

Local Culture Report: Le Tour de France

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Tour de France is "Grand Tour" equivalent of the Vuelta Espana or the Giro di Italia. However, the Tour de France is the most popular race in the world without hesitation. In the mind of racers, it is more important to win a Tour de France than a world championship. Win Tour de France shows polyvalent qualities of the winner.

II. HISTORY

A. Creation of the Tour de France

The foundations of the Tour de France takes place on a national French scandal. At the end of the year 1894, Alfred Dreyfus who was captain in the French army at this time and by the way was Jew, was convicted to have given secret information to Germans.

After several years and several justice judgements, it was proved that Alfred Dreyfus was not the author of the supposed high treason. However, France was separated in two parts: the dreyfusards and the antidreyfusards.

The second important fact was that at this time, it was existing only one sport newspaper named "Le Velo". Pierre Giffard, the editor-in-chief, was politically committed and was writing in his sheet to defend Dreyfus. However, his newspaper was financed through the advertisement by car industrialists who were antidreyfusard. The Comte de Dion, who was the representative of car industrialists, chose Henry Desgrange in order to create a rival newspaper named "L'Auto-Velo". A feature of this sheet is that it was published on a yellow paper which will be the colour of the leader jersey of the Tour de France.

In 1903, the director of "Le Velo" took "L'Auto-Velo" to court to have the name "Velo" in his title. "L'Auto-Velo" is then renamed "L'Auto". In order to avoid any money losses due of this name change, Henri Desgrange will organize a race in collaboration with Geo Lefevre: the Tour de France.

B. Rules

1) *Tour de France - from individual to team:* The creator of the Tour de France, Henri Desgrange, was considering cycling has an individual sport. Until 1925, enlisted riders were racing in an individual way without any team. Until 1964, bike change or external help to fix any trouble on the bike was strictly forbidden. The only possible was that each rider has to fix his bike by himself.

Trade team appeared in 1927 and after some organization problems, the organization of Tour de France decided to introduce the concept of national team. In fact, during all the season, riders were in private team and were coming to the Tour de France under the effigy of their country. So, some problems of loyalty between riders appear. Another matter was that all teams were not equal regarding the number of cyclists by team. The financial aspect of the private sponsors was also discarded.

Hence, at the beginning of the 60s, a step backward is carrying out where national teams were replaced by trade teams.



Figure 1. First page of "L'Auto" announcing the creation of the Tour de France (left). We can notice that the newspaper was printed on a yellow paper. Newspaper named "Le Velo" which was the rival sheet "L'Auto" (right). We can point out that the paper was printed on a green background.



Figure 2. Nowadays, trade teams (Cancellara - Saxo Bank) are engaged in the Tour de France (left). Between 1930 and 1962 and also 1967 and 1969, National Team were competed (Charly Gaul - Luxemburg) (right).

2) *Tour de France - from amateur to professional*: At the creation of the Tour de France, enlisted riders were independent and amateur. Around the 30s, Tour de France can be considered reserved for professional cyclists. Riders were involved inside a team, first by nationality then by private sponsors. The obvious consequence is that an environment was created around the team to structure it. Each team were synchronized by a manager. Mechanic were in charge of all equipment. Nowadays, each team can be compared as a little town composed of all different professions from cook through trainer until bus driver.



Figure 3. Example of team organization involved inside the Tour de France nowadays. Each team could be completely independent and can be self-sufficient (Team Radioshack and Gramin-Transitions).

3) *Tour de France - Nowadays*: The Tour de France nowadays is a professional competition. The organization committee selects the team. The number of team selected is about 22 (this number can fluctuate during the year). Each team have to select 9 riders. Hence, a number between 180 and 200 riders participate to the Tour de France each year.

C. History of classification and distinction

1) *Stage - classification*: The Tour de France is composed of several stages. Three kinds of stages are existing:

- **Inline Stage:**

In this inline stage, all racers begin together. The rider who crossing the finish line in first position, wins the stage. The time of each rider is kept and add to an elapsed time. Riders are consider in the same group if no break is observed in the group (a break of one second will cut a group in two parts). Another important rule exists regarding the final kilometres of a stage: on the mass-final stage, any rider encounters any mechanical problem or fall will not lose any time.

Between 1923 and 2008, bonuses system was existing allowing to the first riders of the stage to recover some seconds. After 2008, the system of bonuses was abolished.

Intermediate sprints and mountain sprints can be included during the stage allowing to accumulate some points for the points classification and mountains classification. Regarding these both classifications, at the finish line, during the flat stages, points for points classification are attributed and for the mountain stages, points are distributed for mountains classification.

- **Individual Time Trial:**



Figure 5. Fabian Cancellara achieving an individual time trial during the Tour de France 2009.



Figure 4. Inline stage where all riders are competing together.

The principle of an individual time trial is that each cyclist has to finish individually as fast as possible a route defined. During an individual time trial, each cyclist starts a different time, with a gap of 1 minute between each. This gap passes at 2 minutes for the 20 last competitors to avoid the influence of a cynosure.

Regarding the specificity of the time trial route, usually this route is almost short compare to an inline stage. The distance of a time trial is about between 35 and 60 kilometres nowadays. In the past, the time trials were longer.

The first time trial was organized in 1934 between La Roche-sur-Yon and Nantes on a distance of 80 kilometres. Usually, two or three time trials are organized at each Tour de France. Usually, a specific time trial,

very short (no more than 20 kilometres) is organized the first day of the Tour de France. This little time trial is calling "Prologue" and opens the Tour de France.

- Team Time Trial:

The basic idea of team time trial is about the same as the individual time trial. The difference is that instead of competing individually, all members of the team are realizing the time trial using drafting to be faster and more efficient. The time of the team is taking on the fifth rider. Hence the basic idea during a team time trial is to keep at least 5 riders until the final line. However, a team is composed of nine riders so 4 of the riders which are teammates will usually scarified themselves. Riders who have more than a bike-length behind the fifth rider are awarded their own times.

The basic idea to carry out a team time trial is to put up the strength of a team and highlight collective of cycling on competition as Tour de France.

The creation of team time trial was in the same time than the team appeared in the Tour de France in the middle of the 20s. Between 1927 and 1929, the enlisted team were involved in the Tour de France as a giant team time trial.

The first stage of the Tour de France ("Prologue") can start by a team time trial as 1971 for the first time.

2) *Overall basic classification - Yellow jersey:* From 1903 to 1905, the winner of the Tour de France was the competitor who finishes the race in the fastest time.

Then, between 1906 and 1912, the rules change. After each stage, a number of points were distributed and added regarding the final place of each cyclist. At the end, the racer with greatest amount of point was declared winner.

In 1913, a step backward was done. The winner will be declared regarding is elapsed time. In the future editions, this rule will never change. At this time, no distinctive jerseys were assigned. We will present in the following parts, the different ranks which will be created and the assignation of distinctive jerseys.

3) *Yellow Jersey:* The yellow jersey is the distinctive jersey wearing by the leader of the overall classification. The winner of the Tour de France is every time a polyvalent (mountain, time trial) rider.



Figure 7. (left) Yellow jersey worn by Fabian Cancellara (Saxo Bank) after the first stage in the Tour de France 2010. (right) White jersey worn by Andy Schleck (Saxo Bank) at the end of the Tour de France 2010.

professionalism could claim at this classification. Then, between 1983 and 1987, the rules change: only first-time competitors to the Tour de France could claim for this classification. From 1987 to nowadays, the riders less than 26 years old are involved in this classification. However between 1989 and 1999, the classification existed but no jerseys were distributed. The first rider to win the young classification was Francesco Moser. The first rider who win the overall and young classification was Laurent Fignon in 1983.

5) *Green Jersey:* The green jersey is given to the leader of sprinters classification. This classification is to assess riders who are fast for mass-flat final stage. For the flat stage, points are attributed to the end-line. Hence, the rider who wins sprinters classification is a fast, technique and clever rider in mass finish. A second way to obtain points is during the inline stage where some intermediate sprints can bring in precious points. This classification was created for the 50th anniversary of the Tour de France in 1953 and was won by Fritz Schaer. In 1968, the green jersey was replaced by a red jersey.



Figure 6. Team Slipstream-Chipotle by H30 achieving a team time trial during the Tour de France 2008

This jersey was introduced officially in the edition of 1919 worn by Eugene Christophe. It is the classification the most important. The signature of Henri Desgrange appears on all yellow jersey. It seems that Philippe Thys, winner of Tour de France 1913, 1914 and 1920, obtained a yellow jersey in 1913. The first rider who wore the yellow jersey from the beginning to the end of the Tour de France was Ottavio Bottechia in 1924.

4) *White Jersey:* The white jersey has been introduced for the classification of young riders. The rider who wins the young classification is usually a polyvalent rider as the yellow jersey. This classification was creating in 1975. Until 1983, riders with less than three years of



Figure 8. (left) Green jersey worn by Thor Hushovd (Team Cervelo TestTeam) at the end of the Tour de France 2009. (right) Polka-dot jersey worn by Laurent Jalabert (Team CSC) at the end of the Tour de France 2001.

6) *Polka-dot Jersey*: The polka-dot jersey is dedicated to the leader of the mountain classification. The classification is to assess riders who have capabilities to climb well in mountains. Points of this classification are distributed during the mountain inline stage where riders are climbing several mountain passes and were points are given at each top. This classification was introduced in 1933. However the polka-dot jersey appeared only in 1975. The first rider who won officially the classification was Vicente Trueba. The first cyclist who put on the polka-dot jersey was Lucien van Impe.



Figure 9. (left) The team which is leading the team classification wears a number black-on-yellow. (right) The rider the most assertive of the previous stage wears a number white-on-red.

7) *Team prize*: The team classification is awarded the fastest team. In fact, after each stage, the time of team's best three riders is added. This prize exists since 1930 and the France was the first team awarded. The first trade team awarded was Saint Raphael in 1962. It is only after 2006 that after every day, the leader of the team classification wears a number black-on-yellow.

8) *Prix de la combativite*: The price of the combativite is given after each stage to the rider who animates the most the stage. The most assertive rider is chosen at each day by a board of eight specialists in cycling. This last rule is available since 2003. Before, a system of point was placed to choose a cyclist. This classification exists since 1953. The first rider awarded was Wout Wagtmans. Each day, the most assertive rider of the

previous day wear a number printed white-on-red instead of black-on-white next day.

9) *Historical jerseys*: Two others classification existed:

- Combination classification: Between 1968 and 1989, a combination classification was available. An average of each classification was done to affect this jersey.
- Intermediate sprints classification: From 1984 to 1989, a specific jersey which was red was given to the best sprinter who has the most number of points but of intermediate sprints only.



Figure 10. Combination jersey

D. Organization



Figure 11. The actual director of the Society of the Tour de France Christian Prudhomme

The creator of the Tour de France, Henri Desgrange organizes the Tour de France until to die in 1939. During the Second World War, the organization of the Tour de France is suspended. It is in 1947 that l'Equipe directed by Jacques Goddet with the help of the Amaury Group, reorganize the Tour de France. In 1965, Amaury Group bought L'Equipe and starts to be the only owner of the race. In 1992, the Amaury Group create Amaury Sport Organisation which will organize different kind of sport manifestations as the marathon of Paris, Paris-Nice, etc. The Society of the Tour de France will be a branch which will be in charge to organize the Tour de France. The actual director of the Society of the Tour de France is Christian Prudhomme who was previously commentator of this race.

E. Anecdote

- In 1904, riders were stopped by demonstrators and were also aggressed by some persons. The fourth first of the Tour de France were disqualified to have taken the train during the competition.
- During the edition of 1905 and in 1906, some demonstrators had thrown some nails on the road.
- In 1908, cyclists braved a snow storm to achieve Lyon.
- Henri Lavoine, after a problem with his bike, had to finish on foot the last 10 kilometres of the last stage of the Tour de France 1909.
- In 1910, only one rider climbed the mountain pass of the Tourmalet without any stop.
- In 1911, Brocco won the stage arriving in Bayonne. This stage had to pass through the mountain pass, Le Galibier. He was disqualified to have not competing the two previous days waiting for this stage. The transmission ratio at this time to climb was 22x11 (multi-gears were not allowed) instead of 40x23 nowadays.
- In 1912, Lapalize and his team gave up to protest against the secret agreement between all Belgians riders.
- The next year, the same Lapalize gave up to protest against the tiny amount of money who he won. Eugene Christophe broke is fork and has to walk during fourteen kilometres to achieve a blacksmith. In four hours, he will fix his fork alone.
- In 1914, the winner were penalized of thirty minutes to have changed is wheel during a stage.
- In 1921, Henri Desgrange punished riders judged as non-attackers.
- The next year, Eugene Christophe had to walk until the end of the stage of Galibier after that he broke is fork.
- Pelissier's brothers gave up in 1924 because they did not want to accept the rules (rule of unballast).
- Some of the riders finished a stage by bus during the night in 1926.

- Frantz after had broken his bike, finish a stage with a woman bike in 1928.
- In 1929, at the end of the stage arriving in Bordeaux, three cyclists are ex-aequo and wore the yellow jersey.
- In 1935, Romain Maes won Tour de France after that the leader Antonin Magne was hit by a car in the mountain pass of Telegraphe.
- In 1936, Italian riders did not competed for political reasons.
- The next year, before the start of a stage in Luchon, Roger Lapebie observed that somebody sawed is handlebars.
- In 1938, Speicher was downgraded to help himself hanging on a car. Paul Maye finished the first stage with a fracture collarbone.
- In 1948, Bartoli won the Tour de France, ten years after his first victory in the Tour de France.
- The next year, Fausto Coppi won the Tour de France after a comeback of thirty minutes.
- In 1952, the Tour de France was broadcasted at the television for the first time.
- The next year, Jean Robic caught a flask with lead inside to win ten kilograms in the descent of the Tourmalet.
- In 1962, Raymond Poulidor started the Tour de France with a wrist in a cast and he finished the Tour de France at the third position.
- The next year, Jacques Anquetil simulated a mechanical problem with is bike in order to change a lighter bike to climb.
- Strike of the riders after that the organization chose to do a dope test in 1966.
- Tom Simpson died during Ventoux climb. It was the consequences of drug-use (mixing of amphetamines, alcohol and diuretic).
- Raymond Poulidor gave up after a fall caused by a motorbike while he was in good position to win the Tour de France 1968. First official dope test after the tragedy of the previous year.
- Eddy Merckx cumulated the three classifications of the Tour de France 1969 for his first participation.
- After the giving up of Luis Ocana after is fall, Eddy Merckx refused to wear the yellow jersey in 1971.
- Guimard beat Merckx after that this one believed that he won in Tour de France 1972.
- Ocana used for the first time a titanium frame in 1973.
- In 1974, Raymond Poulidor took the second place with one second on the third rider.
- Lucien Van Impe used the first carbon frame in 1975. It is the first time than the Tour de France finished on the Champs Elysees.
- Raymond Poulidor finished at the third position for his last participation at forty years old in 1976.
- Pollentier was excluded after that he tried to cheat during a dope test in 1978. The riders organized a strike in Valence to complain about the inappropriate schedules.
- In 1979, first time than the women could follow the Tour de France in the car of the organization.
- In 1981, Phil Anderson is the first Australian who wore the yellow jersey.
- In 1983, Pascal Simon defended his yellow jersey during six days with a broken shoulder. Michel Laurent was declared winner of a stage after a fall where he was implicated.
- First appearance in Tour de France 1985 of lenticular wheels and automatic pedals.
- In 1987, 229 riders started the Tour de France which is a record.
- In 1988, Pedro Delgado admitted to have taken some drugs to win the Tour de France. However, this drug was not forbidden at this time and Delgado was not disqualified.
- In 1989, Pedro Delgado missed the start of the prologue. Laurent Fignon looses the Tour de France for only eight seconds. Time trial handlebar was used by Greg LeMond for the first time.
- In 1991, all the P.D.M. team gave up after a food infection. It seems that the real reason was a problem of E.P.O. doping.
- In 1992, for the first time, an electrical derailleur is used by several riders.
- Fabio Casartelli died in 1995 after a fall in a descent.
- In 1998, problem of doping with gave up of several team.
- After the death of Andrei Kivilev during Paris-Nice, wear helmets is an obligation.
- In 2009, Lance Armstrong did a comeback after three years of stopping.

III. DOPING

In the last years, Tour de France and cycling are considering as sport where athletes are doped. In fact, the actual position against doping implicate that cheats are more detected than in the past. Moreover, it will be the same phenomena if the different sport federations (football, tennis, etc.) wanted to try to find liars. The position of the Tour de France to try to "clean" the image of the competition can explain the redundancy of the doping affairs.

Since 1924, Pelissier's brother admitted that they used different types of drugs.



Figure 12. (left) Festina team was exclud from the Tour de France in 1998. (right) Ricardo Ricco used E.P.O. in the Tour de France 2008.

In 1967, Tom Simpson died when he was climbing the Mont-Ventoux. His death was due to a mixing amphetamines, diuretic and alcohol.

In 1998, the most important doping affair of the Tour de France named "Festina affair". The trainer of the Festina team was caught with several types of drugs. One of the most drugs used at this time was the E.P.O. Organization send Festina off of the Tour de France. It seems that Festina team tried to provide with medical care doping to avoid that riders put their life in danger. During the same Tour de France, TVM team was checked with some drugs too. After this second problem, about five teams left the Tour de France 1998.

After that, several riders were caught as Remondas Rumsas, Philippe Gaumont or David Millar. The two last one were member of Cofidis team in 2004. Philippe Gaumont wrote a book about doping in Cofidis team which was never proof. David Millar explained that he used E.P.O. After this affair, he engaged himself against doping.

Maybe the most suspicious case of the Tour de France was between 1999 and 2005: Lance Armstrong. The superiority, the communication and the history of Lance Armstrong was suspicious. In 1999, Lance Armstrong was in cancer remission. After his seven victories in the Tour de France, a newspaper L'Equipe published some test dope which shown the culpability of Armstrong. In 2010, Floyd Landis accused Lance Armstrong of doping when he was in the same team and teammates of Armstrong. A trial against Armstrong is opened in United States nowadays.

In 2006, a "second Festina affair" took place named "Puerto affair" where several names of riders appear to be client of a doctor managing blood transfusion. Jan Ullrich and Ivan Basso, two rivals of lance Armstrong were in this list. Thirty cyclists were excluded from the Tour de France 2006. In the same Tour de France, Floyd Landis who won this year was convinced of doping.

In 2007, cyclists of Deustch Telecom as Erik Zabel or Bjarn Riis, confessed that they took some drugs during their careers. On the Tour de France 2007, Alexandre Vinokourov was convinced of doping and all is team (Astana) was expelled from the Tour de France. Michael Rasmussen was fire from his team while he was leader this year. Christian Moreni was convicted of doping too in the same Tour de France and Cofidis team was excluded from the Tour de France.

In the Tour de France 2008, Manuel Beltran, Stefan Schumacher, Bernhard Kohl and Ricardo Ricco were doped with E.P.O. The team of Ricardo Ricco decided to leave the Tour de France.

IV. STATISTICS

A. Distance

Historically, the Tour de France should cover the perimeter of France and the riders should be represented as superman. During the two first Tour de France, riders had some night stages which were abolished after due to the cheating. The concept defended by Henri Desgrange was that only one rider could achieve Paris due to the difficulty of the race.

After the doping scandals and the death of Tom Simpson, the organization of the Tour de France and the Union Cycliste Internationale limited the distance and imposed the rest days. Nowadays, the Tour de France does not follow anymore the borders of France, crossing sometimes to go in other countries. Some discontinuities appear between stages where riders use bus, car or train to achieve the starting towns.

B. Records

1) *Victories*: The most victories in Tour de France have been by Lance Armstrong which seven times consecutively between 1999 and 2007. Four others cyclists won five times the Tour de France: Miguel Indurain, Bernard Hinault, Jacques Anquetil, Eddy Merckx.

Richard Virenque is the cyclist who won the most important number of mountains classification which seven. Frederic Bahamontes and Lucien Van Impe won six times each of them.

Erik Zabel won six times the sprints classification. Sean Kelly won only four times.

Eddy Merckx has the greatest numbers of victory stages in the Tour de France which is thirty-four. Bernard Hinault won twenty-eight while Andr Leducq won twenty-five and Lance Armstrong won twenty-two as Andre Darrigade.

Three riders won eight victories during the same Tour de France: Eddy Merckx, Charles Pelissier and Freddy Maertens.

The minimum time between the winner and the second rider is eight seconds in 1989 when Greg LeMond beat Laurent Fignon.

2) *Distances*: The longest Tour de France was in 1926 where riders had to complete 5,745 kilometres. The shortest one was in 1904 where they had to complete 2,428 kilometres.

3) *Speed*: The fastest inline stage was in 1999 between Laval and Blois where the average speed was around 50.355 kilometres per hours (194.5 kilometres) and was won by Mario Cipollini.

Regarding an individual time trial, David Zabriskie realized the best average in 2005 between Fromentine Noirmoutier at the average of 54.676 kilometres per hour on 19 kilometres. Chris Boardman realized the fastest prologue at the average speed of 55.152 kilometres per hour on 7.2 kilometres.

During a team time trial, the fastest team was the Discovery Channel Team of Lance Armstrong which won between Tour and Blois at the average of 57.32 kilometres per hour on 67.5 kilometres in 2005.

4) *Towns*: The towns which received the most the Tour de France are Paris (135 times), Bordeaux (80 times) and Pau (62 times).

V. CONCLUSION

The anniversary of the hundred edition of the Tour de France is approaching and this race is still the most popular cycling event in the world. However, the doping problems existing in the professional cycling besmirch the reputation of the Tour de France.

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