

LAISSAC-SÉVÉRAC L'ÉGLISE

578 m



LE PUY-EN-VELAY

629 m



Col de Peyra Taillade

1 190 m - km 158 (8,3 km à 7,4%)

1 057 m Le Bouchet

km 156

955 m SAINT-BÉRAIN

km 155

780 m Vergues - km 153



14%

574 m PRADES - Pied de col - km 149,5

1 100 m

1 000 m

900 m

800 m

700 m

600 m

500 m

Pourcentage moyen par kilomètre

6

6,8

6,2

6

9,8

12,1

4,7

7

8

1

2

3

4

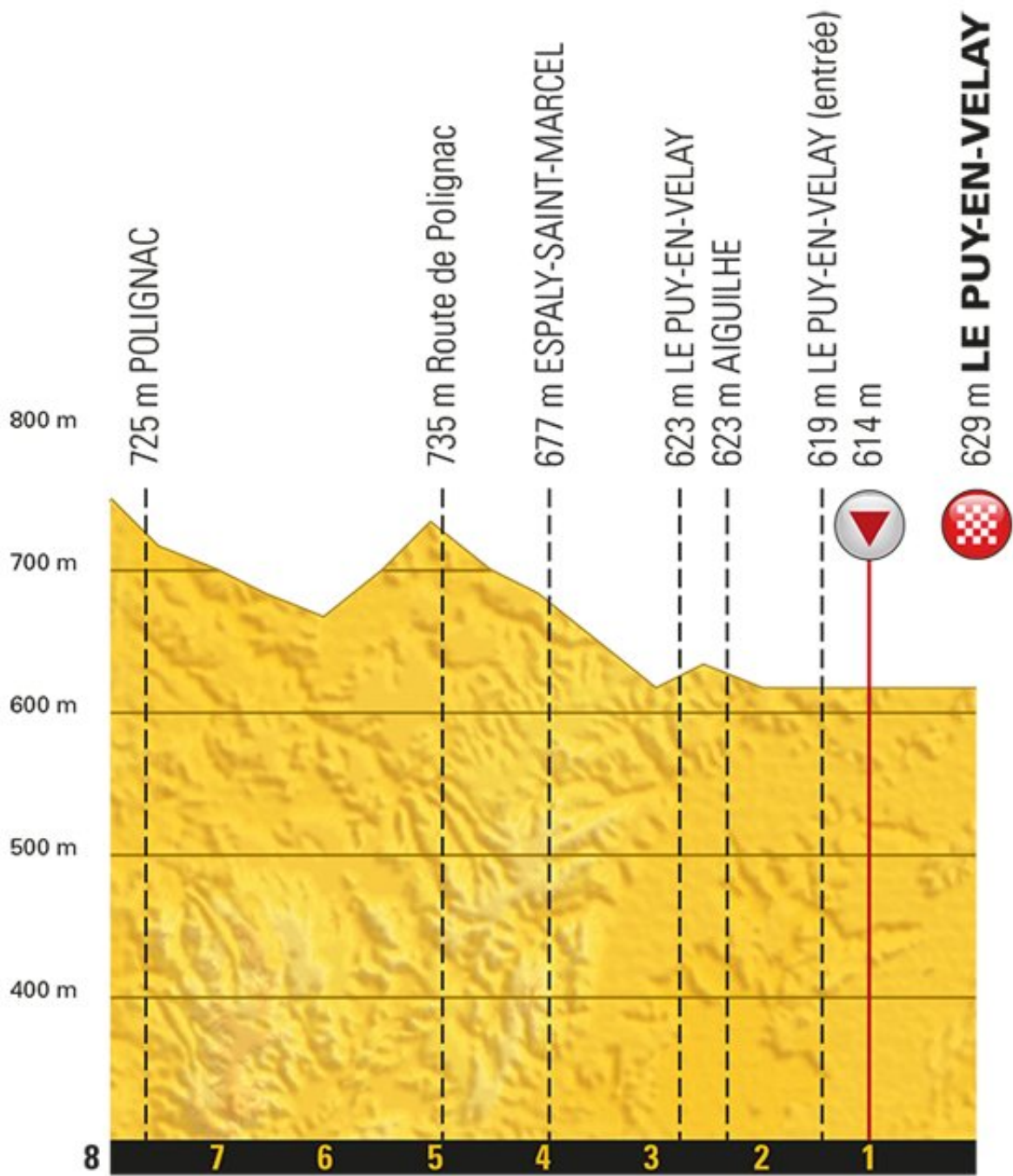
5

6

7

8

7,5



"As Americans, many of us are attuned to teams, rather than individual cyclists. Cycling has very few long term teams, Quickstep comes to mind, Francaise de Jeux, where have all the old teams gone?"

I jotted this thought just after the stage one TTT, which kicked off the Tour in Dusseldorf a few weeks ago. Where have all the old teams gone?

On the day of that time trial there was a road leading down to the start house, with two or three team busses for each team set up on both sides of this road. It was possible to stand and watch the cyclists as they were getting ready, as well as the marvelous work of the mechanics, etc., who were preparing each cycle for a cyclist. Another through I wrote was this:

" Without the support staff, the soigneurs, the mechanics, there is not team. They really keep everything moving, and make sure the cyclists are where they are supposed to be with cycles in the right condition, God bless them. I was close to a couple of mechanics during the time trial, as their guy was in line, presumably already on a bike, and there were about five cars ahead of them. They jumped out of the team car, and began fiddling with one bike and then with a second bike, and then pulling out a measuring tape and measuring things. A young German asked me why they were doing that. I said that these guys were very well attuned to UCI regulations, but also

to the preferences and conditions that each cyclist needed to flourish. They both went ahead toward the start house, with both bikes, and their cyclist had already gone forward with a third bike. I don't know what eventually happened, but two of the bikes would have had to go back on the roof rack for emergency use..."

On that day there were a few spectators standing and watching at each team bus, there is lots of interesting activity (a Grammar Girl podcast I listened to today on the drive back reminded me not to engage in comma splicing, but what are you going to do). Near the Sky Team bus, though, there were dozens of people crammed into the space on constant watch, and they were blocking the sidewalk. There was NO activity, unbelievably so, at the Sky Team bus, no one out and around, doing anything. The scene, many spectators, no activity, called to mind people standing in a town square, watching for the glockenspiel, waiting for any activity, no matter how insignificant. That is team loyalty, though, which is seldom seen in cycling.

At the airport I began to talk to an Englishman who had on a Bora-Hansgrohe shirt. I asked, "I thought all you English HAD to cheer for SKY. Will they leave you back in the country?" He said he worked for a company which worked with Hansgrohe, and his trip was paid for, but he was, at heart a SKY fan. Bora

and Hansgrohe apparently brought lots of workers to Dusseldorf, though. They could be seen on touring busses all over the city.

But the old teams, where are they? Have they gone the way of the St. Louis Browns, and the Washington Senators?

An article in the Gazzetto dello Sport in Spring pointed out that, this year, there are no teams in the pro peloton this year sponsored by Italians. They hastened to remind us that there were many Italian cyclists, but no Italian teams. In Dusseldorf I ran into a few Italian teams, not officially, their sponsorship had been bought up by companies from other countries, so although they had been Italian, and virtually all of the support staff and most of the cyclists were Italian, there are no Italian teams.

In most sports, fans are fans of teams, and they cheer on their team, and the players who, that year, happen to be playing for them. Teams are long-lasting, as they are named for places, often, or are owned or sponsored by cities or countries. You may appreciate a player who has moved onto another team, you won't cheer for him, though. I asked an Italian, a great soccer fan (of Lazio), something about the Italian National Team, for which several of the Lazio players play. He said that he did not "tiffare" the National Team, meaning he was not a fan of the national team, so he knew nothing about them.

In cycling the teams are named for their sponsors, who are not bound to support them long term. So, I have known people who were fans of one team or another, but that can really only last, it seems for a year or three. Standouts in cycling do rely on the strength of their teams, certainly, and a give squad will pull together. The cyclists, however, do not feel team loyalty from year to year, and so our favorite cyclists may move every year or two in a pursuit of a more profitable offer. The managers who form the teams, and attract sponsors, know how this is all done, and they assemble the team, bring with them, presumably, their crack mechanics, etc. to give the framework.

In many ways, Fantasy Cycling fits in this fluid sport. Unlike any other sport, perhaps, it is easy to pick cyclists from a variety of teams, because they become famous on their own. So, in that world, the team you assemble is just as real as Jonathan Vaughters'. You can even choose, as your team jersey, one of literally dozens of jerseys of times past. Where have all the old teams gone? Whither O.N.C.E., Seven Eleven, Fassa Bortolo or Saeco?

Enjoy the Tour

Enjoy the day!

DANGER

**CRAZY
BASTARDS**

Étape 15 : Laissac-Sevérac l'Église • Le Puy-en-Velay

Classement général provisoire

| | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|------------------|---|
| 1 | Christopher Froome |  SKY | 64h40'21" |  |
| 2 | Fabio Aru |  AST | + 18" | |
| 3 | Romain Bardet |  ALM | + 23" | |