

Former LMC Cyclist Ready For Garmin-Sharp

Written by Peter Hymas, Cycling News
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The WorldTour makes its first foray into Europe at Paris-Nice, with a 2.9km prologue time trial kicking off the eight-day race on Sunday, and Andrew

Talansky (Garmin-Sharp) is ready. Now entering his third year at the WorldTour level, all spent with the Garmin organisation, the 24-year-old American faces the first test of a season in which he expects to make his Tour de France debut in July.

"What I'm looking for at Paris-Nice is the kind of the improvement I saw year-to-year in the Vuelta last year - from being who knows what to being 7th overall," Talansky told Cyclingnews from his residence in Girona, Spain. "That's what's going to happen this year in Paris-Nice. I'm going there very conservatively to say I'm racing for the top five but you know the podium is a goal and it's really a wide-open race this year."

Talansky made his WorldTour debut at Paris-Nice in his first year with Garmin, 2011, where he finished 61st overall but showed glimpses of his potential with a 7th place finish in the stage 6 time trial. The American has made stellar progress since then, featuring his first pro victory in both a road stage and stage race last year at the Tour de l'Ain, a top-ten finish at the Vuelta a Espana, and a second place overall (by 12 seconds) to Bradley Wiggins (Sky) at the Tour of Romandie where Talansky was also denied victory in the concluding time trial by mere fractions of a second at the hands of the flying Briton.

While not intimately acquainted with this year's Paris-Nice parcours, Talansky likes what he sees, particularly on the final day.

"I actually don't know any of the climbs that well," said Talansky. "I've looked at it all on paper - I've looked at the profiles - and it looks good. It looks like it's going to be a really hard race, which is exactly what I need. By the time we get to that Col d'Èze time trial, even though it's only 20 minutes on the last stage, people are going to be really tired and that's usually when I can excel. That looks pretty much like my ideal time trial.

"If somebody else doesn't make the race hard then we will definitely make it hard. With the race being a little more open this year I think there's enough people who have an opportunity to be on the podium or to win that it's going to be an exciting race. I've been preparing all winter for it and I feel I'm where I need to be. Now it's just a matter of going and doing it."

The seeds to Talansky's 2013 season have been sown during winter training and his off-season training block augers well for this year's racing programme.

"This was probably the smoothest winter I've had since being on Garmin," said Talansky.

"Things just really clicked. I got into a good rhythm in the US, I base myself out of Napa Valley when I'm there. You have all the roads you need and a nice mix of weather. You have cold, wet days - but you need those because you have to race in it - and then you get plenty of sun. It was good.

"In one sense a lot did change this winter in that it was my first full winter working with my coach Jesse Moore. He's a California-based guy and it's very scientific-based training - everything has a purpose and it's very, very specific. I followed the program to a T, I have 100 percent trust in him, and it's paying off."

Talansky's season kicked off at the Tour Méditerranéen on February 6, but unfortunately he was denied the chance to top his 2011 fourth place overall result as the Garmin-Sharp

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organisation was the victim of a massive theft in which all of the squad's road bikes were stolen overnight prior to stage four. While the team withdrew from the race, Talansky was still able to test himself in the stage 2 time trial where he finished in 11th place, 59 seconds down on stage winner Lars Boom (Team Blanco).

"For me, personally, I was just there to do a time trial and get in an uphill finish. It would have been nice to get to race up Mont Faron but for my preparation for the season and the races it wasn't very crucial. I can simulate an uphill race in training just as well as I can in a smaller race.

"We have all the data now with power and I got the information I needed, the team got the information they needed," Talansky said of his time trial performance. "You have a four-minute climb at the end but it was 30 minutes of pancake flat roads with a huge amount of wind - that's not my specialty at all. It was actually exactly what I was looking for and hoping for regarding how the numbers went so it was good to get a half hour effort in and at Paris-Nice it's just going to be 20 minutes. Going into Paris-Nice it's very promising."

Tour de France debut in the making

Talansky has competed at the Vuelta a Espana in each of his prior two seasons with Garmin, but this year he's focused on the Tour de France where he hopes to make his French Grand Tour debut this coming July.

"That's what my season is based around. Barring accident or illness I will be there. You're not racing it until you're there on the starting line, but they told me to be ready for that and I will be come July," said Talansky.

"It will be exciting since it's my first Tour, but it's the Tour so everything will be a little bit harder and a little bit bigger. But at the end of the day when you get to a final climb you still just have to do everything you can to get up that climb and when you're doing a time trial it's still just a time trial. That's just the way I'm looking at it.

"To the public it's the biggest race in the world, but at the Vuelta last year we had some of the best riders in the world with Contador, Valverde, Rodriguez and Froome. The list just kind of gets longer when you go to the Tour, everyone's just that touch better, but it's still a bike race."

Photo Courtesy: Andrew Talansky, LMC Athletics