

= 2015 Eneco Tour =

The 2015 Eneco Tour was a road cycling stage race that took place in the Netherlands and Belgium between 10 and 16 August 2015 . It was the 11th edition of the Eneco Tour stage race and was the twenty @-@ first race of the 2015 UCI World Tour .

The Eneco Tour is an unusual race in the cycling season : it primarily favours classics riders rather than climbers . The first three stages of the race were suitable for sprinters ; the fourth stage was an individual time trial ; and the final three stages were suitable for the classics riders . Elia Viviani (Team Sky) won the first stage and was the first rider to wear the leader 's jersey . Jesper Asselman (Team Roompot) took over the lead after the second stage due to time bonuses , before losing it in the time trial to Jos van Emden (LottoNL ? Jumbo) . Wilco Kelderman (also LottoNL ? Jumbo) took the lead after the fifth stage , but lost it to Tim Wellens (Lotto ? Soudal) the following day . Wellens defended his lead on the final stage to win his second successive Eneco Tour ; he had been the defending champion after victory in 2014 . Greg Van Avermaet (BMC Racing Team) was second , with Kelderman third .

The points classification was won by André Greipel (Lotto ? Soudal) and the combativity award by Gijs Van Hoecke (Topsport Vlaanderen ? Baloise) . Lotto ? Soudal also won the team classification .

= = Teams = =

The 17 UCI World Tour teams were automatically entitled and obliged to start the race ; three UCI Professional Continental teams were invited as wildcards to form a twenty @-@ team peloton . Each team entered eight riders to form a 160 @-@ rider peloton ; one rider , BMC Racing Team 's Daniel Oss , withdrew before the race due to a fall in training , so 159 riders started the race .

= = Schedule = =

The first three stages of the race were flat road stages , with no classified climbs . All of these stages were expected to suit the sprinters , though crosswinds had the potential to make the stages more difficult . The decisive section of the race was expect to start with the individual time trial on stage 4 . The final three stages of the race were expected to suit classics riders : the fifth and sixth stages were hilly stages in the style of the Ardennes classics , while the final stage used roads that feature in the cobbled classics . One change to the regulations in 2015 was the introduction of a " golden kilometre " , a series of three intermediate sprints on each road stage approximately 20 kilometres (12 mi) before the finish . The first three riders across each of these sprint points won bonus seconds in the general classification . This replicated the system from the 2015 Tour of Belgium , where the golden kilometre system had played a part in the victory of Greg Van Avermaet (BMC Racing Team) .

= = Pre @-@ race favourites = =

Most World Tour stage races are won by strong climbers . The Eneco Tour is unusual because the favourites for overall victory were classics riders ? those who perform strongly in the Ardennes classics and the cobbled classics that feature in the early part of the cycling season .

The defending champion was Tim Wellens (Lotto ? Soudal) , who won the 2014 Eneco Tour in the penultimate stage . He was one of the favourites again , although Cycling Weekly predicted that he would be given less freedom to attack as the defending champion . One other former winner of the race took part in 2015 : Lars Boom (Astana) had won in 2012 . He was another strong favourite in 2015 , especially as the race included a longer time trial than other recent editions of the race . Other favourites included Niki Terpstra (Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step) , who was third in 2012 , Greg Van Avermaet (BMC Racing Team) , who was in strong form after coming close to victory in the Clásica de San Sebastián , Philippe Gilbert (also BMC) and Wilco Kelderman (LottoNL ? Jumbo) .

The first three stages of the race were flat and therefore particularly suitable for sprinters . Prominent sprinters taking part in the race included André Greipel (Lotto ? Soudal) , Giacomo Nizzolo (Trek Factory Racing) , Elia Viviani (Team Sky) , Andrea Guardini (Astana) and Edward Theuns (Topsport Vlaanderen ? Baloise) .

= = Stages = =

= = = Stage 1 = = =

10 August 2015 ? Bolsward to Bolsward , 183 @. @ 5 km (114 @. @ 0 mi)

The first stage was a 183 @. @ 5 @- @ kilometre (114 @. @ 0 mi) flat stage in the Netherlands , starting and finishing in Bolsward . The race began with a large loop south of the town , through Sneek and then north along the coast from Oudemirdum , then returning to Bolsward . After the first time across the finish line , the race turned north for a shorter loop , through Franeker and then south along the coast from Harlingen , before returning to Bolsward for the second time across the finish line . There were then two laps of a 20 @. @ 4 @- @ kilometre (12 @. @ 7 mi) finishing circuit . The stage contained no climbs .

The day 's early breakaway was formed by Nathan Haas (Cannondale ? Garmin) , Frederik Veuchelen (Wanty ? Groupe Gobert) , Laurens De Vreese (Astana) , Jesper Asselman (Team Roompot) , Nico Denz (AG2R La Mondiale) , and David Boucher (FDJ) . The racing conditions were fairly easy , as there were no crosswinds . The breakaway 's lead was over seven minutes at one point , but this was quickly closed down by the peloton and reduced to three minutes with 40 kilometres (25 mi) remaining . There were three intermediate sprints in the space of 1 kilometre (0 @. @ 62 mi) , described as a " golden kilometre " , which were won by Denz , Asselman and de Vreese respectively . The breakaway was then caught and Team Sky and Lotto ? Soudal drove the peloton towards the finish line . Sky 's Andy Fenn was leading out his teammate Elia Viviani and , with 500 metres (1 @, @ 600 ft) remaining , Viviani was able to follow the wheel of André Greipel (Lotto ? Soudal) . Greipel opened his sprint with a long distance to the finish line and Viviani was able to follow him and then come past him to take the stage victory . Danny van Poppel (Trek Factory Racing) finished second and Jean @- @ Pierre Drucker (BMC Racing Team) third , with Greipel in fourth place .

= = = Stage 2 = = =

11 August 2015 ? Breda to Breda , 180 km (110 mi)

The second stage of the race started in the south of the Netherlands , starting and finishing in Breda . The course was 180 @. @ 7 kilometres (112 @. @ 3 mi) in length and , like the first stage , was entirely flat . The stage began with a loop to the south of Breda , around Ulvenhout , then crossed the finish line to begin a much larger loop . This second loop took the riders north to Wagenberg , then south @- @ west to Bosschenhoofd and south @- @ east to Meer , where the Tour entered Belgium for the first time . Here the route turned north again , passing to the east of Ulvenhout and returning to cross the finish line for the second time . The final part of the stage was two laps of a finishing circuit to the east of Breda ; these laps included the golden kilometre .

The early breakaway was formed by two riders , Gijs Van Hoecke (Topsport Vlaanderen ? Baloise) and , for the second day running , Jesper Asselman . The two riders briefly had a lead of seven minutes , but this was controlled by Team Sky , especially Ian Stannard . Asselman allowed Van Hoecke to win the two early sprints for the combativity jersey and , in return , was allowed to win all three sprints in the golden kilometre . The two riders had a two @- @ minute advantage at this point . In the main peloton , Philippe Gilbert and Andriy Hryvko (Astana) competed for the remaining one @- @ second bonuses : Gilbert won the first and third ; Hryvko won the second . Asselman and Van Hoecke were then caught by the peloton ? led by Lotto ? Soudal ? with 15 kilometres (9 @. @ 3 mi)

remaining . Despite several crashes in the final kilometres of the stage , the peloton came to the finish together . Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step attempted to lead out Tom Boonen as they entered the final 1 kilometre (0 @.@ 62 mi) , but Lotto @-@ Soudal were able to bring Greipel to the front to open his sprint with 150 metres (490 ft) to the finish line . He finished comfortably ahead of Guarnieri , with Boonen in third .

Asselman finished in 78th place on the stage , in the same time as Greipel . As a result of the bonus seconds won in the golden kilometre , he moved into the overall lead of the race . Greipel was in second place , five seconds behind and on the same time as Elia Viviani . This was the first time that any rider from Team Roompot had worn a leader 's jersey in a UCI race .

== Stage 3 ==

12 August 2015 ? Beveren to Ardooie , 171 @.@ 9 km (106 @.@ 8 mi)

The third stage of the race took place entirely in Belgium . It was a 171 @.@ 9 @-@ kilometre (106 @.@ 8 mi) course that contained no classified climbs ; it was the final flat stage of the race . The route began in Beveren with a circuit around the municipality . The course then took the riders west as far as Bassevelde , before turning south @-@ west towards Ardooie . After the riders crossed the finish line for the first time , they began two laps of a finishing circuit around the town ; these included the golden kilometre .

The breakaway was formed by three riders early in the race . These were David Boucher (FDJ) , Edward Theuns (Topsport Vlaanderen ? Baloise) and Frederik Veuchelen (Wanty ? Groupe Gobert) . They built a lead that reached four minutes , but were always under control by the peloton . Team Roompot did a lot of the work at the front of the peloton controlling the breakaway . With 48 kilometres (30 mi) remaining , Gorka Izagirre (Movistar Team) and Hugo Houle (AG2R La Mondiale) touched wheels and crashed after a sharp corner . Houle continued , but Izagirre was forced to abandon the race and was taken to hospital in an ambulance following a blow to his head on a traffic signal . Theuns won all three of the golden kilometre sprints ; the nine bonus seconds moved him up to fifth place overall at the end of the stage . The breakaway was caught with 20 kilometres (12 mi) remaining and , apart from a brief attack from Nathan Haas (Cannondale ? Garmin) , the peloton came to the finish together .

The peloton was led first by Giant ? Alpecin and then by Lotto ? Soudal and Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step . The peloton split slightly due to Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step 's work . Arnaud Démare (FDJ) was the first to start sprinting . Tom Boonen , however , was able to follow him , despite clashing wheels at one point , and came past in the final metres to take the stage victory . Démare was second with Viviani third . Boonen moved up into second place overall following the stage , one second behind Asselman and on the same time as Viviani .

After the stage , Boucher was thrown out of the race by his team . He had recently been told that his contract would not be renewed and had disobeyed team orders not to go in the day 's breakaway .

== Stage 4 ==

13 August 2015 ? Hoogerheide to Hoogerheide , 13 @.@ 9 km (8 @.@ 6 mi) (ITT)

Stage 4 was a 13 @.@ 9 @-@ kilometre (8 @.@ 6 mi) individual time trial around Hoogerheide in the Netherlands . The course was fairly flat , with a slight downhill section towards the start and a gentle uphill section towards the finish , the Rijzendeweg .

An early leading time was set by Adriano Malori (Movistar Team) , with a time of 16 ' 40 " and an average speed of 49 @.@ 99 km / h (31 @.@ 06 mph) . Soon afterwards , however , that time was beaten by Jos van Emden (LottoNL ? Jumbo) . Van Emden was seven seconds quicker than Malori and was the first rider to complete the course at an average speed of over 50 km / h (31 mph) . The only other rider to come close to Van Emden 's time was his teammate Wilco Kelderman , who finished the course five seconds behind to take second place . Van Emden won the stage , the first WorldTour victory of the year for LottoNL ? Jumbo . Van Emden also moved into the overall

lead of the race .

Several other contenders for overall victory finished the course in good times . These included BMC 's Greg Van Avermaet and Philippe Gilbert and Astana 's Lars Boom . Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step 's riders were less successful , however . Their best @-@ placed rider was Julian Alaphilippe , 41 seconds behind Van Emden . Niki Terpstra , who had been considered a favourite for the overall victory , suffered mechanical problems , changed bikes twice and finished 1 ' 26 " back .

= = = Stage 5 = = =

14 August 2015 ? Riemst to Sittard @-@ Geleen , 179 @.@ 6 km (111 @.@ 6 mi)

The fifth stage of the race was the first hilly stage , with 23 categorised climbs . Many of these climbs (known as hellingen) feature in the Amstel Gold Race . It began in Riemst in the Belgian province of Limburg . The riders completed one and a half laps of a circuit of the town ; this included the first climb of the day , the Muizenberg . The course then left the town to the east , crossing the Halembaye , before crossing the border into the Dutch province of Limburg . As the route continued to the east , the riders climbed the Heiweg , the Bergenhuizen , the Camerig and the Schuttebergsweg . The route then turned to the north , though it frequently turned back on itself to take in the various climbs . These included the Mamelisserweg , the Gulperbergweg , the Eyserbosweg , the Hulsberg , the Schanternelsweg , the Fromberg and the Sweikhuizerberg . After this , the route entered two and a half laps of a finishing circuit around Sittard @-@ Geleen . On the two complete laps , the riders climbed the Windraak , the Kollenberg , the Sittarderweg and the Weg langs Stammen . The golden kilometre came on the first lap between the last two of these climbs . After the two complete laps , the riders climbed the Windraak once more , before finishing in Sittard @-@ Geleen .

The breakaway was formed after 60 kilometres (37 mi) by Dylan van Baarle (Cannondale ? Garmin) and Johan Le Bon (FDJ) . Van Baarle was the better placed of the riders , 29 seconds behind Van Emden , with Le Bon ten seconds further behind . LottoNL ? Jumbo controlled the peloton on behalf of Van Emden , assisted by Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step . Van Baarle and Le Bon had a lead of five minutes at one point ; this was reduced to three and a half minutes with 35 kilometres (22 mi) remaining . The breakaway riders did not contest the bonus seconds in the golden kilometre , though Van Avermaet and Gilbert took the remaining seconds in the main peloton . A heavy thunderstorm started as the riders entered the finishing circuit and disrupted the chasing group , with no team taking responsibility for the chase ; Le Bon and van Baarle had a lead of over two minutes as they entered the final lap . Lars Petter Nordhaug (Team Sky) and Lars Boom (Astana) both put in brief attacks but soon sat up . The lead was reduced to just over a minute with 15 kilometres (9 @.@ 3 mi) remaining ; at this point , as the riders crossed the Weg langs Stammen , André Greipel put in an attack and was joined by Wellens , Kelderman , Giant ? Alpecin 's Georg Preidler and Orica ? GreenEDGE 's Magnus Cort to form a chase group .

The five @-@ man chase group did not work well together , with only Greipel and Wellens consistently working at the front of the group . Kelderman put in a brief surge on the final climb of the Windraak to reduce van Baarle and Le Bon 's lead , but the group was not able to bring the leading pair back . Van Baarle and Le Bon worked together until the final 2 kilometres (1 @.@ 2 mi) , when Le Bon attacked in the slipstream of one of the motorbikes following the race . Van Baarle continued chasing but , with both riders exhausted from their efforts through the day , he was unable properly to regain contact . Le Bon was able to hold on in the sprint to take the stage victory , with Van Baarle finishing second on the same time . Cort won the sprint for third , with Wellens and Kelderman on the same time . Kelderman took over the race lead , one second ahead of Le Bon , with Van Emden dropping to fourth .

= = = Stage 6 = = =

15 August 2015 ? Heerlen to Houffalize , 208 @.@ 6 km (129 @.@ 6 mi)

The sixth stage was another hilly stage , with 14 climbs coming in 208 @.@ 6 kilometres (129

@. @ 6 mi) . The race started in the Netherlands , in Heerlen , with a circuit that included the climb of the Bergseweg . The route left the town to the south , crossing the Mamelisserweg and the Schuttebergsweg before entering Belgium . The route continued to the south as it entered the Ardennes . The riders climbed the Col de Spitzberg , the Côte la Firme Libert and the Côte de Wanneranval on the way to the finishing town of Houffalize . The course first climbed the Côte Saint @-@ Roch ; this climb is part of the Liège ? Bastogne ? Liège course and is 1 kilometre (0 @. @ 62 mi) in length with an average gradient of 11 % . The route loops around to the south of the town before entering two laps of a finishing circuit . The circuit crossed the Côte Saint @-@ Roch again , then the Rue Bois des Moines , the Côte d 'Achoffe and the Côte Petite Mormont , before finishing in Houffalize . The significant difference from previous year 's editions of the Eneco Tour was the absence of La Redoute from the finish .

The day 's early breakaway was formed by Jan Polanc (Lampre ? Merida) , Matthias Brändle (IAM Cycling) , Nikias Arndt (Giant ? Alpecin) , Sébastien Turgot (AG2R La Mondiale) and Jérôme Baugnies (Wanty ? Groupe Gobert) . Though they had a four @-@ minute lead at one stage , they were caught as the race entered the finishing circuit . Andrey Amador (Movistar Team) was the first to attack from the peloton , with numerous other attacks following , and a new , eight @-@ man leading group was formed . This did not initially include Kelderman , the race leader , but he was able to rejoin the lead group as it grew to nineteen riders . Brändle attacked again and briefly led the race , but he was caught by work from Van Avermaet . Simon Geschke (Giant ? Alpecin) attacked and was joined by Michael Rogers (Tinkoff ? Saxo) . Wellens soon attacked from the group behind ; he caught and passed Geschke and Rogers on the Côte Saint @-@ Roch , then won nine seconds in the sprints in the golden kilometre . Van Avermaet attacked from the main group ; he too passed Geschke and Rogers to take second place in all three sprints and win six seconds .

Kelderman was once again dropped from the main group and was then again able to rejoin it , but the group was not able to chase Wellens down . Geschke and Van Avermaet rode together , while Jan Bakelants (AG2R La Mondiale) and Tom @-@ Jelte Slagter (Cannondale ? Garmin) attacked from the main group . Wellens 's lead extended during the downhill run into Houffalize ; he won the stage by 49 seconds ahead of Van Avermaet , with Geschke third . Wellens moved into the overall lead , 1 ' 03 " ahead of Van Avermaet , with Kelderman dropping to third .

= = = Stage 7 = = =

16 August 2015 ? Sint @-@ Pieters @-@ Leeuw to Geraardsbergen , 193 @. @ 8 km (120 @. @ 4 mi)

The final stage of the race took place entirely in Belgium . It was a 193 @. @ 8 @-@ kilometre (120 @. @ 4 mi) route that started in Sint @-@ Pieters @-@ Leeuw on the outskirts of Brussels and ended in Geraardsbergen in the area of East Flanders known as the Flemish Ardennes . The principal feature of stage 6 was the series of cobbled climbs . The stage began with a circuit in Sint @-@ Pieters @-@ Leeuw , then headed west . The first climb was the Pelikaanberg , but this was the only climb in the first 80 kilometres (50 mi) of racing . The final 110 kilometres (68 mi) included 16 climbs . The first of these , the Mont , came as the route turned north towards Oudenaarde and was followed by the Kanarieberg and the Edelareberg . Here the riders turned to the east and crossed a series of climbs also used in the Tour of Flanders : the Leberg , the Berendries and the Valkenberg . The riders then crossed the Tenbosse before entering the two and a half laps of the finishing circuit . This included four climbs : the Denderoordberg , the Muur van Geraardsbergen (the final climb in the Tour of Flanders until 2012) , the Bosberg and the Okerzelerstraat . After two complete laps , the route finished halfway up the Muur van Geraardsbergen .

There was a fourteen @-@ rider breakaway that formed at the beginning of the day 's racing . This group never had a large advantage and broke up on the first ascent of the Muur . The lead group after the climb was formed of three men : Manuel Quinziato (BMC Racing Team) , Björn Leukemans (Wanty ? Groupe Gobert) and Yves Lampaert (Etixx ? Quick @-@ Step) . Attacks came from the main group and eventually a ten @-@ man chasing group was formed . The leading three riders kept a lead of approximately a minute as riders came and went from the chasing group ;

the chasers were caught by the main peloton (led by Lotto ? Soudal) with approximately 10 kilometres (6 @. @ 2 mi) to the finish line .

Quinziato , the weakest climber of the three leading riders , attacked at the summit of the Denderoordberg , the penultimate climb of the day , quickly dropping Lampaert . Leukemans attempted to hold Quinziato 's wheel , but was dropped on the flat . Quinziato soon had half a minute 's lead and entered the base of the Muur alone . He had more difficulty on the climb , however : as Leukemans and Lampaert reached the cobbles , they quickly began to catch him . Quinziato eventually crossed the line with just a few seconds to spare . This was the second professional victory of his career , nine years after his first , which had come in the 2006 Eneco Tour . Wellens finished in a large group 42 seconds back and sealed his overall victory in the race .

= = Classification leadership table = =

There were four principal classifications in the race . The first of these was the general classification , calculated by adding up the time each rider took to ride each stage . Time bonuses were applied for winning stages (10 , 6 and 4 seconds to the first three riders) and for the three " golden kilometre " sprints on each stage . At each of these sprints , the first three riders were given 3- , 2- and 1 @-@ second bonuses respectively . The rider with the lowest cumulative time was the winner of the general classification . The rider leading the classification won a white jersey .

There was also a points classification . On each road stage the riders were awarded points for finishing in the top 10 places , with other points awarded for intermediate sprints . The rider with the most accumulated points was the leader of the classification and won the red jersey . The combativity classification was based solely on points won at the intermediate sprints ; the leading rider won the green jersey . The final stage was a team classification : on each stage the times of the best three riders on each team were added up . The team with the lowest cumulative time over the seven stages won the team classification .