

May 2018

My first stint to Belgium! Finally!!

The first half of the month was spent in Belgium, I wasn't sure what to expect from the racing but the day before I left I got a podium in a regional race so I knew the legs were coming, but had no idea where they were compared to all the pros.

Living in the south, I definitely take for granted how easy it is to get over the channel. 3 hours to Dover and then only 90 minutes to Oudenaarde isn't a hard journey at all (but I was a bit nervous driving on the other side of the road for the first time, but turns out its easy over there and even more confusing when I came back!!).

My first race there (and only third of the season) was Trofee Maarten Wynants, a UCI 1.1. I was really proud of my performance, my longest race had only been 2 hours so far and my longest ride only 2 and a half hours up until this point. I didn't actually finish the race which was really gutting but I made it to 110km of 120km and unfortunately didn't finish due to a rookie error- MAJOR BONK!!!! One second I was absolutely elated and was convinced I was going to get round, maybe even with room for a good ending sprinting, the legs felt amazing. I underestimated how hot it was and turns out one bottle in 27°C heat does not get you round a race. The course was a fairly technical 10km circuit and I had got so involved in focussing where to be in corners and constantly moving up, I forgot about looking after my nutrition. I went from feeling incredible to thinking I had a double puncture. I literally couldn't turn the pedals!! Never experienced anything like it. By the time I got round to the pits I could barely see straight and couldn't even get off my bike. I just fell sideways on the floor, still mounted. I can safely say, I gave it my all. Shame that 'my all' could have been a lot more. Lesson learnt- onto the next!!!

The next race was another UCI race, the prestigious Marianne Vos Classic. An early crash followed by a puncture unfortunately took me out of that race at half way, frustrating but that's bike racing. Regardless of that however, I had a heavy training week as I didn't feel like I had trained enough since returning from injury to justify a taper so by this point I was feeling rather fatigued.

The next day was a kermesse. I did a total of seven kermesses last year and whilst I would say they didn't go badly, they weren't exactly spectacular results either, but despite the fact I'm not as fit as I could be yet and don't have any of the 'high end' form just yet, without bragging, I was on fire. I was super reactive, super aggressive. I rode in a break for about 25km until it got pulled in, another break went out and got pretty far out but a group of us worked hard at the front to pull it back in to set up our sprinters. After all the work I did and with my inexperience in the crazy bunch sprints out there, I managed 29<sup>th</sup> which I was super happy with as my aim was top 40.

Returning to the UK in May has brought Tour Series! My rounds were Stevenage and Salisbury (Salisbury is only tomorrow at this point as I write this so fingers crossed!), where Stevenage brought an early, pretty bad crash where I somersaulted a few meters and landed flat on my back and has left me extremely stiff and with some more whiplash. I still got up and finished however, but hopefully the next round brings more luck.

With massive thanks to the fund, I will intend to take my training to the next level as since returning I have decided to invest in a power meter which I have saved up to and can finally afford, which will hopefully be delivered in the next few weeks so I will have them by the time I get back from my next

Belgian stint (1<sup>st</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> June with a few UCI races).

To summarise, whilst my results don't necessarily stand out yet, with no winters training and only a month back into things I couldn't be feeling more positive or more motivated. There's still a lot of big races to aim for and I really believe this could still be the season I wanted it to be back in the winter. Lots to look forward to and can't wait to get stuck in!



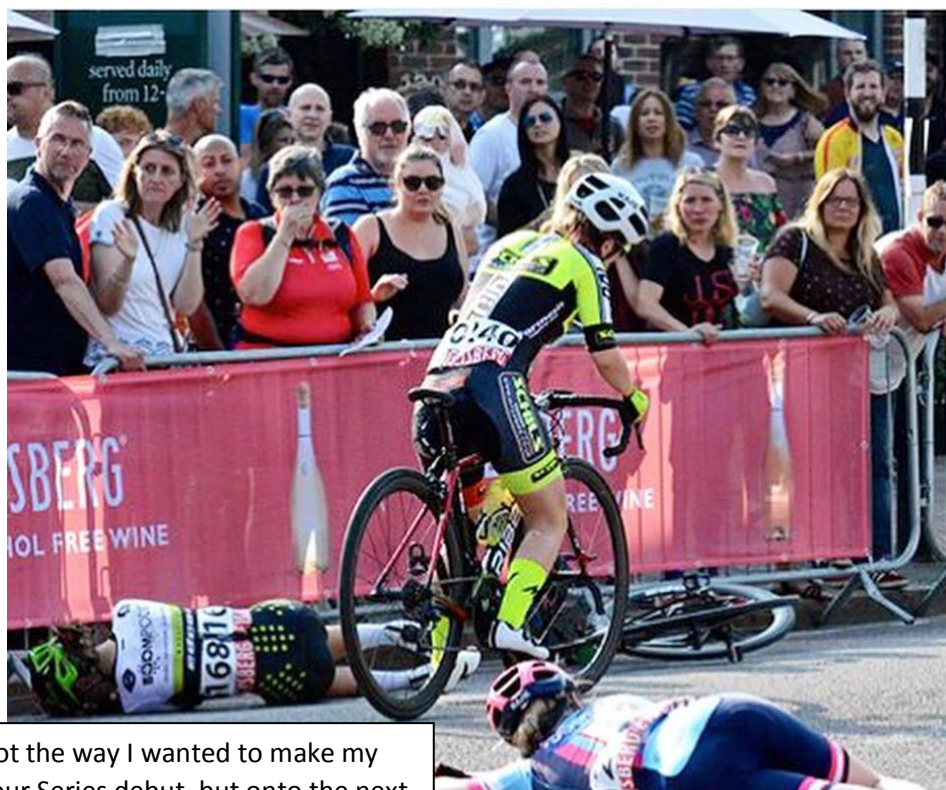
My first UCI 1.1 race. Did much better than expected. Time to aim much higher.



Riding in a break of 6, with mostly UCI riders. Looking forward to better results and more improvements.



The kermesse where I felt strong and aggressive. Proud of my ride, especially considering the amount of UCI teams that showed up.



Not the way I wanted to make my Tour Series debut, but onto the next one!