seeded straight away in the final four. There's no way a team as good as Poland wouldn't advance to the final if they had to go to one or more competitions before the final."

The manager of the American team is aware that the current promoter is just starting out in speedway competitions, but he points out the consequences of their decisions.

"Of course the people at Discovery are new to running the SGP series and world competitions and maybe in 2026 it will be better. But that means a lot of waiting for us."

He concludes with:

"A real World Cup must involve more than nine countries and more than one competition per team. It would be good if Discovery expanded the competition and perhaps extended the competition to two weeks. If it happens in 2026, then you will get a real ranking of speedway teams."