

Team Swift Europe Report
Team USA - Nieuwelingen Trip 2017, Camp B

Gianni Lamperti

Racing Age 16, Category 2

Team USA - Nieuwelingen Trip 2017, Camp B

17 th Place	Kermesse Denderkindeke
24 th Place	Kermesse Drieslinter
14 th Place	Kermesse Saint Lambrechts-Herk
1 st Place	Kermesse Mol Gompel

Tour of West Flanders:

2 nd Place	Stage 1 Kermesse
33 rd Place	Stage 2 Kermesse
4 th Place	Stage 3 Team Time Trial
14 th Place	Stage 4 Kermesse
10 th Place	General Classification

Day 1

I was super excited to ride and race in Europe for the second year running! The morning of the flight, I woke up at 5am to drive to SFO and fly out to the Netherlands. I got on my flight and there was a little delay due to mechanical issues. And then things got worse. Long story short, we were delayed almost three hours due to a seizure, refueling, headwinds, and plane traffic. I'd been sitting for too long and was already prepared to get off. Fortunately, I was able to make my transfer flight in the nick of time. My flight went well and when we got to Sittard, Michael (Garrison) and I went for a little spin since we were the only ones at house. The rest of the team arrived later in the day. Our coach Jon introduced the five of us: it was Michael, Lucas (Bourgoyne), Alastair (Pounder), Nolan (Jenkins), and I, before we headed to bed since it was late.

Day 2

We were all still getting situated and getting our bikes working the second morning. We headed out for a 2 hour ride and got to know each other. We chanced upon a really cool windmill in Germany from WW2 in which a few American Soldiers hid in until they snuck out months later to come home. We came back and went into town to look around a little bit. It was exactly as I remembered from last year with the same shops and shop owners. I ended up talking to a couple of locals before we came back and hung out before dinner at

6:30.

Day 3

On the third day, we woke up and left a little early for our ride as it was supposed to rain later on in the day. We were planning on doing a 2.5-hour ride into Valkenburg. We had a nice ride and stopped at a busy coffee shop about halfway into the ride. It ended up turning into a 3.5-hour ride, and I started feeling raindrops toward the end of the ride. As soon as we finished, the downpour started. The rest of the day we stayed inside and played a ton of ping-pong and cards. The one thing I miss about California is the weather. It's so easy to go out and enjoy the sunshine. Sittard is a great town, but it is always a matter of timing the weather.

Day 4

Today, we planned on doing an hour recovery ride and we left at 10 with the 17-18s as they were doing openers because they had the Auble Stage Race the next day. Alastair and I turned around about 40 minutes in and came back in the early afternoon. It was a wet and rainy day again, so I washed my bike when we got back and made some lunch. The two of us talked and played cards while waiting for the others to come back. When they were back, we hung out for the rest of the day before going to dinner.

Day 5

This morning, I got up and saw that it was a little misty. I threw on warmers and we rode out to a long flat road in Germany where we typically do our lead-outs. For almost an hour, we practiced lead-outs and saw all but one car during that time. We each tried being in different positions in the lead-out before openers. We stopped at the same old World War II windmill. When we got back we cleaned our bikes and loaded the van to race the next morning.

Day 6 – Kermesse Denderkindeke (17th)

Since the 17-18s were racing, I woke up to a calm vibe around the house. We made breakfast, then got bottles and made some snack food for the race later on. I packed my Clif products, which always keep me properly hydrated and fed. We got to the race, which was about two hours away as it started to pour. We signed in, pinned up, unloaded the car and got ready to go. We were running a bit late as we had hit some construction on the way, so I rode around for just 10 minutes before the start. The rain had stopped for the time being as we lined up at the back. It was fast from the gun. Corners one and two were extremely slippery and quite a few people went down on the first two as the field blazed

through the first lap. Coming into the third corner, I had made it to the front and was happy to be safe; I was hearing crash after crash all around me. Coming into the next half of the lap, it was a curvy and skinny road. There were quite a few crashes here as well with slippery, oily corners and manhole covers. Coming into the last corner, I was on Michael's wheel when he hit a manhole cover and slid out. I kept going and stayed at the front. In those situations, I find it best to keep calm and focus on the road, not on what happens around me that could potentially throw off my concentration.

I raced really hard and was very aggressive. I went with a lot of moves, but the field would not let me go for more than a few minutes. Coming into the last lap, Nolan got off the front and got about 30 seconds. It was really slippery and he went a little too fast through one of the corners and slid out. I lost position on the last couple corners and went hard to the finish and was really lucky to miss all the crashes. It was classic Belgium kermesse weather and I knew it was going to be a good, albeit painful, few weeks of racing.

Day 7 – Kermesse Drieslinter (24th)

The morning of this kermesse, it was pretty dry, although we didn't know what the weather was going to do since it was always so unpredictable. It was about a two-hour drive to the race and when we got there, we had to park in a very muddy field. We carefully walked down to inscription and signed in. At registration, I was first in line and I told the Jury that I was on Team Swift. He assumed that we all were and later on the results, we were all on Team Swift for the race. Starting the race, it was very windy and thankfully the course was not technical at all. The last 2k of the course had a slight downhill and tailwind section, making it incredibly spun out in 52-16 gearing. I felt pretty good and got to the front within a couple minutes of the start. There were a ton of moves from the start, but I learned my lesson from the previous day and was a little more conservative for the first 15 minutes or so. Nothing really happened in the first 15 minutes as everyone is too fresh and the field chased down every move. We bid our time and waited patiently, staying in the field. For me, this was one of the harder and more selective races that we had done because of the wind. It was always strung out, but we stayed near the front. At around six to go, Lucas got in a break and riders kept bridging to make it around seven riders. On the last lap, we came within 8 seconds of them and nobody jumped across. I had considered it, but I figured Lucas had a really good chance in the sprint, so I left him. He ended up second in the sprint and the rest of us were towards the front of the field. We were stoked on our first podium result, and if it were any indicator of the next few weeks, it was going to be a good trip for the US.

Day 8

The day after the race, we went for a little ride in the morning, then into Maastricht. We got lunch at a nifty underground restaurant. The restaurant was in an old train tunnel that ran underneath the city, so it had a bunch of train-related decorations. Michael and I came back a little early as the other guys went shopping and we were ready to get back for some of Rik's dinner. We went to bed early to wake up early and beat the afternoon rain.

Day 9

Today, we went for a 2.5-hour ride in the drizzle, although it was a nice riding temperature. I ended up with two flats, but luckily I had a frame pump and two tubes. We all stopped and they timed me on flat-fixing, which ended up being a great game for us. When we got back, we played poker for most of the day and watched a movie to stay out of the cold, wet weather.

Day 10

I woke up and made a good breakfast before heading out on yet another rainy ride. We rode into Valkenburg and raced up the Cauburg, a steep climb featured in the Amstel Gold Race. We were having a really good ride and we're going all out every chance we had: up the climbs, in the cobbles, and in the crosswinds. On the way back, it was raining incredibly hard and we eventually lost sight of Jon. He had the directions, so we were lost somewhere between Sittard and Valkenburg. We rode in what we knew was the general direction of Sittard and didn't panic. Eventually, we found some signs that pointed toward home. We made it after an extra hour of riding. It was without a doubt the most fun ride that we did while in Europe. We cleaned our bikes when we got back and couldn't do much since it was raining pretty hard, again.

Day 11

This morning, we went out for a rainy recovery ride and just hung out when we got back. We had a really good stretching session with Jon, and he taught us about what all the different muscles in our legs and lower back do to give us power and determine the pedal stroke. We then discussed how to ride in the caravan since we had Tour of West Flanders coming up the next week. Stage racing in Europe as a junior is awesome and has a lot more support. It's more like what you see on television with the pros, and I was super excited to do my first European stage race.

Day 12

We got up and went out for our openers ride before Genk tomorrow. We rode out to a long flat road that was going to be perfect for lead out practice. It was

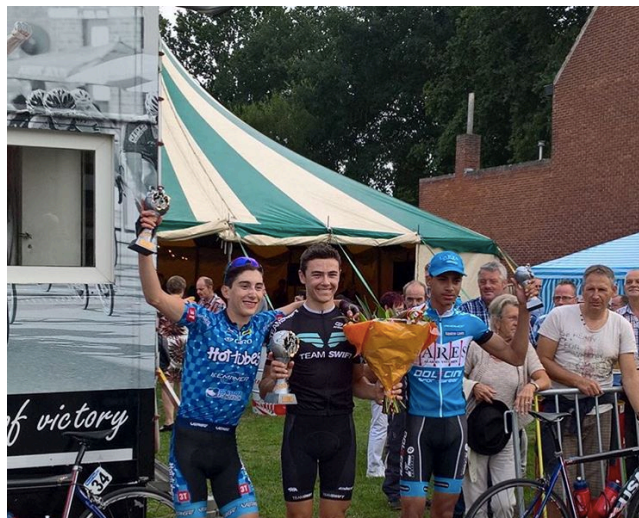
drier today with only a few showers here and there. We had an order for our lead outs and the first rider would rotate to the back the next time we did it. We did it five times and each time, we got a little smoother, a little faster, and had a little more fun. If we got to use this strategy in a race, it would look awesome and professional. With Team Swift, I've had some practice with lead-outs, so I was able to bring some of that experience with me to Europe and found that I was a natural leader and communicated effectively with everyone. We rode back early since the BinckBank tour was coming through Sittard later that day and we were eager to go out and watch a World Tour race. We rode on the course as we headed home and saw thousands of fans lining the streets for miles upon miles. Once we got back we watched it on TV for a while and then walked down to the road 30 seconds away from us to see them come by. It was a great experience as we cheered and yelled at the riders.

Day 13 – Kermesse Saint Lambrechts-Herk (14th)

The morning of the race, it was raining lightly as we drove there. We got to the race and it looked like a technical, hard course. I had not been feeling the best for the last couple days and had a little bit of a head cold. I thought I might feel better if with a hard effort to clear it out of my system. I know that's not how the body works, but the mind is a different thing and that's what I told myself to give me confidence. It started off at a pretty solid pace and I knew it was going to be a fast race. About halfway through, four riders got about 30 seconds or so. I, along with Michael and Lucas, pulled hard on the front for a lap. I went really deep and it messed with my throat for quite a few laps. I had a hard time swallowing and had to breathe through my nose. The break had too much time and was too strong for us to successfully pull it back. I attacked at 2k and got a little gap, but was only away for 700m or so. We came in and had two top 10's but it was disappointment not to get a better result, especially since we were riding well. We were too isolated and the break was too far and big to bring back. Despite that, I knew in my gut we were going to race well on Sunday.

Day 14 – Kermesse Mol-Gompel (1st)

The morning of Mol-Gompel, I felt good and my throat felt a lot better. The course was short and we did 27 laps: basically an American-style crit. I got to the front quickly and efficiently and knew I had to stay up there or else gaps would open up in front and I would be working way too hard to close them down. I covered quite a



few moves, but the course was not very selective at all, so nothing really stuck. I countered one move with another rider, and we stayed away for a few laps before coming back. Coming into two to go, I covered a couple moves, which kept me at the front. I got on Michael's wheel coming into the last lap and we were staying at the front well. Lucas got in the lead-out train and now I was super excited and ready for a Team USA win. Michael got on the front with about 800m to go and went as hard as he could to ward off any attacks. I attacked into the corners that were about 300m from the finish. I got a gap through the corners and sprinted to the line, taking the win! Lucas took second — he was on my wheel coming through the last corner. It was an awesome race and I was extremely happy to win and for us to take 1-2! I couldn't wait for West Flanders.

Day 15

This morning when I woke up, I could feel soreness through my legs. It had been a hard two days of racing, and now it was time to recover for Flanders. I had breakfast and packed up all my things before I put them in the van to head off to Izegem in Belgium. It was about a three-hour drive and there was quite a bit of traffic. When we got to the house, it was smaller than Sittard, but it was nice and homey. In contrast to Sittard, the weather was really nice but the weather predictor showed bad weather for the rest of the week, so we went out for a ride along the canal and went sightseeing while we could. When we got back to the house, we started to unload all the TT bikes for the Flanders TTT and other stuff from the van into the garage. We then hung out for a while before going to the store and getting ready to buy and make dinner. Once we got back from the store, we had fun cooking a pasta dinner and then had a team meeting about the Flanders course we were going to ride the next morning.

Day 16

The next morning, we woke up and it was raining hard. We made breakfast, but decided to wait to ride. It was supposed to clear up later in the day. We decided that today would be a good day to go to the Museum in Flanders. It was a unique experience and we saw really cool bikes and old team cars from way back in the day. It was hard to read anything that had to do with the history of the sport as it was all in Dutch, but we could make out names like Eddy Merckx. We then got some good food at a little restaurant and headed back to the house in Izegem to go for our ride. Once we got on the bikes around two, it had stopped raining. We rode to the stage 1 course on road bikes and rode a few laps. This was the same course as the TTT course, but it had a few extra corners at the end of the lap. It was a good course for us since it was technical and perfect for either a break or a lead out. I was especially excited that the course was short and punchy which would suit well for both races: the Kermesse and TTT. We

rode back to the house and just as we did, the sky opened up with thunder, lightning, and began dumping rain.

Day 17

Today when we woke up, it was raining really hard so we decided to wait once again to go for our ride. We hopped on the trainers at 10 and spun for 30 minutes or so, just to get our blood moving and legs spun out. We hung out and I finished off some online homework (I was, after all, missing a week of school) for the rest of the day before heading out to ride around 1. We drove to the stage two course and rode it. It turned out to be a great course for the team with a long uphill in it that led to the finish line. Then we drove to the stage three course since it was only a few miles away from the other course. Like stage two, it had a hill in that led to the finish as well. I was confident in all of the courses and could not wait to start racing.

Day 18

Today was the last day before we got to race and it was raining yet again. I really enjoy racing in the rain because it's more mental than physical. Whoever can keep calm, handle their bikes, and ride through the cold would come out on top, so I was happy. We decided to ride on the trainers so we didn't start the race with wet shoes and kits. We had quite a few meetings and discussed everything that we would possibly need to know for the next day. We had a pre-race dinner discussion from Robert and went to bed early.



Day 19 – Tour of West Flanders Kermesse (2nd)

Today was race day! I got up in the morning and made some breakfast before hopping on the trainer. We decided to spin for a little bit as we didn't race until 3. Once we hopped off, I made sure all my stuff was packed up and ready to go. We left and got to the race a bit early as Jon had to go to a directors meeting. We pinned our numbers, rode a lap, rolled out, and then got ready to race. There was also a team presentation to introduce all of the riders. We lined up around the middle of the pack: about 60 riders back, to show how big the field

was.

The race was off. I made it to the front pretty fast as I went up the left side during the neutral section. It was fast almost instantly after the neutral and people started attacking left and right. I noticed instantly that you had to be constantly moving up or else you were moving backwards. I got in a sizeable break about 7 laps in and we stayed off through the headwind and got caught around the finish later in the lap. I slotted back into the field and it was really hard for a few laps: I had just gone really deep in that break. There was a crash with two to go and I was right next to it. I made it past, luckily, and kept my composure. The field was split down to 20 people or so at this point. It was coming into the headwind and the people on the front of the lead group slowed, so we got caught by a lot of people. It was full gas from there on out as a kid attacked coming into the first corner. Michael and I were a little far back at this point and I told him I was with him. He took me to the front through the crosswind and when we got there before the headwind, the solo rider was in sight. I rolled off the front into the headwind and as soon as I had a gap I half-heartedly hit it. My thinking was that at this pace, I would catch the rider, and could out-sprint him. If I got caught, I could still sprint in the field. I was lucky, because two riders came past me who were bridging and I hopped on them. Coming around the last corner, I took my last turn pulling and went to the back. The rider who was third wheel jumped, so I jumped around the rider in front of me and immediately tried to come around but it was too late. I tried a bike throw, but to no avail. I knew I should have jumped earlier and been the first to go, but nevertheless I was ecstatic about my result.



Day 20 – Tour of West Flanders Kermesse (33rd)
Team Time Trial (4th)

Today was a double day with a Kermesse in the afternoon and a TTT in the evening.

Stage 2:

At the start of Stage 2, I slotted my way towards the front and as we had planned, I was in the 3rd or 4th row. I knew right away that once again, I was going to have to be constantly moving up if I had any chance at all. For the first

few laps, it was pretty sketchy and hard on the skinny roads, and I knew how important it was to be at the front for that part. I would say that this was the hardest stage for me to stay at the front, so I would slowly drift back throughout a lap and move up before the base of the finishing climb. I was toward the front going over the top, but I realized that the short descent after the finish was much harder to keep that position.

At 3 laps to go, two riders got up the road and got about 40 seconds. Everyone slowed up after a hard section and just before the crosswind; I attacked, hoping that one or two riders would come with me. I saw Michael close to me. I really wanted him to come with me, but it was a now or never situation. I got a gap by myself and pulled about 25 seconds on the field and nearly made contact with the two lead riders. It was just too windy and I couldn't make it all the way. The field caught me and it slowed up. Nobody did anything because they thought we would catch the two riders for sure. On the final lap there was an attack about 3k out and Nolan got in it. He made it to the line for 5th and the rest of us finished spread out in the field.

Stage 3:

We got changed and headed to the TTT course since we thought we were in a time crunch. We realized we still had a little over three hours until we raced upon arrived. We ate some food and re-pinned numbers on the backs of our jerseys. We got on the trainers and did a little warm up before heading to the start. At the start, I was first to go off and ramped it up to speed for a minute. I dipped back to last wheel and before I knew it we were at the first turn. Alastair was coming into the corner from the inside and Lucas went toward the outside, making us go a lot faster through the corner. I don't think Alastair thought we would be coming by so fast and when he finally got up to speed, we had a gap on him. It was late to be waiting for him, so we kept going. I was second wheel and Michael was in front of me and had just gone really hard through the crosswind. It was hard for me to come around him, but I did and kept our pace high. The key to TTT's is the short turns. With shorter turns, everyone is constantly accelerating and it's easy to maintain a higher pace instead of one person pulling for minutes and dropping speed.

As we came into the next corner, once again, Michael was on the front and we gapped the other two off a little through the corner, which made it hard for them to close the gaps. We kept it smooth again until the next section, which was a series of corners where we once again gapped off the other two. By this time they were pretty tired from closing gaps, and Michael and I were driving it hard on the front. We pushed it hard through the finish and lost by 9 seconds. I feel if we were a little more organized, we would have gotten it, but it was a great result with how little practice we had over the past couple of weeks. I could name every place where we could have made up a few seconds, but it was

honestly one of my favorite stages and I was happy with how the day had gone.

Day 21 – Tour of West Flanders Kermesse (14th)

General Classification – 10th Overall

Starting the last stage, I was really excited because I had a good feeling and was extremely confident with how strong I was riding compared to everyone else in the field. I had two goals in mind at the start. First, secure my top 10 in GC or move up to top 5 and secondly, race extremely aggressive. Aggressive racing is way more fun, and besides, it was the last day to learn from racing in Europe. I wanted to try as hard as I could and even if I didn't get a result, I could still come out of the race and say to myself, "Gianni, you raced as hard as you could have and gave it your all."

I started out toward the front almost instantly. There was only one split second in the race where I thought I had to move up, so I did. I was there for everything. I was aggressive, at the front, and not going to let my GC position fall. At about five laps to go, Alastair got in a move with about six really strong riders including the yellow jersey. I knew that second in GC who was only two seconds back was not in it and the move was for sure coming back. I was right and a few minutes later, it came back while second place's team chased it back. Coming into the final lap, there was a rider that was solo up the road, but I figured we would catch him on the last climb. Coming into the last corner, it slowed down and I was on the outside, so I knew if I didn't jump, I was going to get swarmed right away. I jumped and just went as hard as I could all the way. I got 14th and was a little bummed that I set myself up in a less-than-ideal position coming into the final hill, but I was super excited that I got top 10 in GC and a great result on the last day, and a superb result the on first day. It was by far the best and most fun four days of racing I ever had in my life. It was an amazing three weeks and I couldn't be more thankful for the opportunity that I was given. Thank you to Billy Innes, Coach Jon Heidemann, and of course my parents, Coach Laura, and the Team Swift sponsors!

-Gianni