

Froome: Let Landa take on next year

France

Mikel Landa can come back next year and challenge Chris Froome for Tour de France victory, the current champion believes.

Landa was lying fourth at the Tour after yesterday's final mountain stage at 1min 36sec, despite working for Sky team leader Froome throughout the race, and having ridden in May's Giro d'Italia.

The 27-year-old Basque has already said he's leaving Sky at the end of the year to look for a role as a team leader, and Froome has no doubts he will come back in 2018 to challenge the Briton, who is on the brink of a fourth overall success.

"He did have a tough first week in this year's race but, keeping in mind he did the Giro d'Italia, he's come up through the race remarkably well," said Froome.

"He's really been there for me in the moments when it's been tough up there in the mountains. I'm extremely grateful for that.

"He's got the engine to ride with the best in world and he's certainly capable of coming back to contest the overall victory."



Great Britain's Christopher Froome celebrates his overall leader yellow jersey on the podium

Landa has already set out his stall: he wants to be number one. "Let's be clear about this, this can't happen to me again. I won't go back to being a number two," he told journalists on the second rest day.

In 2015 he played second fiddle to Fabio Aru at the Giro d'Italia, giving up his own aspirations to help the Italian, who finished second to Alberto Contador while Landa

was third. It was one of the reasons he then left Astana to join Sky, ostensibly to be the team leader at the Giro.

However, illness cost him and he quit the race after 10 stages when sitting eighth overall in 2015 and earlier this year, as co-leader with Geraint Thomas, a crash in stage nine ended his overall hopes, although he battled back to win the mountains jersey. (AFP)

Brajkovic, Grmay best on stage 18

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Manama

Bahrain's Merida Pro Cycling Team rider, Janez Brajkovic (Slovenia) and Tsgabu Grmay (Ethiopia) finished 43rd and 44th respectively in joint times of four hours 49 minutes and three seconds on the 18th stage yesterday of the 104th Tour de France from Briancon to Izoard over 179.5km in the last of the Alps mountain range.

Brajkovic and Grmay were eight minutes and 30 seconds behind the stage winner, Frenchman Warren Barguil (4:40:33) of Team Sunweb.

During the latest stage of

Bahrain Merida positions:

Results from stage 18, a 179.5km run:

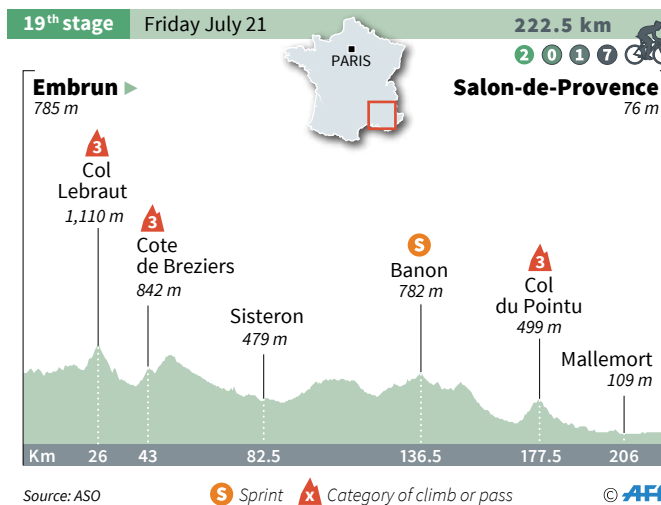
- 45. J Brajkovic (SLO, one hour 57 minutes 22 seconds)
- 61. Cink (CZE, 2:31:50)
- 72. T Grmay (ETH, +2:36:25)
- 108. Y Arashiro (JPN, +3:15:17)
- 120. J Moreno (ESP, +3:27:34)
- 123. S Colbrelli (ITA, 3:33:28)
- 147. G Bole (SLO, +3:52:41)
- 164. B Bozic (SLO, +4:15:09)



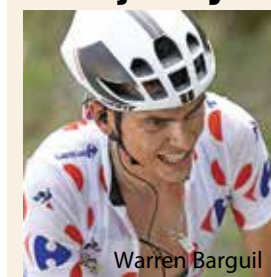
Janez Brajkovic (file pic) 25:46), Sonny Colbrelli (Italy, 111th, +25:46), Grega Bole (Slovenia, 126th, +28:33) and Borut Bozic (Slovenia, 154th, +28:33).

the tour, Bahrain's other six riders classified were - Yukiya Arashiro (Japan, 105th, +23:50), Javier Moreno (Spain, 109th, +25:46), Oldrej Cink (Czech Republic, 110th,

The tour resumes today with the 19th stage (and longest of the tour) taking the remaining (169) riders onto a relatively flat course from Embrun to Salon-de-Provence over 222.5km.



Barguil sews up mountains Tour jersey



Briançon, France

Warren Barguil became the first rider to sew up a Tour de France jersey yesterday as his lead in the king of the mountains competition became insurmountable.

The 25-year-old Frenchman needs only to reach the Tour finale in Paris to claim the polkadot jersey.

Barguil started the day with a 49-point lead over Primoz Roglic in the competition with a maximum 58 points available before Paris.

But Roglic failed to score a single point on the first category Col de Vars climb during Thursday's 179.5km 18th stage, where a maximum of 10 were available.

It meant Sunweb rider Barguil maintained his 49-point lead with only 48 points left.

Barguil's teammate Australia's Michael Matthews is also close to tying up the sprinters' green jersey, which he should do on today. (AFP)

French will fight for Tour for years to come

France

Romain Bardet believes French cycling is in a strong place and has several young riders who can challenge for Tour de France glory for years to come.

Bardet took third place on the epic 18th stage of the Tour yesterday.

Warren Barguil moved up a place to ninth overall and secured victory in the king of the mountains competition. With Thibaut Pinot having finished third on the Tour in 2014 and fourth in May's Giro d'Italia, French cycling

is in a great place on the Grand Tour scene, and a first victory in the Grand Boucle since Bernard Hinault in 1985 is getting closer.

"In the next few years there will be several Frenchmen fighting to win the Tour de France, and that's good," said Bardet. (AFP)



France's Romain Bardet rides in a breakthrough



Riders of the USA's Cannondale Drapac cycling team (From R) Australia's Simon Clarke, USA's Taylor Phinney, Colombia's Rigoberto Uran and USA's Andrew Talansky ride during the 179.5 km eighteenth stage of the 104th edition of the Tour de France cycling race yesterday between Briancon and Izoard, French Alps (AFP)