

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

Profile Overview

This is a unique-looking stage, with a long flat section in between two hilly segments, finishing with a Category 2, very steep climb. The long, flattish river valley is really a false flat, so it is deceiving.



Profile Objective and Intensity

As I was contemplating how to create and coach this profile, I thought that instructors might want some cueing for “less hard” segments on the flat roads, since so many profiles are complete sufferfests for much of the stage. While the ending of this stage can and should be hard, the rest of it can be imagined as hanging out in the peloton waiting for the axe to fall for the final three climbs.

Therefore, I decided to start this stage after the first group of climbs. We begin on the flat, in the Tarn River Valley, riding underneath the engineering wonder of the Millau Viaduct. I give you coaching for moderate, tempo-paced intensity, mostly in the saddle, until we reach those final hills.

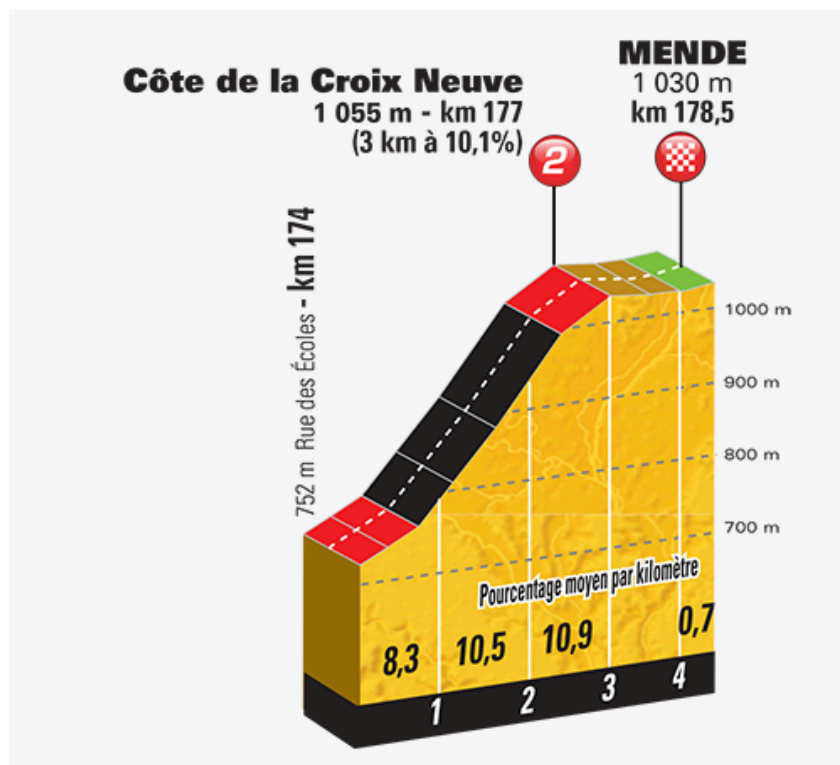
Then all bets are off and the Kraken is released!

However, you don't have to teach this as a moderate intensity for the flat segment if you don't want to. Depending on how many stages you are teaching in your own Tour, you may want to work at a higher intensity. In that case, you can fill the flats with attacks and counterattacks. If that is your preference, I suggest taking part of the attack segment from the "Suitcase of Courage" profile from the 2013 package (Stage 3) and adding it in this stage, prior to the final assault on the climbs.

If you are doing many stages and your riders will be coming often, then use the first two-thirds of this stage as more of an endurance/tempo ride.

The Final Climbs

The stage finishes with a Category 2, a Category 4, and another Category 2 climb in fairly quick succession. Will it be hard? Oh yes! Check out the image below of the final climb to Mende. It's only 3 km but most of it is over 10%. This one would hurt to walk up! On your bike, it will most definitely put you in the pain cave. Even cresting the top won't be a relief, since it will be a mad dash to the finish line. Sprinting after a full-on, gut-busting climb like this is not something that comes easy.



The Viaduct de Millau

At kilometer 78, this stage passes underneath the Viaduct de Millau, which holds the record as the tallest bridge in the world. It is 343 meters high (1,125 feet, which is taller than the Eiffel Tower) and 2,460 meters long (1.5 miles), supported by only nine slender towers. It was built in 2004, and in 2005, France was able to show this engineering masterpiece off to the world during the Tour de France, as the peloton rode underneath the impressive bridge. It had to wait ten years before the peloton returned to the Tarn River Valley, in Stage 14 of this year's Tour.

Note that the viaduct itself is a motorway, so cyclists could never ride on the actual bridge itself. But it sure is impressive even to ride beneath it! You can Google "Viaduct de Millau Tour de France" and print out some images to give your participants a visual of where they are riding.



Warm-Up

Equinox 7, Jean Michel Jarre, 5:35, 81 bpm

Welcome to Stage 14 of the Tour de France. Today's race starts in Rodez (pronounced "Ro-day") in the middle of France.

Back in Stage 10, you experienced some brutal intensities delivered by the attacking armies on the flattish roads. Today, we are going to do this stage just a little differently. Instead of being a domestique sent out on the hunt by your team leader to chase down breakaways and attack other riders, today your role is going to be the team leader.

Now normally, in a high mountain stage being a team leader would send chills down your spine, knowing that in the early climbs in the Pyrenees, he would need to establish his place in the GC, and towards the end of the Tour in the Alps, he would need to make up lost time, or solidify his lead.

However today, a little more than halfway through the Tour, imagine that GC contender (you can pick whomever you want to portray) needs to be protected by his team. With the layout of this route, the peloton will likely stay together for the entire stage, save for a breakaway group or two. But the peloton isn't going to aggressively hunt down those breaks today, until the last climbs towards the end.

That long flat section isn't really flat...it's a false flat. You're going to see our cadence starting out quick, but gradually slowing down until we hit the base of the first Category 2 climb. The peloton will keep a high tempo pace on that section, but as long as you envision yourself tucked behind your teammates, protected from the wind, you'll be riding mostly at a moderate pace, in Zone 3. You may fluctuate a little bit within this zone, perhaps sneaking into Zone 4 for short sections, but mark my words, you're going to want to save a little bit.

Because...as the road turns upward for those three steep climbs that come in quick succession, your team strategy is to get to the front of the peloton and drive the pace. Your teammates will probably turn themselves inside out for you, with the goal of delivering you close to the front for a win, or at least a top-three finish.

But, who knows. The best laid plans don't always turn out the way we want them to!

Flat Road 1

Initials B.B., Serge Gainsbourg, 4:04, 100 bpm

This section is flat. After the warm-up, start speeding up the legs to 100 rpm.

Let's do this like slightly delayed television coverage. We join the race, already in progress, at the 58 km mark. The peloton has just descended from the first series of rolling climbs. Nothing too steep, nothing too hard. There was an early breakaway of six riders; the opportunists know that an early breakaway may be their only chance for a long-shot stage win. A second chase group was sent out by several of the teams who don't have contenders high up in the GC. They are only a few minutes ahead of the peloton, so they don't have much hope.

The peloton has made the unspoken collective decision to let the breaks go...for now, at least. Your team has no riders in the breaks, since everyone was given the very important role of protecting you, their team leader, and delivering you to the final climbs.

At 1:20 the song takes a little break. Add resistance and stand for 20 seconds (to mimic adding gear and establishing your team's place at the front of the peloton), then at 1:41 when the rhythm picks back up, sit back down and grab that 100 rpm cadence again. This energy break happens again at 2:46 to 3:05. Gear up and stand again for 20 seconds.

Flat Road 2

I See Red, Thousand Foot Crutch, 4:10, 95 bpm

Settle into your rhythm. You're going to want to hold this tempo and mindset for an extended time, without surges in energy. Sit as much as possible for the next 22 minutes, but go ahead and stand for short periods as needed to stretch out the legs and give the butt a break. This stage is a very long one; imagine the mental strength needed—not to mention the physical endurance—for the riders to stay focused and committed over almost 120 miles.

The best way to stay focused is to remember your mind-body connection. Relax. Breathe. Focus. Allow your legs to roll over smoothly, one after the other, 95 times per minute. Connect your breath to your pedal stroke, over, and over, and over, and over...

The peloton passes underneath the amazing architectural wonder of the Viaduct de Millau, the highest bridge in the world. It is 1.5 miles long and 1,125 feet high, supported by nine narrow columns, which, from a distance, don't look strong enough to hold up this massive highway far above the river valley below.

False Flat 1

Xavantes, Ramiro Musotto, 3:57, 89 bpm

Grab the beat at a cadence of 89 rpm, and raise the resistance to maintain the same general intensity (power output) that you had at a higher cadence.

Hey, this road isn't flat, is it? You start to feel the slight grade tug at your legs, slowing your cadence down ever so slightly, but still, you notice it.

Your team has been able to stay near the front of the peloton, and your teammates are rotating in front of you, keeping you at least four to five riders back at all times. Your competitive side feels the need to take a turn at the pacemaking, but your wisdom holds you back. Nope, that is not your role today; you need to respect that! By allowing the others to do most of the work, you are simply holding back the waters of the dam, so you can release that energy later in the stage.

Still...you notice the 2% grade in the legs. It feels like a slight headwind.

False Flat 2

Architect, D. Batistatos, 4:18, 87 bpm

Another slight increase in grade; adjust the resistance a bit. Power output stays the same.

Sometimes on these long flat sections, you have to keep your mind occupied by visualizing your plan of attack at the end of this stage. It helps you stay focused and stay with the plan.

Let's review your plan...Your teammates will deliver you to the first climb. Several of them will stay with you, pulling you at the front end of the peloton. If there are attacks by the GC contenders, you will have to go with them. You will need to be disciplined, strong, tenacious.

Say those words to yourself: I am disciplined. I am strong. I am tenacious. I am a winner.

Stay quiet with your thoughts through the rest of this song.

False Flat 3

C'mon Let Me Ride, Skylar Grey, 4:14, 85 rpm

Your team is going to start lifting the pace a little. If you have power meters, you can add a handful of watts, allowing your intensity to rise to high Zone 3. If you don't have power, pay attention to your breathing and stay aerobic, but add a few heartbeats to the effort. You can stand a few times in this song, during the "dub" sections and energy breaks.

Listen to the words of this song. Let me ride your bicycle! That was you as a kid, wasn't it?

Look at you now, riding your bicycle through the roads of France, the leader of a professional team; a mentor to younger riders.

Your teammates have now positioned themselves at the front of the peloton. When there are this many teams, and 180 riders in the peloton, that's not always an easy thing to do.

It means you have taken control. It means you are dominating the movement and positioning of this large mass of riders. It also means you demand respect.

It is exactly as you planned it last night over dinner. Strategy like this doesn't happen by accident! The pace is going to be lifted just a little bit...we'll stand up every so often for 10–20 seconds.

Final Assault Before the Climbs

Master of the Universe, Juno Reactor, 6:05, 85 rpm

OK, this is the last flat(ish) segment before those hills you see off in the distance. They are getting closer and closer. The energy has picked up a little bit; I want you to pick up the tempo just a bit. Cadence remains at 85 rpm, but add enough resistance to bring you to the border of Zone 3 and 4. Do try to stay on the south side of Zone 4!

This is the final segment where you have to show such restraint and discipline. Don't overdo it.

As the climb approaches, get them ready. It will start off very steeply.

Cat 2 Climb: Côte de Sauveterre

All At Once, The Airborne Toxic Event, 5:16, 142 bpm

The hill starts out very steeply, but stay seated. You've got to look around and see what everyone else is planning.

2:09 And there's an attack! Stand up and go for it! This is your time to show everyone that you mean business. Punch it out! (Go to breathless here.)

3:23 Sit back down. You've managed to pare down some of your contenders. You still have three teammates who managed to stay with you; they now get in front of you and pull you up, giving you a little bit of a respite. You are still hanging on at high Zone 4; no more of that hanging back stuff for you!

Roll it over the top of this first litmus test.

Downhill

Les Toupies, Mètaturk, 2:04, 90 bpm

Let them enjoy this downhill. Remind riders they have to stay together as a team; there are four of them left together. The other teammates had turned themselves inside out setting the pace on the false flat. But you aren't alone...there are about twenty other riders who have peeled themselves away from the peloton on that last climb. So, it's not a small group. The peloton is about a minute and a half behind. It's not impossible that they could catch up, so you've got to

keep your speed up on this downhill and on the approaching rolling section before the second climb.

Short Rollers

Météorite, Mètatuk, 2:32, 139 bpm

You've got just over 2 minutes before the second steep climb, but this isn't flat here. We are going to go up and down and up and down and up and down!

You can do this section similar to “jumps,” alternating seated with standing every 10–20 seconds (or every 16 beats if you're beat oriented).

Cat 2 Climb: Côte de Chabrits

La Réalité (Alix Remix), Amadou & Mariam, 3:59, 130 bpm

The song will start off a little erratically, so at the beginning have them stand up with high resistance until the beat gets going strong about 30 seconds into the song. Then sit down and hold a hard 65 rpm pace, right at the edge or just above threshold.

Your teammates are in front of you continuing to drive the pace up this climb. They are working harder than you right now, but all of you are starting to feel this long day. Already 160 kilometers/100 miles under your wheels; that starts to take its toll! And now, you are laying out almost full throttle, leaving a little for that final climb, but definitely feeling the steepness of this climb.

One by one your teammates have dropped off from the sheer effort of helping you out. That's why they call them domestiques, right? They are there to serve you and help you achieve your goal. As they drop back, you give them a head nod of gratitude, acknowledging their hard work. You are left with only one loyal teammate. He's going to deliver you to that final climb.

Short Descent

Les Petits Boudins, Dominique Walter, 2:07, 88 bpm

This is a cheesy but fun song, perfect for this final descent. If you do decide to use this song, here's a funny story to go along with it:

This is a retro French song, from the mid 1980s. A “boudin” (pronounced “boo-dahn”) is a type of sausage. But “petit boudin” is term of endearment, essentially meaning “my little sausage.” And no, it's not derogatory! The video for this song from back in the 1980s apparently was very popular.

As a cyclist, it's not unusual to start thinking about how hungry you are after over 100 miles of racing...so our protagonist has visions of dancing sausages in his head as he descends, ready to attack the final climb!

Stay together here; don't let dancing sausages distract you too much! You don't want to lose your last domestique; you're going to ask him to attack hard from the beginning, pulling you with him. Are you ready?

Cat 2 Climb: Côte de la Croix Neuve

To Victory, Tyler Bates (300 Motion Picture Soundtrack), 2:34, 140 bpm

0:00 – 0:25 *Your teammate knows his part—he attacks right away and you stand up and grab his wheel! But you aren't alone; six of your opponents are right there with you.*

0:26 (Add on a little more gear.) *You look up and you see the last of the original breakaway riders. You have snuck up on them; they are furiously trying to protect their lead. There are four of them left.*

1:31 *Your teammate cannot hold this pace anymore on this 10% grade. His job is done. He drops back, and you let up ever so slightly, ready to attack again.*

1:50 *Back out of the saddle, you continue to drive hard on this very steep segment, driving your legs against the resistance, taking the bit in your teeth. You are closing the gap on that breakaway, your small group now whittled down to four total riders. You've got to keep this throttle opened up. You don't care so much about those breakaway riders—they are so far below you in the GC. You do care about one of the riders in this group you're in; he's only 45 seconds back in the GC, so you need to finish before him.*

Keep driving until 2:17, as the song subsides.

Finish line! Success!

No, you didn't win the stage, that wasn't as important to you as beating your GC opponent.

Cool-Down

Port Coton, Zaz, 2:56, 86 rpm

Tour de France (Chillout Mix), Dream Chaser, 3:51

Your team fulfilled their roles to perfection today. You kept your place in the GC, and the Alps are approaching...and a TDF team can't ask for anything more than that in the bigger scheme of things. This is a twenty-one-day race; you can't win every stage, but you can plan your strategy and stick to your plan as much as possible, knowing fate and Mother Nature will throw some wrenches in your plans on many occasions. When everything goes off just as you envisioned? Well, that's reason to celebrate!

Remind everyone they are just over halfway through the Tour stages. The Alps are only five days away.

Stage 14 Playlist (58 minutes)

Section	Music	BPM	Time
Warm-Up	Equinox 7 Jean Michel Jarre The 12 Dreams of the Sun	81	5:35
Flat Road 1	Initials B.B. Serge Gainsbourg	100	4:04
Flat Road 2	I See Red Thousand Foot Crutch Oxygen:Inhale	95	4:10
False Flat 1	Xavantes Ramiro Musotto Sudaka	89	3:57
False Flat 2	Architect D. Batistatos Architect	87	4:18
False Flat 3	C'mon Let Me Ride Skylar Grey C'Mon Let Me Ride	85	4:14
Final Assault Before The Climbs	Master of the Universe Juno Reactor Odyssey	85	6:05
Cat 2 Climb: Côte de Sauveterre	All At Once The Airborne Toxic Event All At Once	142	5:16
Downhill	Les Toupies Métatuk La Foire aux Primates	90	2:04
Short Rollers	Météorite Métatuk Somnambule Au Soleil	139	2:32
Cat 2 Climb: Côte de Chabrits	La Réalité (Alix Remix) Amadou & Mariam La Réalité (7 Remixes)	130	3:59
Short Descent	Les Petits Boudins Dominique Walter A Paris: Rock N Roll Mini Skirts	88	2:07
Cat 2 Climb: Côte de la Croix Neuve	To Victory Tyler Bates 300 Motion Picture Soundtrack	140	2:34
Cool-Down	Port Coton Zaz Zaz Tour de France (Chillout Mix), Dream Chaser Tour de France	93 128	2:56 3:51