

Bad day? Could be worse!



The Orica team bus ran into the finish-line structure at the Tour de France today, destroying its air conditioning system and causing a near-disaster for the finish of the race.

There are days when you wish you didn't get out of bed. Today was one of those days at the Tour de France, when Team Orica's bus snagged the finish-line banner (not really a banner but a substantial piece of hardware) driving through the course just 25 minutes ahead of the racing riders.

Was the structure set too low? Should the bus have been turned off the course beforehand? Why was it in that position so close to the time the riders would be coming across the line? A whole lot of questions. Looking at the TV coverage, the Caravan, the colorful collection of advertising vehicles that precedes the race, came through immediately beforehand, but the time schedule says they should have come through an hour and a half earlier. Sounds like things were not going as planned!

The result of all of the confusion was an initial decision to finish the race 3 kilometers earlier on the course, because they couldn't extract the bus from the structure, but eventually they did get it moved, within minutes of the riders coming through. The conflicting messages given to the riders caused yet more confusion, which led to a number of crashes that likely wouldn't have otherwise happened. The three favorites for winning today's stage, Cavendish, Greipel and Sagan all went down in crashes in the final kilometers of the race. Not a great way to start, but not unusual either; the first week is often a crash-a-thon due to nervousness and Darwin working to thin the herd. It was interesting seeing how many riders crossed themselves (the Catholic ritual) as the rode over the line, relieved to have come through in one piece. Never noticed that before.