

Feature Article

Badger-tastic articles about Formula 1

A BADGER IN BELGIUM

by [Benson Jammichello](#) on Sep 6th, 2011

Coming to you a week later than anticipated, this is an account of Badger writer Benson Jammichello's trip to the Belgian Grand Prix at Spa with [IntentsGP](#), purveyors of pre-set up tents at various Grand Prix weekends. You can find them on twitter - [@IntentsGP](#)

Right, where to start? A brief background: Badger was offered the chance to go along to the Belgian Grand Prix with IntentsGP to see what they do and to get a feel for the camping side of F1. This included travelling both ways with the team and helping them set up all of their kit and, needless to say, take it down again.

This account is written in the style of a brief diary and contains my actions, thoughts and general musings on my time in Belgium.

Wednesday, August 24th

Morning

Leave my house in central(ish) London at 12.45am to get on the bus to Heathrow. Consider it an ungodly hour. Begin to question whether I *really* like F1 that much. Decide I do.

Get on N3 in Kennington and then the N9 at Trafalgar Square (which is a great bus by the way - highly recommend it). Arrive at Heathrow c. 0145. Hang around in a lay by for half an hour waiting for Mark from IntentsGP (en route from Bristol to Folkestone) to pick me up. Wonder if this is what my life has come to. Lay bys at 2 in the morning.

Mark from IntentsGP arrives then proceeds to drive van right past me. Wonder if he's taken one look at me and thought better of it. Comes round a second time. Wave like the sea. Get in van. Reflect that London at night is very quiet. Consider I must be sleep deprived.



Chat to Mark on way down. Aware I'm babbling like an idiot. Mark drinks a lot of energy drink. Think it must be to maintain a slight buzzing in the ears to drown me out.

Get to Folkestone at 4am-ish. Have a cup of tea. Like tea. £1.75. Bloody cheek.

Meet Alex (Mark's brother) and Olwyn (their mother) prior to going through the tunnel. Both very nice. Think I'm not at my best, though do admirable job in holding it all together.

Still awake at 0430 - no let up in sight.

Go through tunnel. Sleep for half an hour. Drive to Bruges. Have breakfast. Nice. Lardons. Yummy.

Full up and back on road. One van (driven by Alex) feeling strain as we tonk along Belgian motorways. Not as good as a solid British motorway. Scenery not much kop.

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BADGER BANTER

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- [rachel](#): I always think it's weird to be recognised!

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- [Sambo](#): all the best dean, sure you can use everything that made you a champion on the track to triumph over this too.

- [mark farrell](#): Get well soon Dean and looking forward to seeing you back on the track

- [Calder Leighton](#): Hi badger thanks for the update, good luck Dean hope to see you back out on the track soon where you belong.

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- [Alexis](#): It's Hockenheim in 2012 isn't it?

Play a game to stay entertained. Name as many famous Belgians as you can - Hergé, Hercule Poirot, Justine Henin, Kim Clijsters, Jerome D'Ambrosio. Game over as quickly as I expect. Muse that it isn't a particularly stellar list.

Afternoon

Feel less tired as of 1234 local time. Will I ever need to sleep again? Tweet that I am invincible. 10 minutes pass. Consider I probably will need to sleep again. Try. Indulge in a multitude of micro-sleeps. Wonder if this is how birds sleep. Arrive at answer. Yes.



Arrive at campsite c. 2pm. Erect tents and marquee. Two locals provide "help". They're not good (not that I claim to be a tent-putting-up-genius). Help Mark and Alex to erect some tents and think I might be starting to get the hang of it. Campsite owner is a fearsome woman, with a good line in single word rebuttals. Mostly "no". Ignore her. Continue to erect tents.

Sleep deprivation really setting in. Keep referring to "France" when I mean "Belgium".

Evening

Go with IntentsGP down into Stavelot. Go to a nice restaurant. Eat a Sicilian pizza. Wonder why I've come to Belgium to eat Pizza. Decide I like Pizza. Ignore self.

Indulge in a glass of local beer called "Kwack" as recommended by IntentsGP. Decide they may be very good at putting up tents, but they're less good at recommending beer. Too sweet for me. Wonder how hard it would be to get a pint of Harveys Sussex Best.

Return to campsite; in bed by 2130 UK time. Comfy. Sleep till 0630.

Thursday 25th August

Have a chat to man by wash basins. He has a rat's tail. Still, seems nice enough. Compare seating plans for Grand Prix. British people abroad - maintaining polite conversation since time immemorial.



Have dispensed with the "help" of two locals. Erect last three or four tents.

Next task is to put air beds in tents and put sheets on. Attempt to put a single sheet on a double bed for something approaching 10 minutes. Stop. Get double sheet. Things work better.

Afternoon

IntentsGP guests starting to arrive. Campsite as a whole filling up really quickly. Time spent filling cool boxes with ice blocks, cutlery, BBQ tools and other sundry items.

Evening

Olwyn demonstrates a high level of skill in the kitchen and whips up a lovely dinner of wraps and salad.

Chat to guests over a beer afterwards. Tell them Badger is amazing. Think I manage to convince them. Go to bed. Some minor rowdiness on campsite apparently. Hear nothing. Dead to the world.

Friday, 26th August

Time to Chillax, Lewis? (3)

- [Eddy Worthy](#): Lauren I agree with you totally, controlled aggressive driving is what is needed in F1 so it doesn't become a...

- [lauren fuller](#): i am going to say now, i am a lewis fan. he doesnt need to calm down, imagine if F1 was full of calm drivers, no...



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Jenson goes Joyriding in Manchester

Should feel excited about seeing real F1 cars in action today. Instead, wake up at 0630 again and feel bloody groggy. Stagger around. Decide to go and have breakfast. Eat cereal.

Perform ablutions. Portaloo's still in cracking nick. Bewildered as to how this can be.

Pack bag to go to Spa. Still have no idea which way is up. Get in free taxi shuttle to circuit. Takes all of four minutes. Make a mental note to congratulate IntentsGP on choosing such a conveniently located campsite. Wonder if I should have walked. Discard that notion as ridiculous.

Realise I have forgotten Badger badge. Don't tell Adam, who will probably a) fly over to make sure I have one or b) attack me. Think discretion is the better part of valour.

Enter circuit with full intention of sitting at Les Combes. Take wrong turn and end up at Pouhon (where I watched last season's qualifying). Decide it's pretty good and stay.



Am bathed in glorious sunshine and then, just as quickly, huddling under an umbrella as torrential rain pours down. Now don't regret spending £16 on a pair of waterproofs before departure.

Enjoy FP1.

Afternoon

In break between practice sessions take a stroll down to Les Combes. Decide Pouhon is better. Return and sit in nearly exactly the same spot. Think this probably won't happen on race day.

Notice how place has filled up. Still large gap around me though. Wonder if this has anything to do with lack of shower.

On another note, notice some F1 fans have dodgy beards. Do not include myself in that bracket.

Stop reading my newspaper and spend some time musing. Consider drinking beer at 0900 to be barbaric and reflect on a lack of civilisation. Wonder what world is coming too. Eat three cereal bars during period of reflection. Am no closer to solving The Big Question Of Our Time.

Two gentlemen arrive and lay out large, homemade banners in praise of Schumacher and, I think, Spa. Sign in English. Consider this odd. Smells of paint. Wish they had painted it in creosote. Like the smell of creosote. Gentlemen leave. Worry people will think I own/spent time making sign. Try to look as non-German as possible. Await opportunity to belt out the national anthem and/or Jerusalem.

Hate air horns. Probably used by people who drink beer at 9am.

Enjoy FP2, although wish those around me would bugger off.

Practice finishes - go straight back to campsite as, not to put too fine a point on it, I ache. All over.

Evening

Go back to the campsite. Sit down. Eat food. Chat to man about F1. Go to bed.

Part 2 will be published very soon folks, so stay tuned to hear how Badger's Benson Jammichello got on Saturday and Sunday and whether his waterproofs survived... Read [Part 2 of this account here](#)



Benson's home for a weekend... is it waterproof? He hoped so!

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 by [Benson Jammichello](#) on Sep 5th, 2011

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Saturday, 27th August

Wake up early again. What used to be a novelty now turning into a drag. Walls don't let in light like a tent does.

Not quite as groggy as yesterday, but still want to get to the circuit in good time for qualifying. Decide to sit at Pouhon again.

Portloos at the campsite still clean and usable. Marvel at the wonder of the space/time/campsite vortex that has allowed this to happen.

Put on waterproof trousers and long johns prior to departure. Pat self on back for foresight. Get shuttle bus again with a very porty, genial Belgian driver. Straight on, straight off. Impressed.

Motor up to Pouhon, making sure to take the racing line while walking. Get exactly the same spot as in practice. Pleased. Circuit quite busy at 8.30 in the morning. Where were all these people for first practice yesterday morning? Feel smug that I've been here all weekend which automatically makes me superior. Feeling lasts all of five seconds as I realise I'm still sitting on the side of a hill in the rain.

While waiting for qualifying activities include: watching FP3, reading my magazine, cowering from the rain, and eating cereal bars. Not necessarily in that order.

Heavy downpour. Realise I am sitting in the middle of some sort of natural water run off area for hill. Feel miserable, but pleased I have waterproof trousers on. Note waterproof trousers slightly too small as develop wet feeling on small of back. Adjust coat/waterproof trouser relationship accordingly. Worry about being the victim of a landslide.

Afternoon

Qualifying good. Jenson bad. Lewis impressive. Red Bull boringly good.

Leave straight away again. Body aches. Promise self a grandstand seat for next year.

Back to the campsite. Shuttle bus works like a dream again. Have a nice sit down and a cup of tea. Play scrabble with Mark and Alex. Am winning when Alex pulls out a word with an 'h' and a 'z' on a triple word score. Feel aggrieved, but lose with something approaching dignity. Know this will scar me.

Evening

Main marquee filling up with IntentsGP guests.



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Real action starts when X-Factor comes on the television. After 20 minutes or so an unusual sight develops. 20-25 F1 going men sitting round watching the warblings of some teen Lady Gaga wannabees. Have a really good time. Drink beer, make merry and socialise with other guests. Ask two Australians where they're from in New Zealand. After initial embarrassment fades, tell them I will be heading to the circuit for the race at the same time as I did for qualifying.

Go to bed. Sleep soundly.



Sunday, 28th August

Wake up early for the race at about 6ish. Feel bad about the Australians, but want to secure the same spot as the last two days.

Camp site portaloos STILL in great nick. Bowled over in shock. Wonder how it can be.

Try to get shuttle bus from campsite. Very busy. Have to wait for 10 minutes. Consider worse things have and will happen in the world.

Find my way to Pouhon. Top of the hill very busy, but side still under populated. Maintain exactly the same seat as Friday and Saturday. Glare at some people for hitting me with beer cans they've thrown down the hill. Settle in for a long wait.

Pouhon fills up quickly. A man in an all in one blue lycra suit proceeds to waltz past. Try not to think about it too much and focus on a newspaper article about corruption in India.

Afternoon

Race an hour away. Some French men come and sit directly to my left in chairs. Block my view. Annoying. After a brief conversation, we come to an accomodation. Move forward three feet and find my view is significantly better than it was before they arrived. Feel relieved and promise self once again to pay for grandstand set next time.

Race very good. Disappointing lack of rain. Jenson Button gets loudest cheers as he drives past. God Save The Queen.

Evening

Return to campsite. Have another cup of tea.

Play Transformers Risk at behest of Alex, who has never been able to play it with anyone before. It is one of the most complicated games ever devised by mankind. Get through two tortuous goes and then call it a day.



Go into Stavelot with IntentsGP and have a nice meal. Drink too much strong Belgian beer. Retire early.

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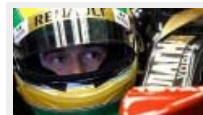
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Monday 29th August

Get up the latest I have so far. Mark and Alex already hard at work taking things down. Have breakfast. Sit down. Feel hungover. Join them in packing things up. Easier than putting stuff up.

Locals return. Still not brilliant, but better at disassembling tents than assembling.

Generally potter round.

Afternoon

All packed by 12ish. Drive to Brussels. Wander round Mercedes museum/shop. Go on Gran Turismo with a steering wheel. Am rubbish. Try to pretend steering wheel is broken. Don't think anyone is buying it.

Get stuck in heavy traffic. Quick run to Carrefour. IntentsGP buy a lot of Belgian beer.

Evening

Reach Calais. Miss scheduled tunnel crossing. Swap from one van to the other. New van smells of diesel. Wonder if I will be overcome and go into a coma. Not the case. Come through tunnel.

Drive back to London. Mark kind enough to drop me at my front door.

Sleep. For ever.

A special thanks to [IntentsGP](#) for taking Benson all the way to Belgium, you chaps are fantastic!

If you're thinking of heading to a grand prix soon, or next season, read more about IntentsGP and their services over on their [website here](#).



Mark (centre) and Alex (right) from IntentsGP with friend.

