

Peking to Paris 2019.

Day 34. Wolfsburg - Liege 600km

The final big push. Over the Rhine and through the Ardennes to the days finish in Liege where a traditional, but typically low key, Belgium welcome awaited us.

And, from a country which boasts more than 1600 different beers you'd have expected nothing less.

We covered a lot of ground today, but thankfully much of it was on the autobahn and on high quality main roads. Strategically placed Time Controls kept everyone in touch but nevertheless it was a long hot day in the saddle for all of the crews.

For the Belgians though it was ameliorated by the fact that they were enjoying a well-earned homecoming (and a heroes welcome) although for Johan Gitsels and Walter Op' t Roodt it was technically their second homecoming.

Anton Gonnissen, travel stained and almost worn out, spoke for them all this morning when he croaked that they "were going home".

Germany had been great and yesterday was a lot of fun but, when we said auf wiedersehen in the forests of the Ardennes and crossed the line into Belgium, it was a good feeling. If success is defined as a journey, then Paris is surely the destination.

With the tail end of the European heatwave still hanging around, a crowd of well-wishers had lined a roundabout on the road to Stavelot and cheered us all on, wherever the licence plate hailed from.

There was only one test today, at the Peugeot track in Malmedy. Within earshot of the more famous Spa circuit, this proximity seemed to have a vicarious effect on the drivers behaviour and every turn here was tackled with the same commitment and dedication that is required at Eau Rouge, just up the road.

Erik Van Droogenbroek for example gave a bravura display of drifting and powersliding whilst Lars Rolner and Dean Drako loved it so much they seemed to do an unscheduled third lap. Alan and Steve Maden however made it all look too civilised as they wafted along in their big Rolls Royce.

Finally, we arrived in Liege, the city that has given its name to one of the most famous rally timers ever and has hosted many rallies to boot.

After dinner, a long night section was looking very likely as the crews readied themselves for Ypres tomorrow and the traditional pre finish party.

Syd Stelvio.