

Alpe d'huez Short Course.

Silence in the tent. It's the start of another great day in the Alps. Across the valley, the sun is catching the cliffs and it will be on the tent in about 30 minutes. The calm of the campsite is shattered as Phil lets go with a couple of fly-sheet rippers.

Situation normal, and soon enough a brew is delivered. Race day!

Wondering if I've done too much riding yesterday, reminding myself that it's not a big race. However, I am about to fulfil an ambition of doing this race, about which I have heard so much.

In transition, after a pleasant morning faffing about with kit, it is the usual scene—getting there far too early, pacing around worrying about what you haven't forgotten, putting wetsuit on on a hot day with 30 minutes to go.

It's actually coming on to rain as I catch up with Johnny and we enter the lake. That first dip under with your head into cold water, and then we're waiting for the off...

Lots of people worry about the swim start, and they are right. It's an alien place, everyone taking on everyone else, and today it's a bit rough. Trying to be the calm man when all around are thrashing about, I get into a rhythm and realise I am having a good swim. Exchange punches with some foreign Johnny (or so I'd like to think) at the first turn, and then turn for home. My sighting is excellent for once and I swim in a straight line to the finish. Up the ramp and then into T1.

The rain has made the road greasy and the first mile is taken very easily. But when I'm through the village, I'm on the bars and feel great. I tell myself to slow down, as there's the slight matter of Alpe d'Huez to come, but I am enjoying the road surface too much. A bunch comes past, all riding together. "Drafting! Piss off, Cheats!" I cry. They will all finish in front of me. But I won't have cheated like them.

All too soon the foot of the Alpe approaches. Supporters are lining the road, screaming at everyone. Brilliant! Allez Allez! I hit the first slope, which is often called the Ramp. Like the bottom of Cross stone Road. Images of Lance and Beltran digging in and smashing the leading group within 300 yards. It's not quite like that for me. But I do feel great, and manage the bottom section in control of my head, unlike some around me who have just gone off too hard.

The rest of the climb is a delight, because I am saving it all for the run, so I can keep backing off if I need to. Not a Bike Race.

Transition is quick and I bang a gel down and run off, determined to pace myself. I can't. and I keep having to check my stride, at least until the turn around. There's a bit of a climb, which I deal with by counting in tens to the rhythm of my feet.

Just about half a mile to go, and I go over on my ankle. The crowd cheer me on, and I can't stop. Race into finish. Done.

On holiday in the Alps with my friends and competing.

Yes, more please...

Simon Anderton

