

Subject: Last race in Belgium

Hello everyone,

Vinkt is a very small town about 20 km from the Bloso Sportscenter where we are staying while in Belgium. We raced Vinkt last year as preparation for the Trophée centre Morbihan, our big race in France.

Last year we caught the race, the Belgian national champion and the remainder of the field off guard by placing 1,2,3 in this race. This year, based on the looks we got while registering, was going to be a bit different. We were not met with a warm and fuzzy look, but I was not expecting one either. Belgians take their bike racing seriously and can take losing about as well as any sports crazy country. Their national pride is based on their prowess in cycling and we embarrassed them with our results last season. The look I got was, "that's not going to happen again. We know who you are."

Fifty Euro for the Belgian racing cards, sixty Euro for their Belgian racing book and twenty-five Euro for our entry and we had our numbers. Palmer, our Belgian mechanic was waltzing around the team car, fiddling with this and that, proud as heck to be "our mechanic" at this race. He was wearing his Hot Tubes hat and getting looks from the other racers parents that said, "traitor," but he brushed them off without a second look as he pumped the tires.

The race was sixteen laps of 6.3 km for a total of 100 km. Rain was in the forecast and it was windy again. We decided that we would take it to them again right from the start. That was how we got the brake last season, hit them hard, hit them early and see where you are. We were fit so if nothing came of it, so be it. We would be ready for whatever that had for us. There were cash primes every lap so there was a lot of incentive to lead through town.

The first lap, two guys ten seconds ahead of the bunch but no problem. The second lap, rain and Yannick with one other, maybe twenty seconds ahead. So far, so good then it happened.

Lap three, six off the front with three of us and a fourth, I think Anders bridging with one other and that was it. The eight of them quickly got a sizable gap and it was off to the races. Austin did an admirable job covering all, and there were a lot, of attacks as everyone knew that, for all intents and purposes, the race was over.

The break gained time and was up to about two minutes when the unexpected happened. Lawson attacked, solo. Does he not realize there is still 60 km to go? Does he really want to time trial for an hour and a half? Maybe he wanted to make up to the team for all the extra work he put them through the day before in Holland, his measure of salt.

The Belgians began racing like a team against us then. They would take turns taking shots at getting across to Lawson, not chasing each other but leaving that to us to do. Yannick took one Belgian off the back who was just sitting on so it was Stuart and Anders to cover three. One went and Stuee made a big effort to get him back then two went and no Anders. It seems that Anders has been dealing with hamstring cramping and was experiencing it again. A moment or two later Anders went blowing by Stuee trying to get the two back. Anders blew going after them and was passed by Stuee and the remaining Belgian.

With two laps to go, the two Belgians caught Lawson and immediately attacked. Lawson responded and one of the two Belgians was dropped. I was a little deflated at that moment as I was sure Lawson was going to win solo.

In the end, Lawson unleashed both a ferocious sprint combined with the most girlish scream I've ever seen in combination as he won the race, The dropped Belgian came in solo for third and Stuee lost the sprint for fourth, finishing fifth after being completely wiped out from his efforts. Anders was caught by the

remains of the field finishing eleventh on the day. Yannick crashed when he was returned to the main field and Austin stopped to pace him back but the two never regained the field.

That was it, another Vinkt, another win, this time with a little more respect for the local boys. Maybe next year we choose another race to do or maybe we go back and see if we can make it three for three. I'll let you, our supporters decide.

As an FYI for all of you that understand power numbers, Lawson, at 151 lbs averaged 280 watts for the race, peaked at 310 watts for 60 minutes and normalized power for the race was 310 watts.

Thanks for reading,

Toby

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