

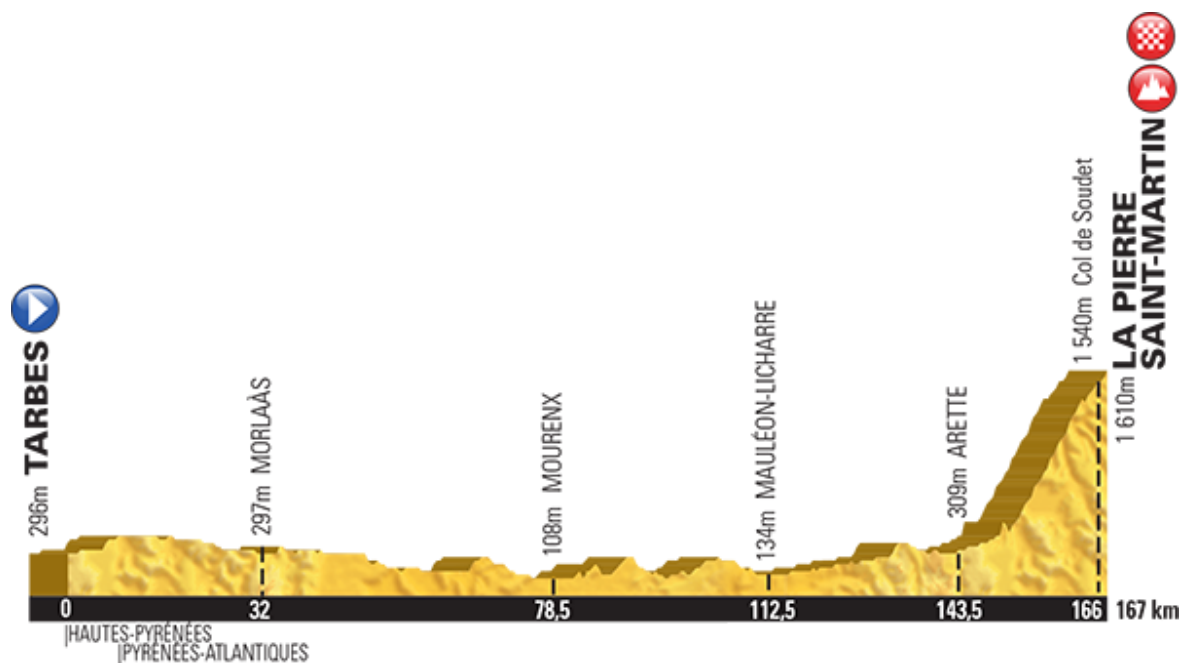
Created by Tom Scotto
Training Type: Race Simulation
Working HR Zones: Zone 3 to 5c
Total Class Length: 60 minutes



Profile Overview

This profile is akin to driving a high-speed rocket into a wall. Life on the bike starts out calm and peaceful. Then the speed picks up a bit, but we don't mind; we are going downhill. Suddenly your Lycra shorts are lit on fire as riders attack the first of four rolling hills. You are on a runaway train headed straight for a 14-minute climb! Your fitness and mental toughness will be peeled away like the layers of an onion with each minute of the final climb. This stage and your energy will be finished once you've reached the summit.

OK, it is time to sacrifice our legs and lungs to the gods!



Profile Objective and Intensity

At first glance, 85% of the profile appears relatively flat with the exception of the final climb. This should be an easy ride for 85% of the class, right? *Wrong!* The carrot of the day is the La Pierre-Saint-Martin, dangling the hopes of an epic mountaintop battle. However, much of the battle will unfold on the 150 kilometers (93 miles) leading up to the climb. After the first 10 minutes, including a rolling downhill, the first of two strong attacks will ignite. Riders will go from maintaining a steady Zone 3 effort to a relentless, undulating Zone 4 and Zone 5 to the finish.

So, What Are the Challenges?

There is the obvious 14-minute climb up the La Pierre-Saint-Martin, but only if they survive the journey to get there. The pace leading up to the climb will be fast; this includes the target cadence. There will be four rolling climbs, but each is to be approached and attacked holding a cadence between 88 and 100 rpm. This higher cadence range may not be characteristic of what is generally accepted as a “climbing” leg speed in indoor cycling. However, on the road—and particularly in a stage race such as the Tour de France—it is more common to see riders climbing with leg speeds that exceed 80 rpm. The faster leg speeds fend off premature muscle fatigue, but as a result, they drive the heart rate through the roof. It will be a delicate balance of saving the legs and keeping the lungs from exploding.

A Little about the Arrival City

La Pierre-Saint-Martin is a ski area and village in the Pyrenees, on the Spanish-French border. The actual Col de Soudet is about 1 kilometer before the finish in the town. This is the first time this col has appeared in the Tour de France from this direction (it appeared from the Spanish approach in 2007) and the town has never before seen the arrival of a stage.

The Basic Storyline

Stage 10 is the first stage after the rest day. Everyone is refreshed (relatively speaking), but also aggressive because of the opportunities on the road ahead. The warm-up and first 10 minutes bring riders to a steady pace (Zone 3). That peace is disturbed by a small group of ten opportunists who attack viciously at the first of a series of rolling hills. A steady Zone 3 effort is now exchanged for a violent, undulating Zone 4/Zone 5 roller coaster. The tempo and heart rates remain high as this aggressive group of riders attempts to free themselves from the main field with the hope of arriving first on the climb to La Pierre-Saint-Martin. Can all of the breakaway riders survive? The small group senses complacency and a second attack is launched to shed the dead weight. Riders dance with breathlessness between Zones 4 and 5 until they arrive at the base of the final climb. A small group of six riders begins the ascent, but the relentless attacks and blistering tempo continue to dissolve the group until two riders are left to battle on the final 4 kilometers (4 minutes).

Warm-Up / Neutral

Across The Threshold, Flooting Grooves, Gaspard Besson, 7:29, 89 rpm

Welcome to Stage 10 of the Tour de France. Today's race starts in Tarbes (pronounced "tarb") in southwest France. This is the first day back on the road after yesterday's rest day. I certainly hope you are rested.

The good news is that the first 40-ish minutes cover a flat to rolling road. The bad news is that much of this road will be attacked at a level of intensity between leg muscle failure and searing lung pain. Oh, and there is more bad news. The stage ends with a 14-minute climb up La Pierre-Saint-Martin. So, if you ever wondered what your breaking point is, your curiosity will be satisfied in about 50 minutes.

Just like for the riders in the Tour, every day is a new day and every day brings new challenges and opportunities to learn about our bodies. Listen to your body and its response to each effort. Anyone can push too hard and blow up, but to go the distance requires constant decisions and discipline.

If you are familiar with your heart rate zones and power output, this is a great stage to put that knowledge to the test. The stage will start with a steady sustainable effort, but attacks will begin and the intensity requirement will rise to threshold. You will dance a fine line between sustainable and unsustainable. This dance will dump you at the foot of the final 14-minute climb.

Our warm-up and neutral zone are about to come to an end. It is time to get this stage under way. Strap yourself in. We are about to board a high-speed train with one stop—La Pierre-Saint-Martin.

Start / Flat Road

Hot Like Dimes, Pretty Lights, 7:23, 91 rpm

After the warm-up, bring your riders into Zone 3. This is a gently rolling road. Enjoy short standing efforts of 15–20 seconds at tempo.

The race director waves the flag and the race is neutral no longer. As we move beyond the city limit, Tarbes begins to fade into the distance behind us.

It is time to get this sufferfest going. Slowly bring your intensity into Zone 3. Take a moment to settle your breathing and relax on the bike.

This section of road contains gentle rollers. We are going to hold a steady cadence near 90 rpm and work in and out of the saddle for short periods of time to maintain our momentum. Make sure you have enough resistance to support your body weight as you stand. Otherwise you will feel as if you are out of control or expending too much energy trying to hold yourself up by your arms and shoulders.

The entire peloton (main group of riders) is together at this point. The pace is such that riders are still able to converse with each other, but there is no doubt that the race is under way.

Although we may feel relaxed at this point in the race, there is an anxiety that looms knowing the potential of what lies ahead. A battle on the final climb is inevitable, but what will unfold en route?

As your heart rate stabilizes and your body responds to the short rolling efforts, it is time to take an assessment of the energy you are working with today. Some days we feel great and unstoppable. Other days not so much; those days require much more discipline and awareness to endure. Neither scenario determines success or failure, but rather allows us to make the best decisions for the best results.

Downhill

Fire in the Hole, Pegboard Nerds, 3:47, 109 rpm

As the road tilts downward, our leg speed picks up, but so has our speed on the road.

This is an opportunity to spin and refresh the legs, but we also must keep pace with the peloton. Maintain a Zone 3 effort.

The cadence is fast between 105 and 110 rpm. If you cannot pedal at this speed, work at a speed that is comfortable but that you still consider fast.

Holding a cadence between 105 and 110 rpm is very difficult. Feel free to maintain a fast speed as long as possible and then back off some of the resistance and relax before increasing your leg speed again.

During fast downhill sections of road, the peloton will often lengthen because riders are providing more space between each other to allow for greater braking time.

It is common for the body to become tense when we attempt to hold fast leg speeds. This is a perfect time to revisit your form on the bike. Relax. Breathe deeply. Allow your legs to turn freely and effortlessly. Forcing your legs to obtain higher speeds at this early stage in the race will only waste energy that will certainly be required later.

Time to Attack and Break Away

Hysteria, Muse, 3:47, 92 rpm

In the distance you see the first of the larger climbs. These are not categorized climbs but can certainly put the legs to the task.

You sense there is a change of energy in the group and something is about to happen.

0:20 Riders have attacked! Ten riders to be exact. You have a decision to make. Are you going to jump on this opportunity or hang back and see what happens? We are not of those that hang back!

This is a 3.5-minute climb, but riders are attacking it as if it is only 30 seconds! The attack is all-out and designed to destroy the comfort of the peloton.

Climbing at ~90 rpm will set both your legs and lungs afire. Find your tempo. It needs to be strong and something you can sustain.

2:14 Another burst of speed. Can you hang on? Can you keep your lungs from exiting your mouth?

Try to settle in again. Do your best to control your breathing. Focus on taking the longest exhale possible.

3:26 Another 15-second acceleration as we punch it over the top of the climb.

Hot and Steaming in the Valley

Opiate, Grains Of Sound, 4:20, 97 rpm

We are riding downhill with a mission. Yes, catch your breath, but remember, we need to maintain the gap we created between us and the peloton (main group). We were able to break away, but it will only remain successful if we stay focused on the task.

Settle into another steady tempo. Find a level of intensity just beneath your threshold and above Zone 3. This is a short reprieve, but one that will soon end as similar short climbs lurk in the distance.

If you feel your legs tightening up, stand and stretch, but maintain your tempo.

Aggressive and Rolling

Insignia, Muzzy, 5:00, 88 rpm

With barely enough time for riders to catch their breath from that abrupt attack, the tempo doesn't change but the demand does. Three short rolling hills approach and need to be attacked with vigor—out of the saddle if possible.

As the peloton crests the top of the climb behind us, we are once again in view and a carrot to be chased down.

If we plan on staying away, we need to punch the gas pedal and keep the pressure on. These rolling hills are going to hurt. Our legs will throb and our lungs will cry.

0:22 – 0:42 (20 seconds) *Load as much resistance as can be sustained at 85–90 rpm. Climb with the energy of a brewing riot. Once over the top, return to a life-draining tempo, breathe, and prepare for the next one.*

1:50 – 2:56 (~60 seconds) *Build the climb and sustain it. That first roller was a teaser. This rolling hill is a minute long. Our speed must be maintained if we are going to elude the teeth of the angry mob behind us. Stay strong over the top!*

3:40 – 4:46 (~60 seconds) *With little rest for the weary, another hill finds itself under your legs and demands your energy. The steepness of these rollers may not appear challenging, but the intensity at which we attack them can drain our legs of life and challenge the depth of our character and our will to continue.*

Second Attack—Not for the Faint of Heart

Showdown, Pedulum, 5:28, 86 rpm

After the last three whipping undulations, a few of the ten breakaway riders are showing signs of weakness. Someone has to take control of this group, otherwise all of the previous efforts will have been for naught.

It is time for you to take the reins and lead. Upon assuming leadership, there is only one thing to do to shed riders who are not pulling their weight...

0:38 – 1:22 *Attack! That's right, it is time to throw down the gauntlet again. The strong will survive and the rest will drift back to lick their wounds in the peloton.*

3:10 – 5:21 *It is time to climb again! Add resistance and feel your legs slow down (the music will slow to 60 rpm). Follow the music as it returns to 86 rpm and takes your legs and lungs with it.*

Your heart rate has little choice but to visit Zone 5. This is a short but violent climb and you realize you have the strength to not only lead this group, but also to dominate on the toughest sections.

Continue your vicious climbing tempo right to the top. Don't worry who remains behind you. You can assess the damage once on the other side.

Relentless

Never Enough, Epica, 4:49, 105 rpm

Over the top of the last rolling hill you look back and see that your group only contains six riders. Four riders have fallen prey to your leadership and display of strength.

The tempo is high and perfect to spin the legs on the downhill as we catch our breath. Do not be mistaken—this is not recovery, but a small bit of sanity. We must keep the pressure on.

The road appears flat but is not. It is what is often referred to as a false flat. The eyes insist the road is flat, but the legs know otherwise.

Ahead lies another short hill before the base of the final 14-minute ascent. We will use this climb to test the remaining group of six riders.

2:54 – 4:39 Time to climb again. We will not attack, but rather maintain a challenging tempo. We are also human and must reserve as much strength as possible.

As we crest the top of the hill, the last climb and all its glory are revealed. We simultaneously feel the chill of excitement and fear surge through our body.

Col de Soudet, La Pierre-Saint-Martin—1610 m (5,282 ft), 15.3 km (9.4 mi), Cat H at 7.4%

La Pierre-Saint-Martin extends 1 km beyond the top of the Col de Soudet at 7.4%. After nearly 4 hours in the saddle (40 minutes for us), six breakaway riders remain with an intact peloton chasing just over 2 minutes back.

Kill Me Every Time, Blue Stahli, 5:12, 63 rpm

The first turn of the pedals on the initial 8% grade of the Col de Soudet sends a shockwave through your legs. The only comforting thought we have is that the peloton will experience the same shockwave when their legs hit the base of the climb.

Beyond Category Climbs—They Kill Me Every Time!

There are only six survivors of the early breakaway. In some strange way you can sense the intensity of the peloton only 2 minutes back. They will soon launch some of the world's best climbers to hunt you down before the top.

You are dangling treacherously at the top of Zone 4, but know you must continue to push the tempo and attack if there is any hope of winning this stage.

0:46 – 1:17 (30 seconds) You surge slightly as the pavement tilts to 10.8% to show your five companions that the time to battle is now. The battle is two-pronged: against each other and against the pursuing peloton.

1:47 – 2:18 (30 seconds) Another surge! Even though your increase in cadence is small, it is enough to cause two riders to begin to falter. In between each show of force you back off to allow someone else to contribute. No one is willing to take the lead...or are they secretly hoping you will destroy yourself?

3:03 – 3:25 (20 seconds) You will not show your weakness; you accelerate again! Two riders fall off the pace and seemingly drift backwards down the mountain.

4:07 – 5:08 (60 seconds) You pick up the pace again. Not because you want to show your dominance, but because one of the official motorbikes passes by, displaying a sign that reads 1:38. The peloton has launched the climbers, who have taken back another 22 seconds. The chase group is looming 1 minute and 38 seconds back. They are closing in fast.

Really Now!, Martone, 4:48, 67 rpm

0:29 – 0:56 (30 seconds) You have 9 minutes remaining to the top. You must keep the pressure on. You surge.

1:11 – 1:39 (30 seconds) You surge again and then settle into an aggressive pace. You notice another rider is showing signs of weakness.

2:25 – 2:40 (15 seconds) You launch a blistering attack! Your breakaway group is reduced to three riders. You are recklessly stumbling in Zone 5 trying to catch your breath.

3:44 You settle into a strong rhythm and realize you must stay on the edge of your sustainable effort if you are to succeed. In the back of your mind you are wondering if either of your two companions have anything left or if they are waiting for just the right time.

Cloak and Dagger, Varien, 4:14, 74 rpm

0:00 – 0:51 *There are only 4 minutes remaining. Another sign flashes 0:29. The chasing riders are only 29 seconds behind you! Your first thought is “Can I survive?” You quickly correct your thinking to “I WILL WIN!”*

0:52 – 2:01 (70 seconds) *Your suspicion is satisfied. One of the two riders attacks. Game on! You respond and the chase has begun. Your heart rate is raging but you must remain calm and breathe.*

2:02 – 2:53 *The pace settles down. The third rider in your breakaway group popped. It is now one rider against another. Chase riders are 15 seconds back and you can hear and feel their breath.*

2:54 – 4:41 (75 seconds) *You decide to deliver the final blow. This suffering will end one way or another. At 3:08 you cross the summit of the Col de Soudet with 1 kilometer to go, and the cheers of the crowd are deafening. You drive into the pedals as hard as you can, fighting with every last ounce of energy.*

As you approach the finish, you realize the peloton underestimated the strength of the breakaway. They underestimated the strength of your legs. They underestimated the power of absolute determination.

Epic Cool-Down**Indra, E.S. Posthumus, 4:18, 93 rpm**

Allow the emotion to ring out in your class. They have worked hard. If there was such a thing as ending credits for a cycling class, this song would provide the perfect backdrop. Commend your riders, by name if possible.

I often hop off my bike and enjoy walking around the room to talk to each rider as they cool down.

Do encourage everyone to take time to stretch after class, to eat, and to continue to stay hydrated. As always, I'm in search of a café so I can sit back and enjoy a nice French press.

Stage 10 Playlist

Section	Music	BPM	Time
Warm-Up / Neutral	Across the Threshold Flooting Grooves, Gaspard Besson	89	7:29
Start / Flat Road	Hot Like Dimes Pretty Lights	91	7:23
Downhill	Fire in the Hole Pegboard Nerds	109	3:47
Time to Attack and Break Away	Hysteria Muse	92	3:47
Hot and Steaming in the Valley	Opiate Grains Of Sound	97	4:20
Aggressive and Rolling	Insignia Muzzy	88	5:00
Second Attack—Not for the Faint of Heart	Showdown Pendulum	86	5:28
Relentless	Never Enough Epica	105	4:49
Col de Soudet	Kill Me Every Time , Blue Stahli Really Now! , Martone Cloak and Dagger , Varien	63 67 74	5:12 4:48 4:14
Epic Cool-Down	Indra E.S. Posthumus	93	4:18