



## La Charly Gaul -- Sunday 07<sup>th</sup> September 2008

Venue – Echternach, Luxembourg

Web Site – [La Charly Gaul](#) (Excellent)

Distance – 160k

Sunday 07<sup>th</sup> September 2008

Time – 6.12

Speed Av – 25.9kph

Position – 79<sup>th</sup> in Cat (282 Entries)

Thursday, 04 September 2008:

Well it's raining here, there's a shock! And windy, again.....this ferry trip should be interesting☺. This time I'm travelling with Mr & Mrs TW, staying overnite in St Malo (usual place) with a 'serious shop' (next door, Cora) in the morning (Fri 05<sup>th</sup>).

Condor again, thankfully as HD has just gone 'boots up' leaving the odd few people rather 'upset!' 1845hrs (local time) sailing (1745 check-in) in by 2145hrs (local time), check into hotel and chill with a beer me thinks (?). After the shop (Fri 05<sup>th</sup>) we intend on driving and staying overnite in Reims, well saves on a 'huge' drive (7.45hrs by Tom Tom) to Luxembourg. Hopefully this time hassle free hotels (!?).

Printed out a load of stuff from the event Web Site (very good) all the course profile/alt/K's/hill ratings, seems like a very hard 'end of season ride'. 11 climbs, longest 8k (!! shortest 1.8k various %'s of difficulty. I don't like hills, so this is a very good learning curve for me. Pre race thoughts, again must use my head, ride to get to the end (learning from 2wks ago) and think(!!).

Check in, last through the 'gate' to the boat. But 1<sup>st</sup> on (!!), Mr & Mrs TW suggest sitting together, 1<sup>st</sup> up to the 'club' grabs the seat(s). I'm up 1<sup>st</sup> seat(s) sorted, and then it happened 'Is this seat taken?' an enquiring lady asked (fitted the bill and ticked all the boxes!), without really thinking I answered 'yes'..... *Whata mistaka to maka!!* .....the error of my ways was pointed out to Mrs W as she arrived, she laughed (!) *'I have biscuits, you could offer to share them'* was the helpful comment.

Skippers on the 'radio', strong winds but no swell, should be OK then. It's the swell that 'gets' people. A little light discussion on the course (Sunday) takes place, the folder proves useful. Arrive St Malo right on time, customs next, but no, empty straight through and off to the Hotel, via the motorway(!), doh(!) so that makes for a 'later T', never mind.

Moules and Frites for me and of course a glass of red (well we are in France). Chill time before shopping and moving on tomorrow. Various discussions were held over the dinner table, with the highlight being – alone @ the age of 83, travelling to a far off country and enjoying one's self, albeit with hairy knuckles possibility of an adam's apple (well your sight does go at a certain age) but does iron a lovely shirt(!) – This I feel is best left at the dinner table (no names no pact drill!).

So after a good nites sleep and a little light breakfast its hypermarket time – Pasta/Wine/Condiments/etc – nicely 'stuffed' into the rear of the van. Couldn't get out on the bikes before breakfast, rain (!) and boy did it rain later! The run up to Luxembourg (left St Malo around midday) is to be 'interrupted' by a stop in Reims (5.48 drive) makes life a bit easier, but it's involve a run around Paris! On the way up it absolutely pissed down!

The run up to wherever we go normally involves a 'pit stop' or two with today no exception. This one was needed as the rain hammered down to the extent of not being able to see where you were going. A bite to eat (linguini was on the menu, nice) me? A Panini and coffee. After the break and with a 'clean' van we continue, joy of joy's Paris in the rush hour!



As the image suggests it was like the [Battle of Britain](#) but in France... *'TW's bought one in the linguini....RD's bought one in the bread basket and gone down in the Seine'* ...bikes and car's everywhere, thank god for Sat Nav! Finally arrive in Reims around 1830, quick shower and more food! I'm in the Ibis, TW in the [Novotel](#) next door (posh one! Get coloured pillows! OOOooo!) So its dinner at yours then!

A very pleasant meal was enjoyed by all. Various discussions took place (again!) Mensa would have been proud (or was that 'densa'?). Anyway head down time, little drive in the morning (5.45'ish) after breakfast. The run back from Luxembourg makes for interesting breakfast conversation, now if we stay both nites in Luxembourg, it'll make for a pretty early start (for me, TW on later boat!) to make the boat back (1715hrs) on Monday. I think I might 'make a hole in it' on Sunday after the race, in other words head back here (Reims), that way it'll give me time to chill and enjoy Sunday nite + a leisurely breakfast. TW agrees and is quite happy to venture back here as well. OK sorted, pay the bill lets go, we'll book up from Luxembourg (after all you never know, it might be OK).

Fairly simple to find no drama's on the way up (apart from a 'whiteout screen' on TW's SatNav...again!). Check in is from 1600 (1500 now) time for lunch then! It's a nice little town, cobbled centre area, compact loads of character (apart from 1 building! Shaped like a block, greyscale in colour, weird windows and situated in between 2 character buildings! Who says Jersey's influence doesn't stretch this far!!) Find a nice little bar, x 2 Lasagne x 1 Chicken Sandwich x 1 T x 1 Coffee (Capo), sorted and nice, Ok sort out the registration, again totally painless, unless you haven't pre-registered (like me! Doh!) But hey ho, filled in a bit of paperwork cross a palm with Euro's and away we go. Quick look at the number entered and course profile, short and sharp climbs (apart from the 8k one!) with quick descends and long'ish recovery in between. Now then what next? T and Cake is the suggestion. Not really worked out the 'common' language yet, there seems to be a fair

'splattering' of German/Belgium/Swiss/Luxembourg 'sightseers', although all with the common factor of age (not on their side) so we should fit in well then(!) hence T and Cake (so many cake shops to choice from) picked one, very nice. Eat inside, not the warmest of days, comfortable I think is the word, nice biking weather. A little stroll after, just to see the 'main' part of the town, compact, smart with somehow a 'Mussels Festival' (??) taking place, and the nearest 'farm' is (??) never got to the bottom of that little question.

So 'visiting' done. Lets go, getting hungry (!!). Plot the route to the hotel (Luxembourg Airport) 30mins away. Easy route, bloody big area (empty) around the airport (something in the air me thinks, room for expansion, Finance block 1 minute away from the Airport!!). Pull into car park and we are met with a 'few' 4 legged 'items' namely dogs! This should be good. A bloody dog show is in town! Long tall short (none fat!) different styles of hair doo (and that's just the owners!!!). Ok 1<sup>st</sup> one that barks in the middle of the night gets it! (dog that is!)

Booked in (must sort out tomorrows accommodation, via laptop and phone) dinner at 1930hrs, going to be busy in the dining room (fortunately no dogs allowed, which didn't sit too well with a couple of Spanish ladies) It was a nice meal, just what the doctors ordered. Well blow me. Look at the state of that dog. It's in a basket (no idea of breed) with hair curlers, pyjamas and god knows what else under the blanket. Pampered? Surely not! After all we do look after our bikes don't we? Must be the same I suppose.

Ok head down time, watch a bit of footy (world cup qualifiers) then up for 0645hrs (breakfast) to leave by 0730 and get to the start by 0800 to chill. Pre race weather forecast was for cloud and drizzle, temp around 15c, wind (well there's always going to be wind in the neck of the woods). We shall see.

Up at 0645, Ok night's sleep (no barking dogs!) time for breakfast. Bit cloudy out there, and windy. It's meant to be Ok. Not that we can actually do anything about it. 1<sup>st</sup> in the breakfast room, nice. Coffee 1<sup>st</sup>, small cooked English, toast and filled rolls for the ride (learnt that one from TW last time). TW appears and the weathers the main subject. What to wear? I think we will wait and see what the 'locals' are wearing, always a good guide.

Bill paid, bags packed and off we pop. Lots of little water trails outside! There's a surprise, all the little darlings have stretched their.....legs (of course!) 30mins drive to start line. Parking simple, straight in 400m from start line. Unpack the bike, look around for some clothing hints. Seems like 'normal' gear. No great 'rain wear' being worn. In that case, TW's wearing  $\frac{3}{4}$ 's me I think arm warmers and knees (after all you can remove those if it gets to warm). Dianne's going to do a little circuit out on the roads (60mins) then off to the cake shop no doubt!

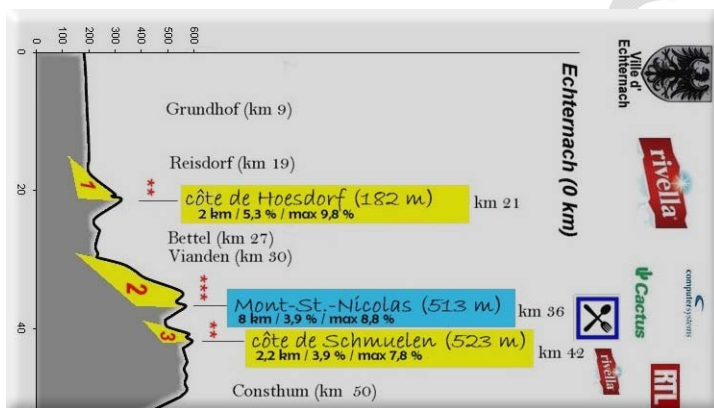


Roll down to the start line (left image), some 200 guys are already there. Sit just back from the line on the edge, ready to push in (160k to do sure no one will mind a bit of push and shove, gracefully done of course!). All shapes and sizes line up, various ages young and old. It's what cycle sportives are all about. Short chat about the race (tactics) we know the first 20k is flat and therefore going to be fast. So keep out of trouble and await the first climb of

the day. Albeit it will be a bit of a 'mess' at the base, don't think anyone will get dropped. 0900 on the dot and away we go. Push in and its Ok, TW gets ahead, but my plans are not to get 'sucked in' to a mad pace and get blown out! Out of town we go, right hand turn very early and straight on. Lead cars and police outriders (the course marshal's leave the junctions 1hr after the lead riders go through).

The pace is warm as the numbers on the right show. It becomes a 'stop start' affair. Guys are not looking forward whilst riding, they just look at the wheel right in front. By the time that wheel slows the guy behind is just jamming on the anchors. Lessons to be learnt is to look ahead, well ahead, this gives you a clue to what's going to happen next. With my race plan not to get involved, I drop back and give myself some room. A little sacrifice but worth it me thinks. A gap (bike length) appears in front of me, nice, but a quick look behind and I notice that guys are dropping back, not by much but enough to know that my 'back' is clear. Ok 1<sup>st</sup> climb (Cote de Hogsdorf) approaching (know that 'cause I looked at my mileage) and everything 'grinds' to a halt (?) small entrance to the hill? Found out later that a couple of guys were caught out by the climb and decided to 'drop down a ring' at the last moment and yes you've guessed it 'slipped up'.

Duration	35 mins
Work	649 Kj
Distance	20Km
Power	806max 307av
Speed	51.4mx 35.7av



2k @ 5% is not that bad, a little leg stretcher albeit with everyone still 'around and about'. Work my way through a few guys in preparation for the descent. The roads are not the greatest. Bumpy and coarse with over hanging trees making the downhill bit 'tricky' with caution needed. Then it happened, the heavens started to open. At the start it was overcast with

a light wind (manageable) in fact I thought I was wearing too much. I was looking at removing some gear. Ok it's not a 'cold rain' nor was it a 'cold wind' so if we keep going we should be ok. Yes I've got no waterproof gear on and the rain will 'sink in' but hopefully the rain will stop at some point (it got that bad that I took my glasses off!! No bloody windscreen wipers!!).

Anyway down the other side and onwards to the next climb. Mont-St-Nicolas at 8k in length, 512alt and a 3.9%av the longest climb of the day (I must confess at this time I found this climb good and I really didn't think it was 8k). Pulling myself up I found TW about halfway up, which was good. We can now work together for the rest of the race (or so I thought so!!) Anyway we reach the top, no drama's, drop down and slide along towards the next 'bump'. The roads are narrow little bit technical and not fast. Again I'm using my head caution first, long way to go, not going to lose too much by slipping off the back around the 'technical bits'. TW disappears off the front seems he's trying to get away (small group ahead) but with a headwind he's got to make it or its wasted effort. Again I'll let him go (catch him on the climbs).

**Pride before a fall - Who said that? - See [here](#) - Wrong!! .....**



Reach the 3<sup>rd</sup> climb – Cote de Schmuellen 2.2k 3.9%av – just a short knock, no sign of TW. No surprise there really only a short and sharp climb. Getting over the top and dropping down we are diverted around what could only be described as a ‘canal edge’ with a stream. Picture it if you can, a snaking 2m wide track running for about 1k. It’s damp, muddy and very slippery. God knows why we were sent down this way. I’m on my own, moved away from the guys I was with (maybe they knew something I didn’t). I round a couple

of corners, very dodgy, a flashing light indicating what (?) is at two of the corners. I now know what! I make the first one, just and then it happened BANG! I hit the deck with no warning, the bike shoots off west bound and heading straight for the stream. And this stream has no fencing around it. The bike just stops short! I clamber back up, backside hurting like a ‘goodie’ it took the full impact no softening of the fall! Clothes ripped tried to get going again....BANG....again, it’s like ice down here, can’t get any grip. It’s one of those things, if you stayed upright you got through, if you didn’t boy it’s hard to get going again. A couple of others go through, just. A passing you ok? Was asked. Pride =’s an answer of yes! But it hurt physically and mentally!

I eventually get going again, everything feels wrong. I’m ‘twitching’ all over the place, my confidence has gone totally! Boy this is going to be a long and painful day. Its only 60k into the course. Another 100k still to go - with no shortcut to get home! The rain is still coming down and I’m now getting cold, with no confidence I am going to suffer!

The Cote de Konerhaff is taken so carefully and the 2nd feed stop is reached. TW’s there waiting, he notices the ‘damage’. He’s been there for at least 10mins. I urge him to go on, my confidence has gone I’m going to ‘limp’ home (if you can limp for 100k!!). He says no ‘we can go as slow as you want, descend at your speed’ (quicker walking!). Hey ho and away we go. Don’t think TW knew how bad my confidence was! Now he was getting cold and uncomfortable. Told Ya!

Up down and around we go TW goes off ahead I’m still ‘naff’ and hurting (when your back goes it goes, there might be nothing wrong with it but it hurts) 105k is the next feed station. Reunited with TW who’s had time for a 4 course meal but the time I get there. Must eat something, keeps the cold out. The ‘broom wagon’ appears at the feed, this would normally spur me on (get rid of some anger) but not this time.

It’s a shame really because on reflection the course had potential. The climbs were not hard (compared with the Eddy Mercx) and the run between climbs was good and rapid. All pointing to a fast time. I think next year I’ll be back, along with the Mercx!

The ultimate sin being ‘placed’ into the ‘broom wagon’. That’s not going to happen! Come on, another bloody descend only 4 climbs and 55k to go. It’s still going to be hard work. Think about the hotel and food after, you know not even that worked, why? Well because you only look forward to something like that when you’ve raced your ‘best’ and put in hard work, a form of satisfaction really. Now I know that’s not going to happen here, yes finishing will be an achievement (mentally and physically) but strangely my mind ‘goes forward’ and ‘how do I get over the crash?’ It might sound a little daft now but with my confidence this low ‘will I recover?’ Only time will tell on that one.

Once your front wheel goes your history, the back one you can 'salvage' but now every time you turn the wheel you think it's going to go from under you! This happened a couple of times and boy it's not nice. You totally freeze. You can't turn the wheel at all. The condition of the roads doesn't help, wet and with leaves all over the place. Over dramatic? Got to get back on the horse after you fall off! My plan after? Where's the worst bit of road (safe area that mirrors the conditions) in Jersey? The cycle track at Les Quennevais of course always slippery. That's where I'm heading on my return home (if things don't improve).



Tip toe over and down and head home, the last 3 climbs are close together. Time ticks by 1 last push and joy of joy's a bloody photographer is ½ way up the climb. Smile as if you're enjoying it. Well he's none the wiser. Top to finish line is 9k (2k down and the rest flat) TW goes off I think I can manage this bit, well only just, head down and get home nearly missed the turning. Left hander along a canal path, oh joy of joys, why? Never mind just do it. Finish line ahead over some cobbles (dry!) and there's TW and Dianne *'Did you*

*enjoy that?'* enquired Dianne (not noticing the 'damage' until TW pointed it out) Lovely I replied wonderful day (albeit a big learning curve, I wish I'd stop learning!!).

Not really a lot to do here apart from hobble back to the van and assess the 'mess'. Not even in the mood for cake! Strip off all the clothing (couple of bits written off) start to strip the bike. First impressions? Not too bad, headset damaged no real marks on the frame, god's knows why not. Wheels off and packed away, frame away in rear of van and now time to head back to Reims and a comfortable bed! TW's done he's ready, 2.48 back, should be interesting with a sore butt!.

This was supposed to be TW's 'swan song' his last event of the year, well I f\*\*\*ed that up for him (he'll learn, there's a learning curve!!). Back in Reims (The [Novotel](#) for me this time) the bath tub is calling (very smart, coloured pillows and music in the bath) 1 hour to sort myself out, then dinner.

After a nice soak in the tub (no visible bruising) it's down to the bar and diner. 3 glasses of champagne (well it is his last trip this year) and chill and 'chew over the day'. The large round table is used again, very nice albeit no cushion! The meal was excellent and the conversation 'bright'. The talk of 'falling off' was helpful, in so much as it wasn't my fault it was down to the road (track) conditions, so get back up there.

A comfortable night's sleep is had with breakfast @ 0900. The run down is 5.45 so leave by 1030, trying to miss Paris this time! This is done with a straight run through, time for a pit stop. The weather this time is glorious not a cloud in the sky, isn't that always the case? Arrive early into St Malo. A pit stop at the Ibis before sailing, chill outside in the sun.

So another one done and now time to review and reflect on the 'seasons' races. Room for improvement is the main thought but there again it wasn't my aim at the beginning of the year to race sportives (injury changed that) so I suppose I might have to 'adjust' that thought. So with that it'll be Ok. Next year!

## Lesson[s] Learnt

Well **one** really big one this time. Falling off! **[1]** Ok so maybe it wasn't my fault (but then again I should have paid more attention to the road conditions **[2]** and it wasn't a big 'hit') but it is a big curve. The effect on the rest of the race was unforgettable, something to remember. Recovery **[3]** is now the name of the game, this again is a learning curve (I can now relate to others who have bitten the dust) on how to do this. Just get out and go (albeit on a quiet road first!). Again another different course different competitors different conditions different result, but oh so worthwhile!

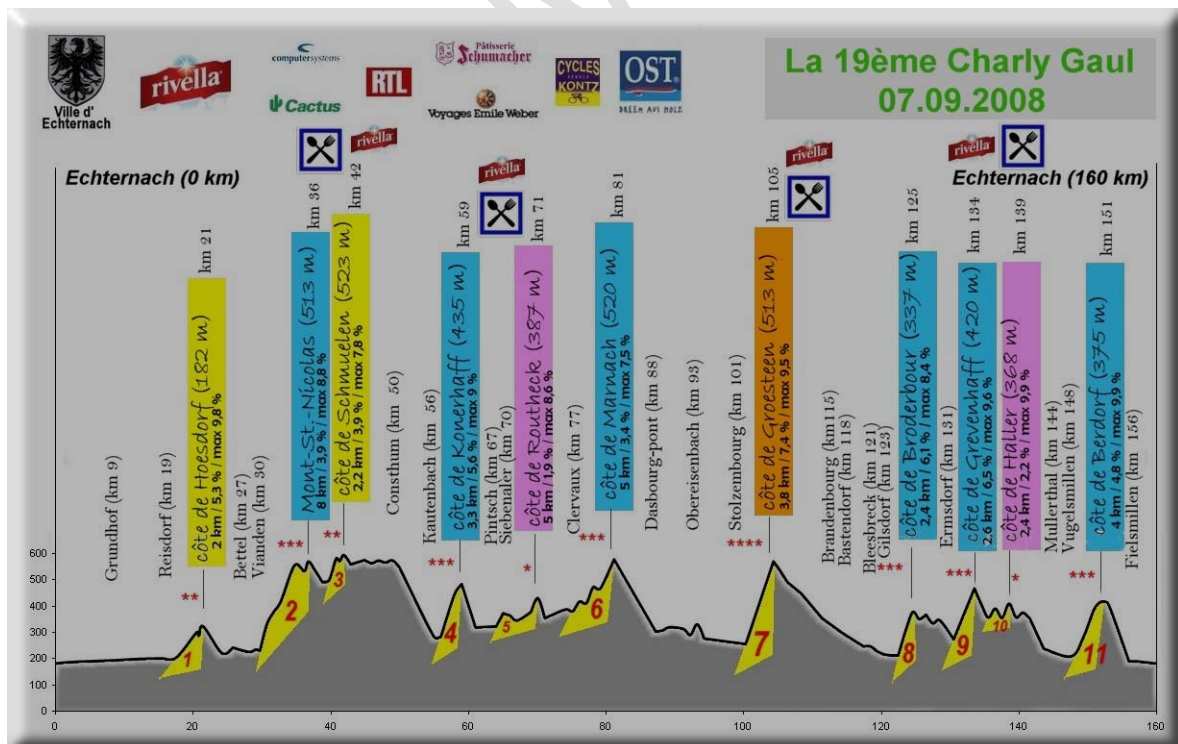
**Facts and Figures** (Source – Power Tap Device - Heart Rate Monitor U/S).

Entire workout (243 watts):

Duration: 6:12:02 (6:17:10)  
 Work: 5393 kJ  
 TSS: 598.9 (intensity factor 0.986)  
 Norm Power: 276  
 VI: 1.14  
 Pw:HR: n/a  
 Pa:HR: n/a  
 Distance: 159.518 km

	Min	Max	Avg	
Power:	10	933	243	watts
Cadence:	29	244	78	rpm
Speed:	3.7	56.9	25.9	kph
Pace:	1:03	16:13	2:19	min/km
Hub Torque:	2.9	51.5	14.6	N-m
Crank Torque:	0	157.6	32.7	N-m

## Course



Race Dedicated to:

Life ☺☺ - Its up's and down's ☹☹ - Maybe it will get better.