

I awoke with a start from my involuntary nap at exactly 11:00 CET 5/15. Why was the train stopped? Where were we? Oh! Close laptop, grab tickets, stuff into patent McWilliam UK hold-all and dash. Oh shoot, my power lead was plugged in; these Swiss trains have unexpected features. Dash back. Get lead, dash out again. Now where is the platform for Basel? My ticket! In my hold-all. Rummage, rummage. That's not it, 's not. Not that. No, neither. Left it on the train!? Run back, train still standing. Find right carriage, old seat. No! Then the kind old lady who had been sitting across the aisle from me said "I saw you put your ticket in your bag". Rummage some more. Ah, that's it in the bright envelope and not the folder for the Glacier Express. Phew....

The thing with sleep is it catches up with you eventually and so it did with me on Sunday morning as the train I was on approached Bern Hauptbahnhof. In consequence, SOL eventually cost me a further 01:15 hours of my life on top of the c 15:15 hours I had spent racing Lou and kenza for the podium spots in this year's Pb3.

The train had at last started to move again, and it was on its way to? Zurich, non-stop. The conductor on checking my ticket gave out to me, and said you'll have to buy a ticket back to Basel in Zurich. I didn't think so, and in Zurich there was a train back to Basel leaving immediately. The conductor gave out, and said you should have got out in Olten. Ah, I said, I wanted to, but the train didn't stop. He said he should charge me for the extra Streckenkilometern, but he wouldn't this time. I said Danke, Danke vielmals.

From Basel, my next destination was Frankfurt, and a good hour behind the advised schedule I was on the move again. These DB ICs do 200 Sachen and more, so it wasn't long before we were coming into Frankfurt am Main. I looked at my itinerary from SBB and then saw it actually said Frankfurt M Fhf. That'll be the airport then, but this train was terminating in the Hbh. I asked the conductress who was very helpful, and she said you vil have to enquire at the DB Schalter, but get the train from Gleiss Sechs to the airport, get out and seven minutes later the IC to Utrecht will arrive at the same platform. It did, and where it had come from? Basel.

So this is the price you pay for trying to win at SOL. On the upside though, it's not every day you get to see even a little extra of la belle Suisse for free, including a lovely journey through the Jura foothills approaching Basel, and of course the shores of Lake Thun.

What about the race? Well, as per usual bonk was ranking well down after an hour of straightish line sailing, but picked up a bit rounding that first island. Faced with a long tricky downwind leg northward, it was clear that it was going to pay to stay slightly hot to pick up more breeze to the West. Went well for bonk, but also for quite a few others.

Half way down the run, there was a major obstruction in the shape of an island. Name of Muhu. West of it is a narrow passage called Väike Väin, the Small Strait. There's a causeway across it, the Väinatamm, so IRL you can't pass there. Looks a bit shallow as well. But on SOL, there's navigable water everywhere and about six of us went in, whilst the rest of the fleet gybed up the main Suur Strait. There was Lou and kenza and rafa and FtAdams and li'l ol' bonk that I recall and that was the race there and then. Well off the rhumb line and in lighter air our places plummeted but after we gybed it wasn't long before our TWAs started to tighten up and our speeds to pick up, as now holding more breeze we bombed in from the left to round Paralepa kenza 1, Lou 2 and bonk 3. Lou and kenza had ducked into Väike Väin at the very last minute, whilst I had gone in a little earlier. It had given my adversaries that small but important edge.

By now the clock had turned 16:30 UTC, and 10:30 hours of attrition were still to follow. At times kenza got away a bit, but then we hauled him back. At one stage Lou went P1, but it didn't last, and in the end I pipped him by 13 seconds. As reflected on before, these sort of dog fights are very IRL, and in the end it's that one extra small mistake (we're all making them) the other guy makes that gives you those seconds back. Best not to dwell on it. It was close. Thanks again Lou and well done kenza, and thank you SOL and our Estonian friends. A really interesting race.