

PMVC-Europe Summer Camp 2013

or

what we learned from Remigio



Greetings all! What follows is a report on a two-part summer training camp by PMVC's European section, held July 17-19 and 29-31 in France's Drome/Haute Vaucluse and Italy's Verona/Trento-Alto Adige areas respectively. The goal was to get Ruud in shape for the seven-day stage race in the French Alps ([Haute Route, Alps](#), August 18-24) he cannot stop thinking about, and to inoculate Michele against an upcoming birthday he would not stop talking about. In spite of his advanced age, Michele seemed to be riding as well as ever, probably because he [races all the time](#) and because he has his Verona team president to look up to (see more on this below). Ruud, too, appeared to be as strong as ever, but he got a reality check on the next-to-last day (more about this later also).

It all began when Michele managed to reach Les Jonchiers from Marseilles--an easy two-hour drive. Ruud and Joan were renting a vacation cottage in this hamlet, tucked away somewhere in the hills north of Mont Ventoux. Although it was the end of the day, the men immediately left for a little warm-up ride up the [Col de Fontaube](#), the French equivalent of the Pudzu Idu ride--only three miles¹ longer and 650 meters higher. Col de Fontaube is the ideal warm-up climb because it's not very long and even less steep. As you ride up in a 39x22 or some compact crank equivalent your confidence grows by the turn. The same happens when you descend pushing a big gear. So we were in high spirits when we got home, where it soon became time for Michele to be presented with his new PMVC jersey:

¹ Indeed: [Rule #24](#) violation.



No new PMVC attire was worn the next day, the club's European section only having ordered cold weather items this time around. This being Michele's only full day in Les Jonchiers, the ride had to go up Mt. Ventoux, but also important were, in this order, scenic quality and moderation in suffering. This meant an ascent [from the town of Sault](#), which we reached after revisiting the Col de Fontaube, followed by the Col des Aires, a beautiful descent to the Toulourenc Valley, and an equally beautiful passage through the town of Aurel. Most of the road up from Sault had been repaved recently, which made the first 15 kilometers of the climb even easier than normally. We thus had plenty of breath left for

interesting conversations, as we passed them, with several American couples who were doing the climb on tandems. (By now, Tom and Carol from Colorado have probably made it to the summit). This was before reaching Chalet Reynard and the final six barren kilometers, because that final section always wears on you, no matter whether you come up from Bedoin (the classic way, taken again this year by the Tour de France) or Sault. But as you can see here, suffering was kept within acceptable limits:



The same went for the way home (rollers) after the always exciting downhill into Malaucene (top speed readings upon request). By that time, the heat had reached the mid-30s Celsius, so it was good that we were able to refill our bottles in Malaucene. Recovery in the afternoon was aided, first, by a Chris Froome tomato omelet prepared by Ruud, and, second, several hours of intellectual activity. We then watched the Tour stage with the ridiculous double ascent of Alpe d'Huez. Michele once again insulted [Ruud's friend, Chris Froome](#), charging that the tomato omelets with which the Champ starts every race day are fishy. Having made himself impossible in this way, Michele left the next day, but not before doing the beautiful climb dead-ending (and therefore with less and less traffic) at Le Poet-en-Percip. Looping around this little cluster of houses and a church, Michele uttered the line of the week when he wondered if we were on "this town's Orange Belt?"

Where Michele did the drive to our second training site, San Zeno di Montagna in Verona Province, Veneto Region in one gruelling, nine-hour sitting, Ruud and Joan covered the move in a more leisurely way the following weekend. Their stop about halfway, in Imperia on the Italian Riviera, gave Ruud the option, at least in theory, to rise early and attempt a ride over the Cipressa and Poggio climbs, made famous by the Milano-San Remo classic, an opportunity he regrettably failed to seize. Thirteen days of riding in France, out of fourteen chances, including two rides up [Mt. Ventoux from Bedoin](#), had made him less

eager than he would normally have been, the classic nature of this course notwithstanding. Ruud's hunger had returned, and his legs recovered from the dead feeling on the final day in France, when he and Michele went to meet the Living Legend--also known as [Remigio Alba](#), the 69-year old president of [ASD Butty, Michele's Italian team](#). The night before, iron man Remigio had eagerly agreed to ride with us from the town of Rivoli Veronese (in between Verona and San Zeno), even though he had raced the preceding two days and was scheduled to do so again the following day. Remigio rode his bike to the meeting point; Michele and Ruud put their bikes in the car and drove. Remigio looks like he was made to sit on a bike, although the truth is that he has made himself this way through many, many hours of hard work, eagerly performed. His legs especially are a sight to behold. Of course the man did not pull us to the foot of the hard, ten-mile climb to Monte Baldo in Avio, but he more than held his own on the way up. Way up there, after riding through some cool rain, we came upon a situation cut out for the president of Michele's American team. Even though by then it was clear that on his recovery day Remigio was in for a 75-mile, mountainous ride, his mood could not have been any better:



(The rocks say: Road Closed, but it doesn't really mean that)². Michele and Ruud decided to ride part of the way to Verona with Remigio, but it was really more to assuage their own feelings of inferiority than to provide any needed assistance to il Presidente. Feeling both humbled and inspired, the two PMVC riders drove home, where Michele prepared a Chris Froome tomato omelet. Ruud ate his part with bread; shaking his head in disbelief, Michele consumed his straight. The final training day again started with a drive to Rivoli. After

² See especially: "The sign may say 'Bridge Out' ... but don't believe it: You have to see for yourself." Oscar E. Swan, *Bike Rides Out of Pittsburgh: 425 out-of-town bicycle rides, from .6 to 110 miles* (Pittsburgh: Lektorek, 2006), 116.

doing the same roads out, and the same climb back, countless times, Michele just can't stand riding to and from San Zeno anymore. Someone could probably blame him for this kind of behavior, but as of this writing, there does not yet exist a Rule prohibiting it (other than Rule #5, of course). From Rivoli, we rode to the town of Peri, the beginning of the nine-kilometer Peri-Fosse climb. Ruud had been here before, in 2002 as part of the Granfondo Chesini (see elsewhere on the PMVC website), and he was eager to revisit the place where eleven years ago he had put himself in contention for a top-30 finish in a 5000-rider field. Back then, all he had available on his aluminum Klein Quantum Race was a 39x26 gear, and he had only needed it on the steep section toward the end. Now, riding his lightweight carbon Nikor frame supplemented with equally light Ambrosio sew-up wheels, he was very grateful to have brought a 28. In 2002 it was a race situation; this year, the end of an intensive 2.5 weeks of riding. Still, the 52-year old Ruud appears to be less strong than the 41-year old version, something Michele caught Ruud contemplating in downtown Fosse:



Perhaps the jury can be out until after Haute Route. Regardless, there was more climbing to do, way up, over an old military road clear through the Parco Naturale Regionale della Lessinia. In the best Swan tradition (father and daughter) both Michele and Ruud had brought their best equipment (i.e. their lightest sew-up wheels) to ride over the concrete

and gravel sections of this deserted, beautiful and steep climb. Eventually, there followed a long, leisurely ride down, through many small villages back to the warm and dusty main road through Valpolicella. After reaching that unpleasant part, they made a bee-line for the car. Not being named Remigio, the men had had enough. The next morning, they did mount their bikes again, but only to ride down the hill to their favorite bakery in Caprino to consume the little rice pastries they both like so much over there. This meant they had to do the Caprino-Lumini climb, loathed by Michele, to get back home. As if he wanted to get it over with as quickly as possible, Michele led the whole way. No assurance from Ruud that this climb was ten, no, twenty times better than anything they have in Holland could change his mind. However, Ruud, about to commence the drive back to his flat, windy home territory, enjoyed it all as much as he possibly could.

All this is not only respectfully submitted, as usual; it is also expressly meant as encouragement to all members of PMVC-America to feel inspired, review [The Rules](#), if necessary, and start getting in shape as of today, and stay in shape, and get better month-by-month, and help each other in doing so throughout the fall and winter and early spring, so as to make a return to Sardinia in general, and Daniela's cuisine in particular, a real possibility next year.

Ruud

P.S. After reviewing the preceding text and approving it without emendations, Michele sent the following update on a race he entered a few days after training camp:

"Oscar (and you) would have loved the race. 85 hilly (very hilly, unfortunately) kilometers, 37 degrees, no "ristori", no water, no nothing. 200 participants, almost all young and superstrong. We started together, so that meant that we had to keep the pace of the veterani (30-40 years old) as much as possible. This was the case for about 15 km, (average way over 40kms) when on a steep hill the veterani mercifully went their way. At that point I wanted to abandon, but Remigio was with me constantly telling me "un altro chilometro".

The good part is that there were no chips so there was a limited possibility of taking some little shortcuts.

Several participants took advantage of this (including me, I have to say...), and it became unclear which was the "official" course. On the other hand, cyclists are cyclists, especially Italian ones, and shortcuts are shortcuts.

It goes without saying that Remigio did not cheat and crossed the line before me."