

## First BIG day in France, and it was a doozy!

Got to admit, last night, I was wondering if I could pull things off today. I felt pretty bad from the travel, worse than normal. And it was supposed to be HOT, and while I generally do better with hot than cold, there are limits, and one of the meds I take to manage my mild bone marrow cancer thing does cause me to sweat more than I used to. And my system was reacting badly to too much airplane food, causing my, er, roids to flare up (which never causes me pain but sometimes, as was the case this time, an annoying amount of blood while getting rid of that airplane food).

But this morning, all tha stuff went away. Kevin and I got out on the road and, truthfully, I felt great. On the 30 mile ride to the base of the big climb, I'd say I even felt better than Kevin, seeing some pretty good (for me) power numbers.

The climb? It was brutal, no two ways about it. I've been up the Columbier from another one of its 4 approaches, and that ride, too, was pretty tough. But today the 'tour chose the toughest side to ride, and today, unlike any other major climb on the 'tour I've done, for some reason, there were no places to get food and drink between bottom and top. And I live for that ice cold coke and orangina and baguette sandwich that wasn't there. I didn't run out of water and most of the climb wasn't too hot, but by the time we got to the top, and found the only "buvette" in town, with lines over half an hour to get food, I was pretty wasted. Thankfully I was able to have some guys save me a place in line while I detoured to the much shorter line for drinks, and quickly downs a bottle of water and another bottle of orangina. The effect was close to immediate; within 10 minutes I actually felt normal again.

For tomorrow's stage, I'm going to bite the bullet and bring whatever we might need up the hill. More weight, but you do what you gotta do.

Pictures? Haven't had a chance to look at them yet. We were about 1.5k before the finish, before Pogacar had attacked and made up a bit more time on Jonas. But what we did get will likely show the mental and physical state of each rider.

The train ride back was pretty crazy; way too many bikes trying to get onto already-crowded trains. I had to stand pretty much the whole way back. Two trains, actually, and on the second train, it was probably a brother and sister, somewhere between 10 & 12, who were either playing tag or hide & seek and requiring that Kevin had to constantly move his bike so they could get through. At the Pescadero Bakery, they have a sign that says misbehaving kids will be sent home after being given extra strong coffee and a free kitten. Might suggest that for these kids.