

## All Sport-Team Swift 2011 Europe Reports

This year Team Swift had a number of Elite Team members race in Europe. Tyler Williams went on both the April and August trips with the USA Junior National Team. John Piasta and Christopher Flanagan were also able to travel to Europe racing with composite teams. Below are Tyler William's reports and results.

### August Europe Race Reports

#### Racing Schedule:

- 10-AugWKermesse Dadizele
- 13-AugSKermesse Ingelmunster
- 14-AugSKermesse Rumbeke
- 17-AugWKermesse Beveren
- 20-AugSKermesse Oosterzele
- 21-AugSKermesse Wortegem-Petegem
- 24-AugWKermesse Mere
- 27-AugSOMloop Mendel -Leie-Schelde(Muelebeke)
- 28-AugSOMloop der VlaamseGewesten
- 30-AugTKermesse Lendeledede
- 1-SepTDepart of GP RueblilandSwitzerland
- 2-SepFGP RueblilandSwitzerland
- 3-SepSGP RueblilandSwitzerland
- 4-SepSGP Ruebliland

<http://www.usacycling.org/news/user/story.php?id=7027>

#### JUNIORS

A group of junior riders contested the [Grand Prix Rüebliland](#), a four-stage UCI 2.1-inscribed junior event in Lenzburg, Switzerland. In the [final results](#), the U.S. team compiled a pair of single-stage individual podium appearances en route to finishing third in the team general classification. Additionally, **Tyler Williams** (Shafter, Calif./All Sport-Team Swift) tied for third in the Sprint Classification and placed fourth in the King of the Mountains Classification while **Alex Darville** (Santa Barbara, Calif./Echelon Santa Barbara) finished eighth in the Points Classification.

### **Tyler Williams**

17 years old

Senior Category 2

### **Top Results:**

1 <sup>st</sup> Place	GP Reubiland, Aggressive Rider Award, Stage 4	Switzerland
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	Kermesse Wortegem Petegem	Belgium
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	GP Reubiland, Team Classification	Switzerland
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	GP Reubiland, Sprints Classification	Switzerland
4 <sup>th</sup> Place	GP Reubiland, Mountains Classification	Switzerland
7 <sup>th</sup> Place	Kermesse Beveren	Belgium

This fall I got another great opportunity to go over to Europe with the USA National Team. It was valuable to gain more European experience and continue my development. My races included 11 kermesses, two UCI 1.1 races and GP Ruebiland in Switzerland.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kermesse\\_\(Bicycle\\_Race\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kermesse_(Bicycle_Race))

### **Kermesse Dodizele:**

Our first Kermesse was 2 days after our arrival in Belgium. Still jetlagged we were there to just get a feel for the type of racing we would encounter the rest of the trip. The course was fairly technical with 2 cobbled turns, a 300 meter hill at 6% and a technical descent. Needless to say our enter stay in Belgium had lots of wind. As usual the race started out full gas. I had a good position but was ran into a roundabout within 2k was able to bunny hop over it but lost a lot of positions. The next few laps I spent a lot of time closing down gaps that had been formed in the cross winds. I was able to get back to the front and actually race but the Belgian national champion had already gotten away and had 4 guys with him up the road. I tried to get in a move up the road later but ended up running out of gas. I ended up being 29<sup>th</sup> out of 87. Not the worst result in the world but could have been better.

### **Kermesse Inglemunster:**

Another very technical windy kermesse but this one was very flat. The course was on a lot of small roads that were still wet from the early rain. After a series of turns there was a 3k stretch of wide open crosswinds leading into the finishing stretch. I made a point of being aggressive in this race which might have been my downfall at the end as I made it into quite of few moves that would last a lap or two but when I needed to be there the legs were fried. It was a good lesson learned though as I would race more conservative the next few days. Still feeling a bit jet lagged I definitely knew I had a lot more potential in the future races.

### **Kermesse Rumbeke:**

I was really motivated to do well in this kermesse if not get a great result then at least to feel good on the bike and make a big impact. The race was on a pretty tough course with lots and lots of wind, a few rolling hills and technical turns. There was also a fairly big field which made for a more aggressive race. I was able to make myself be a little more patient and wait till a bit later in the race to attack and try to get into the winning break. The last few moves had gone away about 30 or 40k into the race so I concentrated on being aggressive in that period. I felt really good that day and was able to get into almost every dangerous selection. At one point I thought I had made the move with a group of 7 including my teammate Daniel Eaton. He unfortunately missed a turn so that was a lot of firepower lost. We continued to ride and stayed out for 30k or so before getting caught. When we were caught I knew the counter attacks were going to be dangerous so I was really attentive then also. The move ended up going on the last lap and I had nothing to try and get to it. Ended up settling for 28<sup>th</sup> in the second group on the road.

### **Kermesse Beveren:**

This kermesse mixed it up from the previous races as this time we were in east Flanders area near Gent. I was curious to see the new teams and race against some new people. It was a cooler day with rain in the forecast for that night. The race was large with 90+ riders so we knew it would be a fairly tough race. The race started insanely fast as most kermesses do. We had gotten to the start a bit late after getting lost while trying to ride the course so it was tough to try and move up through such a big field. I wasn't feeling too well for the first half of the race so I had to try and bank on the move going late and hoping that I felt better as the race went on. About a third of the way in I had finally made it to the front but there was a big move of 20+ guys up the road. Danny, Alexey and I put up a massive chase just the three of us hammering on the front in order to bring it back. After about three laps of chasing we were able to shut it down. From there Alexey and I attacked right away and Danny was able to bridge up shortly. The three of us were off the front with one other guy for a while before 7 more guys finally made it up. From there it was set though the three of us did a lot of work to make sure it stayed away. In the finish I followed an attack inside of 1k and got caught at 500 meters. That left me with little legs left in the sprint. Danny ended up 5<sup>th</sup>; I was 7<sup>th</sup> and Alexey 9<sup>th</sup>. I was pleased to at least finally make it into the move and have a good day racing.

### **Kermesse Oosterzele:**

Kermesse Oosterzele was on a fairly warm Saturday in East Flanders. It was a pretty hilly course which we knew would suit a few of our guys. The course was very technical with lots a tight turns, sand and narrow roads. I hadn't been feeling so well that day but I had to do the best I could. Sense the last month or two after a few crashes

I had had a lot of low back pain. Today would be the worst day yet. The race started out as usual I was in a few moves early just to try and feel out the field. But by the fourth lap I was in a lot of pain having trouble putting any type of power into the pedals. After about 50k I pulled out knowing that I had another race tomorrow and that I wasn't doing myself any favors sitting in the back doing nothing. I was incredibly frustrated but knew that I still had a lot of races left. It still ended up being a good day with Alexey winning the kermesse.

### **Kermesse Wortegem Petegem:**

After a less than ideal day before I was really motivated to make up for it on Sunday. The course was pretty tough with crosswinds, climbs and cobbles. There were around 80 guys in the race that day including 5 of my teammates. The races started and I just sat near the front for the first 20 or thirty km. Then 5 of us were near the front when Danny said to me on the climb we will hit it. So on the climb with a crosswind from the right, 5 of us went to the front and drilled it. Within about 5k we could see the field splintering and within a lap there was a group of 16. Five of us in the front and groups of 2 or 3 off the back. From that point on it was about trying to save as much energy as possible. With three laps to go on a sharp turn right before the hill I hit it again and the group went from 16 down to 6. The next lap on the same climb a guy attacked our group I went with him then surged through and dropped him going solo. I made it about half a lap and got caught with half a lap left to go. I knew that I had probably wasted most of my energy but tried to recover as much as possible. The last time up the hill they started attacking each other I had one other teammate in the group with me. He was able to follow the accelerations and just rode at my own pace which got us back to the 5 guys that were left with about 350meters to go. As soon as I got onto the group I gave everything I had and took a 300 meter flyer. I got caught with 50 meter by Alex and one other guy so I ended up third and Alex ended second by 3 inches. I was pretty happy with my result especially considering the way I had felt the day before.

### **Kermesse Mere:**

This was another very punchy very hilly kermesse. I had one cobbled climb and some very windy sections. The race started well for me but I was not feeling the snap that I had had on Sunday. The move went very early with Alexey in it. I made sure I was in every move that tried to get across after that. Finally with about 10k left in the race I had nothing left in my legs. The race was set and I just rode it in. I was bummed, but was looking forward to a solid weekend of UCI 1.1 races.

### **UCI 1.1 Omloop Mendel**

<http://www.omloopmandelleieschelde.be/>

\* Omloop Mendel translates to basically: "Tour of Mendel"

This race was going to be epic. It was 140km over many of the same roads that the 2010 tour of Flanders did, including the Kluisberg, Oude Kwaremont, Paterberg and Knocktenberg. I was excited to race such an awesome course knowing how brutal the day would be. The race was ballistic from the start with everyone trying to hold position in the front before the first climb of the day. I was near the front of the first two climbs but then on the climb right before the Kwaremont I was pushed off the road and fell into the grass. I got up quickly and rejoined the field and was able to get about halfway through the field before the base of the 2.2km cobbled climb. The pack came to a standstill going up the climb with guys flattening and crashing. I was caught behind a few crashes and the split happened. I tried to ride across to it but ran out of gas right at the top of the climb. I was then able to descend up to the second group on the road only to hit the 600 meter 14% cobbled Paterberg. I can honestly say that this was one of the most miserable, hard hills I have ever done. We crawled up that climb and began to descend again on the open flat section where we had three guys in the second group and two in the first. The second group began to attack the heck out of the three of us. By this point the race was decided and the three of us rode in together exhausted and covered in grime. Our two guys in the lead group had both crashed but managed top 20 results. This was the hardest one day race of my life.

### **UCI 1.1 Omloop der Vlaamse Gewesten:**

Our second Interclub race of the weekend was on the border between the Netherlands and Belgium. It was a 125km kermesse style course with narrow roads and a 12.5km lap. The course was pan flat but because we were so close to Holland the wind was very strong. Each lap had 2 very long sections of cross winds and head wind. Of course the part we would actually have a tail wind would be only 2k. This we knew would shatter the race. The race started with a 4k neutral and we were pretty far back in the lineup so we had our work cut out for us to move up before the splits. A crash in the first 300 meters of the race didn't help matters. Once underway I only had one goal which was to get as close to the front as possible and as quickly as possible. It took about two laps of risk taking and full gas sprints (not to mention about a kilometer of riding in the dirt when a bike path I was using disappeared) to get into the top third of the 200 rider race. By the third lap the race was already blowing up. Alexey had gotten a flat, Danny was sitting maybe ten guys behind me, Colby and Alex were just in front of me in the group. On the tailwind section of the third lap everything went haywire. First a crash happened right behind me, I knew that would take out Danny which it did. Then a crash in front of me caused a split of about 30 off the front which put me in a group back with Colby. We drilled past everyone in the crosswinds just the two of us

and began to ride across the gap dropping everyone that was in our group. Coming into the finishing straight we were in a group of five and when I pulled off we were only maybe 30 meters from making contact with the select group of leaders. Not knowing the road was wet Colby took a risk through the right 90 degree turn and hit a storm drain cover. Instantly he and the 3 other guys in front of me were all on the ground sliding towards the curb. I had nowhere to go but was able not to slide out. I cut as hard as I could but the inside was blocked by the crashed riders. I hit the brakes but just slid. So I aimed for a soft landing which ended up being a bush in a planter's box for my bike and a hood of a van for me. When I got up I looked around and watched the chase group ride by knowing that there was no way I was getting back now. I made sure Colby was okay before riding off and finishing out the remainder of the laps with Alexey Vermulen. I was heartbroken not to have been able to make it into that group because I had good legs today.

### **Kermesse Landelede:**

This kermesse was the next Tuesday after the Interclubs. We had an option of whether or not to race since we were leaving for Switzerland that Thursday for a stage race. I was pretty tired but figured if I'm in Belgium that I might as well race. Only 3 of our 6 guys decided to do the kermesse of about 70 riders. The course was 22 laps of a 4.5km circuit. It was fast and aggressive from the gun with a strong tail crosswind on a downhill which made for some serious work of leg speed which was rarely less than 55kph through that section. The course then made a tight left through an alley before another left into an uphill head cross wind to the finish line. I waited about two laps then I felt like the race was going to start getting serious as some guys I knew were super strong were beginning to launch blistering attacks. I got in a few moves that lasted about a lap but definitely was feeling fatigued from the weekend of racing. With about 40km left a big split happened and I didn't have the legs to get across to it on my own. In normal Belgian fashion the guys in the second group messed around and let the race slip away. I sat in knowing that I needed just to finish and make some money then save it for the next weekend. The group started attacking itself with about 30k left giving the lead group a minute. Finally from somewhere I got annoyed with the group and began to have a few goes off the front to at least get in a smaller group that would work together to get to the finish. They marked my first few attacks closely but I finally got so fed up with them I put down a full sprint in a gradual uphill section of the course. One guy was able to come with me and we were able to get a small gap to the group. For three laps we dangled off the front just the two of us working well together. We were going well and finally opened up a decent gap on the field. With 1 lap to go we had even gotten within sight of the lead pack. We worked together all the way to the line finishing only 5 seconds behind the pack. It was at least good to actually do something in the race and make 12 euro (~15 US\$).

## **GP Ruebiland (GP Carrot)**

<http://www.gp-ruebliland.ch/>

I had been looking forward to our trip to Switzerland all month. I had always wanted to go there and knew the racing would be top notch. This race had a lot of history to it with Andy Schleck, Michele Scarponi, Damiano Cunego, Roman Kruezing, and Thor Hushovd amongst the past podium finishers. This race would be no less stacked with at least 8 National Teams including a very strong French team which consisted of the World Champion, European Champion, National Champion, and two of the podium finishers from Junior Paris Roubaix. I was curious to see how I would stack up with the best of the best juniors in the world.

### **Stage 1:**

The first stage was a 100km up and down stage with some punchy hills and rolling terrain. I was able to get good position early and into a big split with Danny. We were brought back about 10k later but I knew that any counter attacks would be crucial. Danny and I would switch off marking moves in order to make sure we were represented in any break that may get away. There was already a move of 4 off the front including a French rider who was the World champ. I knew there would be a bridge up to it so we just kept with the same tactic. I marked a promising attack to get across the gap. We were eventually reeled in and a counter attack went immediately with Danny and a Swiss rider hauling another French rider with them. It stuck and they gained two minutes within no time. I was not happy to miss the move but having Danny up there was a good thing because he had been riding so strong. I was sitting near the front when about 60k from the finish a crash in the top ten guys caused a massive pile up. I locked the breaks up and slid for 10 meters looking for someone big to land on. I ran into the back of a guy, jumped off my bike breaking my cleat and landed on a Swiss rider. I popped up instantly and found my bike. The chain was off but that looked to be it until I tried to roll off. The broken cleat had gotten jammed into the wheel and it was going anywhere. I heard someone say that a USA rider was down so I thought the car would be coming soon. I tried to at least release the break so I could get rolling but it was not use. I waited and waited but the car never came after about 3 minutes our team car showed up unaware that I had a mechanical. I waved them down, got on my spare bike and took off. I chased solo for the next 60k with the only goal being to make the time cut. I was able to do so and Danny had made it to the final climb before being dropped by the 5 leaders that were left. It was a day of mixed emotions but I was fully committed now to helping Danny get a top 5 in GC.

### **Stage 2:**

The second stage was a short 82k race with three circuits and a 6km climb each lap. My goal for the day was first to take care of Danny and then to at least get a solid result in order to get some momentum. I kept Danny at the front out of the wind and was able to position myself perfectly into the climb each time. The race was steady with the hardest part being the last k of the hill which was 10%. I made it up the hill each time and paced Danny back to the front after being caught behind a crash the last time up the climb when the Swiss team car hit a rider while trying to drive through the middle of the pack. We made it onto the back of the select group of maybe 50 riders over the top of the climb. Alexey was in the breakaway of 4 with about 45 seconds. With about 12k left I rode Danny to the front of the race where I would be in a good position for the sprint and he would be out of harm's way. He sat on my wheel while the French drilled the breakaway back at a steady speed of 50kph. Into the last 5k Alex Darville and I were in good spots to both do well in the sprint. I was on his wheel with Colby leading him through the pack at the front and Danny sitting next to me. But at 1k left Colby got cut off Alex, hit the brakes and I ran into the back of him. Barely staying up I went from the top ten back to 30<sup>th</sup>. The break made it to the finish Alexey got 4<sup>th</sup> Alex got 8<sup>th</sup> in the bunch finish and I came in 16<sup>th</sup>. 12<sup>th</sup> in the sprint after getting back up to the front in the final 500 meters.

### Stage 3:

The third stage was a 9.6km ITT. It was the afternoon after stage 2 so I was interested to see how I would handle a TT after a tough road race. I was the first off on our team after my bad luck on stage 1 put me low in GC. I was motivated to do well in a TT that I though suited me well. It was a technical time trial with lots of turns and hills to break your rhythm. The start went immediately uphill into a right hander followed by another sharp right hander. I started out dancing up the hill feeling really good. Went through first right hander then got my speed up then into the second right hander I leaned in and right in the apex the rear tubular rolled off the wheel. I hit the ground instantly and slid off into a field. Stunned by what had happened I limped over to my bike to find out what had happened. We didn't have a follow car because our director was only allowed to follow 2 riders so he was going later. I put the tire back on a carefully rolled back to the start to get a spare wheel to finish out the time trial. Finally getting a wheel I just rode the rest of the course easy trying to take mental notes of details that would help our guys later. I finished with blood all over my leg and completely demoralized. Not knowing whether they would enforce the time cut I was just hoping for the best and trying to help my teammates however I could. I rode to car before Colby and Danny's time trials just trying to get the bad luck out of my head. I was given an exemption and they gave me a standard time three minutes slower than the winner and a 25 Frank Prime for the Bad luck award. I thought that was pretty funny.



#### Stage 4:

The hardest and longest of the race was the last day. Today would be 111km's long with one 10km Cat. There was a climb at 30k into the stage then one 5k climb that averaged 8% with pitches of 14% each of the three local laps. The race was strung out by the Belgian national team all the way to the base of the climb. Then at the base there was an attack of two guys that was let go. I had moved to the front and just kept going. I bridged up to the two leaders we were given a gap of about 30 seconds up the climb. It was a long but steady hill but one of the coolest climbs I have ever raced up. Near the top we were still away and I was feeling good. With about 600 meters it kicked up to 8% I sat in third on the wheel of the guy I thought was the best climber in the group. At 250 meters I saw him starting to think about sprinting for the top. I jumped him and easily opened up a gap in the sprint big enough that I had a few seconds at the line. I went down the descent alone before they caught me on the lower slopes. The three of us began to work together. Then 2 more Swiss riders bridged up to us making it three Swiss national guys in the group plus the guy on the Swiss regional team. This made it tricky because one of the Swiss riders was in the top ten on GC. Not wanting to threaten Danny's GC spot I stopped working and began to just roll through and skip pulls. This was good and bad. Good because I was able to save energy by doing just enough to where they didn't want to get rid of me but bad because the French were on the front keeping us within a minute. I knew that we probably wouldn't make it so I just milked the break for all it was worth. We got to the local laps which went up a climb which unfortunately there wasn't a KOM the first time only the last 2 times. We descended towards the finish where the intermediate sprint was. I jumped the Swiss lead out and won the intermediate sprint. I was pretty happy now to have had at least made an impact on the day. We made it to the base of the climb for the second time with a small gap of 12 seconds. We got caught just after halfway up the climb. I did my best to stay up front on the climb. I was going so far into the red and it was nuts but I knew I could get more KOM points. At 200 meters from the top I jumped in a steep section of the climb. I got a small gap and just put my head down. I got second and was passed by World Champion LeGac who was leading the competition in the final 25 meters. I knew then that I had pretty much used up everything I had left but rode at the front because there was one more intermediate sprint. I checked to make sure Danny was okay. Then tried to sprint for the intermediate sprint which the Belgians led out. There was a crash right behind them causing a gap in the final 300 meters. I got 6<sup>th</sup> in the second sprint. All I could do now was keep Danny out of trouble in the final lap for as long as I could. I made it with him till the final climb of the day. They hit the bottom full gas and I was cooked. I shouted words of encouragement at him then just rode my own pace all the way to the finish. I ended the day moving into 4<sup>th</sup> in the mountains classification, tied for 3<sup>rd</sup> in the intermediate sprints classification, 3<sup>rd</sup> in

Team GC and another Prime of 10 Franks for being a race animator. I was happy to go out with a good day. Thanks everyone who has helped me this year and all of All Sport-Team Swift supporters and sponsors.

Tyler Williams

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## April Race Report

### Racing Schedule:

- April 16 a kermesse in Geluvelde, Belgium
- April 17, a UCI 1.1 in Belgium, GP Bati-Mettallo (<http://www.vttalbatros.be/>)
- April 22-25, Ster van Zuid Limburg in Belgium (<http://stervanzuidlimburg.be/index.php?cat=2>)

### **Tyler Williams**

#### Europe Report:

This spring I was honored by the opportunity to go race with the USA National Team in Belgium. It was one of the happiest moments of my life and one of my biggest goals. I only found out one month before so everything was crazy trying to prepare for such a big experience. I flew out on Wednesday, April 13. I was flying to Chicago to meet up with a few other guys before the long trip over to Brussels. The cool thing was once I got to Chicago not only was there 2 other guys who were going on the national team with me, but a few others from the other two American teams going over also. So it was nice to have familiar faces when flying into a new country. The flight was 7 and a half hours from Chicago to Brussels and thankfully it went by pretty quickly. We arrived at 9AM Thursday. Once we arrived it was a blur. We went to get our bags, met up with the coaches and drove to the house in Izegem. After a very short tour of the house, we were off for a short spin. It was kinda crazy because once I changed into my kit I noticed I had "kankles" from the swelling on the airplane. I was honestly freaked out at first haha. We rode for about an hour and a half along the canal (which I would get very familiar with) then went back to the house. I was so tired after that ride and at dinner I could not keep my eyes open during the team meeting. I was listening then all of a sudden would catch myself dozing off. The rule is that you must stay up till at least 8 o'clock the first 3 nights in order to get adjusted to the time zone as quickly as possible. After the first day we go into the routine of wake up, breakfast, ride then to lunch, clean bikes, dinner, meeting, bed. It was pretty easy to get into the routine and by the 4<sup>th</sup> day I was adjusted pretty well. Saturday was the kermesse which I honestly

thought was the coolest atmosphere ever. It was like a criterium here except more popular with the public. The amount of people out to watch some local race was incredible. The race was pretty crazy, but three of the guys I was with had prior experience in them so it was good to have that advice. I was also happy to have my Team Swift teammate John Piasta there to share the experience with me and to stick with during the race. I jumped in a break the first lap and was shocked at the speed of the race. The intensity of the racing there was absolutely incredible! I was able to finish in the main pack of the kermesse and was happy that I was at least active in the first race. The UCI race the next day was even more shocking. The amount of money invested in Junior racing there was incredible. A lot of the Junior teams had two fully equipped wrapped cars and spare bikes. The racing at that level was more than NRC racing here. I was unfortunately hit with bad luck 10k into the race with a broken spoke then a tire blowing out in a turn. Needless to say I got acquainted with the insanity in the caravan that was just as bad or worse than the insanity in the race!

The week following the races was pretty low key with the same routine every day, but still great experience. We would ride about 2 to 3 hours per day. Then the stage race the last four day of my trip was located in the Limburg region. This was my favorite experience of the whole trip. The race was 4 stages with a prologue, time trial and three long road stages. I was particularly looking forward to the prologue as it would be my first time doing one. It started at the edge of town then went out up some rollers into a 90 degree left up one hill then down before a twisty fast climb with a bit more than 1k to go. The whole TT was less than 6km. As I was starting it started raining but nothing that was to unbearable. The effort was just incredibly hard but you knew that you had to push more and more every km in order to do a good time. I was able to cross the line with an impressive time only 10 or so seconds off of Lawson Craddock's winning time from the year before. I ended up 27<sup>th</sup> overall which exceeded my expectations and second on the team. The next stage I was riding well and Matt had gotten in the break but once we got to the circuits I double flatted and ended up at the back of the caravan. I was able to get up to the second car before the pace was wicked up on a climb and I shattered. I was able to make the time cut and start the next day though. The third stage was the hardest because of the repetitive climbing and winds that took place. It was also the longest at 132km. The race as usual started out in a full sprint. Coming into the first KOM there was a massive wreck right next to me that took out 30+ riders. Then at the base of the climb another wreck happened and spread the field out more. I was able to survive both and have good position on the climb. Once again Matt got in the break so we had a good shot at winning the day and getting him up higher on GC. The finishing circuits were very hard. There were a few climbs and narrow roads through towns which made the racing interesting. It was very cool though because I had decent legs and was attacking with the Belgian national champion and other big teams. It was good to have some luck in a road race there in order to gain

confidence. I ended up getting a top 10 in the field sprint despite massive cramps in my legs and being exhausted. It was the most fun I have ever had in a race and by far the hardest. Then last day was a complete disaster unfortunately. Matt had worked his way to second overall 2 seconds down on GC. The day started off even faster than normal and with bad crosswinds the field began splitting instantly. I was able to make it into the front split with Matt and one other teammate. The group slowed down for a bit and grew to a big pack again. Shortly after, in typical Belgian fashion, there was a huge wreck right in front of me near the front of the pack on a flat open highway that took down every person on our team. Matt went down badly and once I caught him I could see he was very bloody and was having trouble getting going. He had broken off his cleat so I gave him my shoe because we had the same pedals and got him going again. My day was done and Matt wasn't able to get back as they had hammered the front and split the race to pieces. Besides that event every other person on our team crashed out and Matt pulled out in the circuits. It was a disappointing finish to what had been a great race. But the knowledge I gained there will truly be incredible valuable.

-Tyler W