

## Tour de France

## Kittel wins crash-marred stage 11, Froome stays safe

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN & JOHN LEICESTER  
Associated Press

PAU, France — Ahead of two grueling days filled with some truly punishing ascents, the main contenders on the Tour de France were all hoping that Wednesday would be a nice, relaxed day on the bike.

It didn't happen.

Instead of what riders call a "transition" day, with a comfortable run to the gateway to the Pyrenees mountains, Stage 11 proved to be a brutal experience for some of the top riders after a series of crashes left them nursing cuts and bruises.

When crosswinds started making the bunch nervous toward the end of the 203.5-kilometer (126-mile) stage from Eymet to Pau, the stress became palpable and led to several crashes at the back of the peloton.

German sprinter Marcel Kittel steered clear of trouble and claimed the stage in a sprint finish, taking his tally to five stage wins since the race started.

But Frenchman Romain Bardet, who is third overall behind race leader Chris Froome, was not so fortunate. He hit the deck and slightly hurt his knee, but the AG2R La Mondiale rider was able to continue after changing bikes and did not lose any time.

"It was a nervous day and I was caught in a crash," said Bardet, who is trying to become the first Frenchman to win the Tour since Bernard Hinault last managed the feat in 1985.

"It's never enjoyable to fall. I just have to soak it up and to wait for better days."



The pack with Denmark's Jakob Fuglsang, in fourth position in blue jersey, passes fields of sunflowers during the eleventh stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 203.5 kilometers (126.5 miles) with start in Eymet and finish in Pau, France, Wednesday, July 12, 2017.

AP Photo/Christophe Ena

Two-time champion Alberto Contador went down twice, while second-place Fabio Aru lost one of his Astana teammates when Dario Cataldo was forced to retire with a broken wrist after a crash in the feed zone midway through the stage.

Fifth-place Jakob Fuglsang, another Astana rider expected to play a key role alongside Aru in the mountains, was caught in the same crash.

Though he was able to reach the finish, Astana later said in a statement that Fuglsang had suffered two minor

fractures in his left wrist and left elbow. However, they will not prevent him from starting Thursday's stage.

"It was a nervous day," Froome said of the crashes. "Everything was good on our side."

Froome kept his overall lead intact ahead of the big battle in the Pyrenees. He has an 18 second-lead over Aru, with Bardet 51 seconds off the pace. Trailing 55 seconds behind Froome in the general classification, Rigoberto Uran remains in contention and Fuglsang is still within reach of the

podium, 1:37 behind the yellow jersey.

Thursday's stage will be extremely difficult, with six categorized climbs — three of them either rated Category 1 or "hors categorie" — beyond categorizing. It features a short, but steep uphill finish at an altitude of 1,580 meters (5,200 feet).

Froome described the finish as "quite savage."

"If someone blows in those few hundred meters, there could be some really significant time gaps," the Team Sky leader said. "One of the really key stages of

this year's race."

Froome also expects Contador to try and wreak havoc during Friday's shorter stage to Foix. Contador has already lost 5:15 overall, but could still ruin the Team Sky masterplan with some relentless attacks on his favorite ground.

"He's never shy to attack from far out. We'd be ready for that," said Froome, adding that his team is "not going to allow anyone to come back on GC (General Classification)."

A sprint specialist, Kittel has now won 14 Tour de

France stages in five appearances at cycling's showcase event, a record for a German rider.

Kittel's power in the bunch sprint could not be matched on Wednesday and the Quick-Step Floors rider easily beat Dylan Groenewegen and Edvald Boasson Hagen by half a bike's length, easing up well before the line as he extended his lead in the points classification.

Kittel has lost only one sprint since the Tour started and has been in a class of his own since sprint rivals Mark Cavendish and Arnaud Demare left the race.

"It was a nervy day," Kittel said. "It could have been worse with all the wind."

Three riders — Frederick Backaert, Marco Marcato and Maciej Bodnar escaped from the pack right from the start at the picturesque town of Eymet in the Dordogne, a tourist hotspot with its castles, caves and other sights.

They built a lead of about four minutes over a laid-back peloton, but the breakaway had few chances of succeeding on the flat, straight roads. The peloton trailed by 30 seconds with 30 kilometers left when Bodnar attacked to go on his own.

The Polish rider went all out, using his time trial skills to resist the peloton's pursuit as long as possible. But despite looking for the best possible aerodynamics position in the downhill section leading to Pau, he was swallowed up with just 250 meters left.

"I thought, 'Oof. That was close,'" Kittel said of Bodnar's effort. "This time, the sprinters won."

## Westbrook, Biles win athlete of year honors at The ESPYS

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Russell Westbrook won best male athlete at The ESPYS, while Olympic gymnast Simone Biles earned best female athlete honors Wednesday night.

The 25th annual show honoring the past year's top athletes and sports moments was hosted by Peyton Manning, who humorously mocked his reputation as a control freak and an overexposed commercial pitchman in the retired NFL quarterback's opening monologue.

Westbrook was the NBA MVP, led the league in scoring and set a record for most triple-doubles in a season with 42. The Oklahoma City Thunder star won the trophy over Kris Bryant of the Chicago Cubs, Sidney Crosby of the Pittsburgh Penguins and Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps.

"It's been an unbelievable journey for me," said West-

brook, a fashion fiend who adjusted his black shirt and green pants with wide white stripes before he spoke. "I want to make sure I look good first."

Biles became the most decorated U.S. Olympic gymnast at the Rio de Janeiro Games, winning five medals, including four golds and a bronze. She beat out Olympic swimmer Katie Ledecky, WNBA star Candace Parker and Serena Williams for the honor.

"Ever since Rio it has been an amazing year," Biles said. "I want to thank you all for believing in me."

She was one of three double winners. Biles also won best female Olympic athlete.

Phelps won record-setting performance for extending his record Olympic medal haul and as best male Olympic athlete.

Aaron Rodgers won best NFL player and shared best play with then-Green Bay

Packers teammate Jared Cook. Another Packer, Jordy Nelson, earned best comeback honors.

The biggest ovation of the night belonged to former first lady Michelle Obama, who posthumously honored Eunice Kennedy Shriver with the Arthur Ashe Courage Award for championing the rights and acceptance of people with intellectual disabilities through her founding of Special Olympics. Her son, Tim Shriver, accepted the trophy.

"Once a great first lady, still a great first lady," Shriver told Obama as the crowd roared its approval.

The Patriots and Falcons shared the best-game award for the Super Bowl, won in a furious comeback by New England.

LeBron James, a five-time winner last year, was named best NBA player. Mike Trout of the Los Angeles Angels won best MLB player, while Crosby won best NHL player.



Switzerland's Roger Federer returns to Canada's Milos Raonic during their Men's Singles Quarterfinal Match on day nine at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London Wednesday, July 12, 2017.

AP Photo/Tim Ireland

## WIMBLEDON: Federer advances

Continued from 1B

though, Murray limped, bothered by a sore left hip.

As the match wore on, the hitch in Murray's step became more pronounced, his shots less effective. And Querrey, an American seeded 24th, took full advantage, hitting 27 aces and dominating down the stretch to stun Murray, and a partisan Centre Court crowd, with a 3-6, 6-4, 6-7 (4), 6-1, 6-1 victory, earning a spot in the initial Grand Slam semifinal of his career.

"I am still in a little bit of shock myself," said Querrey, the first U.S. man to reach a major semifinal since Andy Roddick was the 2009 Wimbledon runner-up.

Another quarterfinal surprise arrived later Wednesday, taking out yet another member of the sport's Big 4 and owner of multiple Wimbledon titles: Novak Djokovic stopped playing because of a right elbow injury while trailing 2010 runner-up Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic 7-6 (2), 2-0. Djokovic's elbow was massaged by a trainer during a medical timeout after the opening set. A day earlier, during his fourth-round match, Djokovic also took a medical timeout.

"It was only getting worse," said Djokovic, explaining his elbow was in the most pain when he hit serves and forehands. "Unfortunately today was the worst day. Probably the fact that I played yesterday, kind of days adding up, as I've said before, it wasn't helping at all."

The owner of three championships at the All England Club, and 12 major

trophies overall, said his elbow has been bothering him for more than a year, that he opted against surgery and that he will consider taking a break from the tour.

Time off has paid dividends for Roger Federer, who missed the last half of 2016 to allow his surgically repaired left knee heal, then skipped the clay-court season this year. He, Djokovic, Murray and Rafael Nadal combined to win the past 14 Wimbledon titles, but only Federer now remains in the field.

The 35-year-old Federer, who has won seven of his record 18 Grand Slam championships at the All England Club, is the grass-court tournament's oldest semifinalist since Ken Rosewall in 1974 at age 39. Federer produced a straightforward 6-4, 6-2, 7-6 (4) victory over Milos Raonic, the man who beat him in last year's semifinals.

On Friday, Federer will face Berdych for a berth in the final. Querrey meets Marin Cilic of Croatia, who got past 16th-seeded Gilles Muller 3-6, 7-6 (6), 7-5, 5-7, 6-1 with the help of 33 aces. Muller eliminated Nadal in the fourth round.

Querrey hit 27 aces against Murray and was impeccable for portions of the match, finishing with 70 winners and only 30 unforced errors. He also managed to move past one really bad mistake in the third-set tiebreaker: an over-head that he dumped into the bottom of the net.

"He was dictating all of the points," Murray said.

And Murray was fading. From 1-all in the fourth, Querrey grabbed eight games in a row to take that

set and lead 3-0 in the last.

"I didn't start my best, but I just kept with it. Kept swinging away and then really found a groove in the fourth and fifth set," Querrey said. "And everything kind of seemed to be falling my way then."

It's the second year in a row the 29-year-old Californian upset the defending champion and No. 1 seed at the All England Club. In 2016, he ended Djokovic's 30-match Grand Slam winning streak by beating him in the third round.

This is Querrey's 42nd Grand Slam tournament, the most ever played by a man in the Open era before getting to his first semifinal.

And there were moments along the way when Querrey himself doubted he'd ever accomplish this.

"Last year definitely kind of gave me a new boost that I could do it. But there have been times in my career," he said, "where I definitely thought: If had to bet — 'Am I going to make a semi?' — I probably would have gone, 'No.'"

But he's won three straight five-setters.

Murray, meanwhile, has been dealing with that hip. Before Wimbledon, he skipped some practice sessions and pulled out of two exhibition matches.

His serve speeds slowed in the latter stages Wednesday. His backhands didn't have their usual verve. He couldn't play his usual court-covering defense.

"I was pretty close today. It wasn't like I was, like, a million miles away from winning the match," Murray said. "Obviously, the end was a struggle."

## MARINERS: Next two weeks critical

Continued from 1B

"We have most of the guys healthy. We just have to be consistent. That's been the issue," slugger Nelson Cruz said.

THE GOOD: Cruz is leading the American League in RBIs with 70 at the break despite playing through leg injuries during big chunks of the first half. When healthy, Jean Segura has been the best hitter in the AL and Seattle may have figured out its outfield of the future between Mitch Haniger, Guillermo Heredia and Ben Gamel, who was hitting .323 at the break.

On the pitching side, Ariel Miranda wasn't supposed to be in the rotation at the start of the season but injuries made him the ace for much of the first half. He went 7-4 with a 4.15 ERA. James Paxton, when healthy, showed signs of being at the top of Seattle's rotation going forward.

THE BAD: Injuries. Paxton, Cruz, Segura, Haniger, Robinson Cano, Felix Hernandez and Hisashi Iwakuma all missed time with injuries and while all



AP Photo/Ted S. Warren, File

In this May 31, 2017, file photo, Seattle Mariners pitcher Felix Hernandez, who at this time was on the disabled list, sits in the dugout during a baseball game against the Colorado Rockies, in Seattle.

but Iwakuma have returned, the impact of their absences may ultimately be too much to overcome. Kyle Seager finished the first half hitting just .248. Mike Zunino had a huge June but was that an anomaly or can that become the norm? Seattle's bullpen has been overused due to the injuries and that led to inconsistency.

WHAT'S AHEAD: Seattle's schedule makes the first

two weeks after the All-Star break critical in determining where the Mariners go. After a six-game road trip, the Mariners return home for 10 games against both New York teams and Boston. If facing the top two teams in the AL East isn't difficult enough, it's just the precursor to an awful August where Seattle plays just seven games at home and has road trips of nine and 12 games.