

Bicycle Racing Terminology¹

@: In English language race results; an ampersand (or "at" sign) is used to denote the amount of time or number of points behind the winner. In the example below Luisa Gomes won the race, taking 5 hours, 51 minutes, 15 seconds to complete the course. Joanne Gilles was behind her and crossed the finish line 18 seconds later. Trudeau was still further behind and crossed the line 5 minutes and 39 seconds after Luisa Gomes. Voix and Théâtre were with Trudeau but slightly behind her. The "s.t." means that they were given the same time as Pollentier. If a rider finishes close enough to a rider who is in front of her so that there is no real gap, she will be given the same time as the first rider of that group. French, Portuguese, or Spanish results will often use "m.t." to denote same time. If no time is given, same time is assumed.

1. Luisa Gomes: 5 hr 51 min 50 sec
2. Joanne Gilles @ 18 sec
3. Michelle Trudeau @ 5 min 39 sec
4. Lucienne Voix s.t.
5. Bernard Théâtre s.t.

A

a: In Italian/Portuguese/Spanish race results "a" is the same as @.

à : French for @ in race results.

Abandon: When a rider quits during a race.

Arc-en-ciel: French for rainbow. *See Rainbow Jersey.*

Arcobaleno: Italian for Rainbow. *See Rainbow Jersey.*

Arrivée: French for the finish line.

Arrivée en altitude: French for hilltop finish.

¹ All fields have their own jargon, and bicycle racing is no exception. Here's a glossary of bicycle racing terms, but it is a work in progress, and there are certainly terms left out.

Bicycle Racing Terminology

Arrivo: Italian for the finish line.

Arrivo in salita: Italian for hilltop finish.

Attack: A sudden acceleration to move ahead of another rider or group of riders.

Autobus: French. In the mountains the riders with poor climbing skills ride together hoping to finish in time to beat the time limit cut-off. By staying together in a group they hope that if they don't finish in time they can persuade the officials to let them stay in the race because so many riders would otherwise be eliminated. It doesn't always work. Often the group lets a particular experienced racer who knows how to pace the Autobus lead them in order to just get in under the wire. This risky strategy minimizes the energy the riders have to expend. Synonyms include *Grupetto* (Italian) and *Laughing Group*. See *Time Limit*.

Azzurri: Italian for the *Men in Blue*. The Italian National team wears blue jerseys, hence the name.

B

Bell Lap: If the riders are racing the final meters of a race on a vélodrome or on a circuit in a town, a bell is rung at the start of the final lap.

Bidon: *Water bottle*. Now made of plastic, early ones were metal with cork stoppers. Until 1950 they were carried on the handlebars, sometimes in pairs. Around 1950 riders started mounting bottle cages on the downtube. The trend to dispensing with the bar-mount cages started in the early 1960's and by 1970 they were a thing of the past. In the early 1980's, as a result of the sport of Triathlon, builders started brazing bosses on the seat tube allowing mechanics to attach a second cage so that riders could again carry 2 bottles.

Big Ringing It: A "big" gear - when the rider has his chain on the larger of the two front chainrings - allows a rider to go for maximum speeds. This gearing is most often used on at or rolling terrain.

Bicycle Racing Terminology

Bonification: Time bonus (actually time subtracted) awarded to a rider. Stage races vary and the Tour is always tinkering with its rules. Bonifications can be earned several ways: winning or placing in a stage, winning or placing in an intermediate sprint, being among the first riders over a rated climb. The rules have changed over the years. At one time in the early 1930's the Tour awarded a 4-minute time bonus for winning a stage. In 2005 the bonification was 20 seconds.

Bonk: Total exhaustion caused by lack of sufficient food during a long race or ride. Sometimes a rider will forget to eat or think he has enough food to make it to the finish without stopping to get food. The result can be catastrophic as the rider's body runs out of glycogen, the stored chemical the muscles burn for energy.

Bonus Sprints: On each stage, race organizers designate several locations along the route where bonus points are given to the first three riders that cross the line. These sprints create a "race within a race" during each stage.

Break: Short for *breakaway*.

Breakaway: One or more riders who sprint away from the *péloton* in an effort to build a lead. Competing riders in a breakaway will often form uneasy alliances, working together and drafting to increase or maintain their lead. Those alliances break down, though, as they approach the finish. A team leader in a breakaway with multiple team mates has a decided advantage over a rider who has no support. See *Chapatte's Law*.

Bridge: A rider or riders who sprint away from the main group of riders, or *péloton*, and catch the breakaway.

Broom Wagon: The vehicle that follows the race, picking up racers who have to abandon the race.

When Desgrange added high Pyrenean climbs to his 1910 Tour he thought it would be necessary to have a rescue wagon follow the riders in case the mountain roads were beyond their ability to ascend, hence the Broom Wagon to sweep up the exhausted racers. It is still in use, following the last rider in a stage. Today when a rider abandons he usually prefers to get into one of

Bicycle Racing Terminology

his team cars. Years ago the Broom Wagon had an actual broom bolted to it but today this wonderful bit of symbolism is gone. In French the Broom Wagon is called the *Voiture Balai*.

Bunch: When preceded by "the", usually the *péloton*. Far less often a group of riders can be "a bunch."

C

Cadence: The speed at which the rider turns the pedals.

Caravan/Race Caravan: The official and team support vehicles in a race. Each team has a car in the official race caravan. The team cars follow the *péloton* and riders will often go back to their team car for food, extra clothing, or to speak to their team director.

Caravan Publicitaire: The line of cars and trucks that precedes the race, promoting various company's goods and services. When Henri Desgrange switched the Tour to using National instead of trade teams, he became responsible for the racers' transport, food, and lodging. By charging companies money for the privilege of advertising their goods to the millions of Tour spectators along the route he was able to help pay the new expenses. When the Tour reverted to trade teams the publicity caravan remained.

Category: In European stage racing it is a designation of the difficulty of a mountain climb. This is a subjective judgment of the difficulty of the ascent, based upon its length; gradient and how late in the stage the climb is to be ridden. A medium difficulty climb that comes after several hard ascents will get a higher rating because the riders will already be tired. The numbering system starts with "4" for the easiest that still rate being called a climb and then with increasing severity they are 3, 2, 1. The most challenging are above categorization, or in the Tour nomenclature, "Hors catégorie," HC. In the Giro the hardest climbs are rated a Category 1.

Chapatte's Law: Formulated by former racer and Tour commentator Robert Chapatte, it states that in the closing stages of a race a determined *péloton* will chase down a break and close in at the rate of 1 minute per 10 kilometres travelled. If a break is 3 minutes up the road the *péloton* will need to work

Bicycle Racing Terminology

hard for 30 kilometres to catch it. TV race commentator Paul Sherwen regularly uses Chapatte's Law to come up with his often surprisingly accurate predictions of when a break will be caught. Computer on French television now calculates it.

Cima Coppi: The highest point in the *Giro d'Italia*.

Circle of Death: In 1910 Desgrange introduced high mountains into the Tour. The big stage with the Peyresourde, Aspin, Tourmalet and Aubisque was called the "Circle of Death" by the press who doubted that the riders could perform the inhuman task that was asked of them. Now the hardest mountain Tour stage is still occasionally called the Circle of Death.

Circuit Race. A multiple-lap race around a course of 2 miles or more. Circuit races are great crowd pleasers.

Classic: One of 7 one-day races whose history and prestige will make the career of its winner. They are: *Milan-San Remo, Tour of Flanders, Gent-Wevelgem, Paris-Roubaix, Flèche Wallone, Liège-Bastogne-Liège* and the *Tour of Lombardy*. *Gent-Wevelgem* is traditionally held midweek between Flanders and Paris-Roubaix. Only Rik Van Looy has won them all.

Clincher. A traditional bicycle tire that is mounted on a rim with a wire or kevlar bead. Clinchers are easy to replace or repair, but they and their rims tend to weigh more than a tubular.

Classificação Geral: Portuguese for *General Classification*.

Classifiche Generali: Italian for *General Classification*.

Col: French for *mountain pass*.

Colle: Italian for a *small climb*.

Combine: The Tour has had a competition that uses an aggregate of *General Classification, Mountains, and Points* competitions to arrive at the winner of the Combine category.

Commissaire: A race official with the authority to impose penalties on the riders for infractions of the rules. A common problem is dangerous or irregular sprinting. The commissaire will usually relegate the offending rider to a lower placing.

Contre-la-montre: French for *Time Trial*.

C.L.M.: French abbreviation for *contre-la-montre* or time trial.

CLM par équipes: French for *Team Time Trial*.

Criterium. A multi-lap, one-day race on a closed, short course, typically one kilometre or less. Good criterium riders have excellent bike handling skills and usually possess lots of power to enable them to constantly accelerate out of the corners.

Crono: Short for time-trial. See *Cronometro*, *Time Trial*.

Cronometro: Italian for time trial. *Cronometro individuale* is individual time trial and *Cronometro a squadre* is team time trial.

Cyclamen Jersey: The purple jersey of the point's leader in the Giro.

D

Défaillance: French for a *total mental or body collapse*. See *Bonk* for more.

Départ: French for the start line of a race.

Directeur Sportif: The On-the-road manager of a bike team. Although French, it is the term used in English as well.

Direttore Sportivo: Italian for *Directeur Sportif*.

Disc Wheel. A bicycle wheel with covers or a solid disc, rather than open spokes. Disc wheels are very aerodynamic, but heavy, and can turn into a sail in a strong crosswind.

Domestique: French. Because bicycle racing is a sport contested by teams and won by individuals a man designated to be the team leader has his team mates work for him. These men have been called *domestiques* since Tour founder Henri Desgrange used it as a term of contempt for Maurice Brocco whom he believed was selling his services to aid other riders in the 1911 Tour. Today the term has lost its bad connotation and serves as an acknowledgement of the true nature of racing tactics. Domestiques will chase down competitors and try to neutralize their efforts, they will protect their team leader from the wind by surrounding him. When a leader has to get a repair or stop to answer nature his domestiques will stay with him and pace him back up to the *péloton*. They are sometimes called "*water carriers*" because they are the ones designated to go back to the team car and pick up water bottles and bring them back up to the leader. In Italian the term is "*gregario*".

DNS: Did not start. Used in results to denote a racer who was entered in a race but failed to start. Often seen in results in stage races where the rider abandons after the completion of a stage.

Dossard: French for the *rider's race number* on the back of his jersey.

Drafting. One or more riders ride single file behind another rider, taking advantage of that rider's slipstream. By doing so the rider behind has less of a headwind and gets a breather. At racing speed a rider who is only a few inches behind another bike does about 30% less work. In a crosswind, riders may ride in a diagonal line, instead. Drafting is the lynchpin of most bicycle racing tactics. There are a number of pejorative terms for a rider who does this, the best known is "wheel sucker." See also *Paceline*.

Drop/Dropped: When a rider cannot keep up with his fellow riders and comes out of their aerodynamic slipstream, whether in a break or in the *péloton*, he is said to be dropped.

E

Échappée: French for *breakaway*.

Échelon: When the riders are hit with a side wind they must ride slightly to the right or left of the rider in front in order to remain in that rider's slipstream, instead of riding nose to tail in a straight line. This staggered line puts those riders further back in the pace line in the gutter. Because they can't edge further to the side, they have to take more of the brunt of both the wind and the wind drag of their forward motion.

Équipe: French for *team*.

Escape: When used as a noun it is a breakaway. When used as a verb it is the act of breaking away.

Ètape: French for *stage*.

F

Feed Zone. A designated area along the route where riders can grab "musette bags" filled with food and drinks as they ride by. There is an unwritten rule in the *péloton* that riders should not attack the field while the riders are going through the feed zone

Field: See *Péloton*.

Field Sprint: The race at the finish for the best placing among those in the *péloton*. The term is usually used when a breakaway has successfully escaped and won the stage and the *péloton* is reduced to fighting for the remaining lesser places.

Fixed Gear: A direct drive between the rear wheel and the cranks. The rear cog is locked onto the rear hub so that the rider cannot coast. When the rear wheel turns, the crank turns. Because this is the most efficient of all possible drive trains riders in the early days of cycle racing preferred fixed gears to freewheels. Track bikes use fixed gears.

Flahute: French slang for *tough-guy* bike racer. A Flahute thrives on the cold-weather, rain, winds, slippery cobbles, and sustained high speeds that characterize the Belgian Classics.

Bicycle Racing Terminology

Flamme Rouge: French. A red banner placed at the beginning of the final kilometre of a race.

Flyer: Usually a solo breakaway near the end of a race.

Foratura: Italian for *flat tire*.

Fuga: Italian/Portuguese for *breakaway*.

Fugue: French for *breakaway*.

G

Gap. The amount of time or distance between a rider or group of riders and another rider or group of riders.

GC: General Classification.

General Classification (GC). The overall leader board in the race, representing each rider's total cumulative time in the race. The rider with the lowest time is number one on the G.C. See *Stage Race*.

Giro d'Italia: A 3-week stage race, like the Tour de France. It is held in Italy, traditionally in May. It was first run in 1909.

Giudice di Gara: Italian for *commissaire*.

GPM: Italian, for *Gran Premio della Montagna*. This is the Italian equivalent of the King of the Mountains.

Gran Premio della Montagna: Italian, see *GPM*.

Grand Tour. Refers to three-week major cycling stage races: Tour de France, Giro d'Italia (Tour of Italy) and la Vuelta de España (Tour of Spain).

Green Jersey: In the Tour de France, awarded to the leader of the Points Competition (except 1968 when the Points Jersey was red). In the Giro d'Italia, the leading climber wears a green jersey.

Gregario: Italian, *see Domestique*.

Grimpeur: French for a rider who climbs well. Italian is *Scalatore*.

Gruppetto. A group of riders that forms at the back of the field on mountain stages and ride at a pace that allows them to finish just inside the time limit. (*See Time Cut.*) Usually the gruppetto is comprised of sprinters and other riders who are not climbing specialists or race leaders. Gruppetto is Italian for "a small group". *See Autobus*.

Gruppo: Italian, literally, "group." In road racing it is the *péloton*. When they are all together without any active breakaways, it is "gruppo compatto." When referring to the bicycle "gruppo" means the core set of components made by a single manufacturer, such as a Campagnolo Gruppo.

H

Hammer. To ride hard. Also, to "put the hammer down".

HD: The initials of Henri Desgrange, the father of the Tour de France. For years the Yellow Jersey had a stylized "HD" to commemorate Desgrange's memory. Sadly, to make room for commercial sponsors Desgrange's initials were removed from the Yellow Jersey. They were replaced in 2003 to celebrate the Tour's Centenary

HD: *Hors délais* or finishing outside the time limit. *See Time Limit*.

Hilltop Finish: When a race ends at the top of a mountain, the rider with the greater climbing skills has the advantage. It used to be that the finish line was far from the last climb, allowing the bigger, more powerful riders to use their weight and strength to close the gap to the climbers on the descents and flats. The Tour de France introduced hilltop finishes in 1952 and did it with a vengeance ending stages at the top of L'Alpe d'Huez, Sestrieres and Puy de Dôme.

Hook: To extend an elbow or thigh in the way of another rider, usually during a sprint, to impede his progress while he is attempting to pass. Often it is said that a rider "threw a hook." Means the same thing.

Hors-délais: French. See *Time Limit*.

Hot Spot: See *Intermediate Sprint*.

I

Individuel: French. Independent rider in the Tour. See *Touriste-Routier*.

Intermediate Sprint: To keep the race active there may be points along the race course where the riders will sprint for time bonuses or other prizes (premiums, or "preems"). Sometimes called "Hot Spots."

Isolés: A class of independent rider in the Tour. See *Touriste-Routier*.

ITT: Individual Time Trial.

J

Jump. A quick acceleration, which usually develops into a sprint. King of the Mountains. The KOM is the fastest climber in the overall standings. King of the Mountain is awarded to the racer who has the best total time to the many KOM sprints in the Tour. Look for the KOM jersey in the race.

K

Kermesse: A lap road race much like a criterium but the course is longer, as long as 10 kilometres.

King of the Mountains: Winner of the Grand Prix de la Montagne. In 1933 the Tour de France started awarding points for the first riders over certain hard climbs, the winner of the competition being the King of the Mountains. In 1975 the Tour started awarding the distinctive polka-dot jersey or maillot a pois to the leader of the classification. The first rider to wear the dots was the Dutch racer Joop Zoetemelk. The classification has lost some of its magic in recent years because of the tactics riders use to win it. Today a rider wishing to win the KOM intentionally loses a large amount of time in the General Classification. Then when the high mountains are climbed the aspiring King can take off on long breakaways to be first over the mountains without triggering a panicked chase by the Tour GC contenders.

KOM: King of the Mountains.

L

Laughing Group: *See Autobus.*

Lead Out. A racer's teammate(s) form a pace line in front of the leader, pulling hard for the finish. The supporting cast pulls off one at a time, leaving the leader rested and fast for the last sprint. Leadouts typically happen right before the finish line or sprint.

Lanterne Rouge: French for the last man in the *General Classification*. Some years riders will actually compete to be the *Lanterne Rouge* because of the fame it brings and therefore better appearance fees at races.

Loi Chapatte: *See Chapatte's Law.*

M

Maglia Rosa: Italian, *see Pink Jersey.*

Maillot a Pois: French for *Polka Dot jersey* awarded to the King of the Mountains. More correctly, *Maillot blanc à pois rouges.*

Maillot Blanc: White Jersey. Currently worn by the best rider under 25.

Maillot Jaune: *See Yellow Jersey.*

Maillot Vert: French for *Green Jersey*. In the Tour de France, the leader of the points competition wears it.

Massaggiatore: Italian for *Soigneur.*

Massed Start Road Race: All the riders start at the same time. This is different from a time trial where the riders are set off individually at specific time intervals.

Mechanical. Slang for a problem with the bicycle. "He had a mechanical."

Minute Man: In a time trial the rider who starts a minute ahead. It's always a goal in a time trial to try to catch one's minute-man.

Mountain Climb Classifications. Large mountain climbs are normally classified according to their difficulty. Category 4 is the easiest, followed by Categories 3, 2, 1, and the Hors-Categorie (which is the hardest). Mountain climbs are classified according to their length and the average gradient of the road's incline.

Musette: A cloth bag containing food and drinks handed up to the rider in the feed zone. It has a long strap so the rider can slip his arm through it easily on the fly, then put the strap over his shoulder to carry it while he transfers the food to his jersey pockets.

M.T.: French for *même temps* or same time; Spanish for *mismo tiempo*. See "@"

N

National Team: From 1930 to 1961, and 1967 and 1968 the Tour was organized under a National Team format. The riders rode for their country or region. See Trade Teams.

Natural or Nature Break: Because races can take over 7 hours the riders must occasionally dismount to urinate. If the riders are flagrant and take no care to be discreet while they answer the call of nature they can be penalized.

O

Off the Back. To be dropped. When a rider or riders cannot keep pace with the main group and lag behind.

Off the Front: When a rider takes part in a breakaway.

P

Paceline. A formation of two or more riders who are drafting. Typically, racers take turns doing the hard work at the front of the line. Riders riding nose to tail saving energy by riding in each others slipstream. Usually the front rider does the hard work for a short while, breaking the wind for the others, and then peels off to go to the back so that another rider can take a short stint at the front. The faster the riders go the greater the energy

Bicycle Racing Terminology

saving gained by riding in the slipstream of the rider in front. When the action is hot and the group wants to move fast the front man will take a short, high-speed "pull" at the front before dropping off. At lower speeds the time at the front is usually longer. See *échelon*.

Palmarès: French for an athlete's list of accomplishments.

Parcours: The race course.

Partenza: Italian for *race start*.

Passista: Italian for *Rouleur*.

Passista-Scalatore: A Rouleur who can climb well, an all-rounder. Generally this is the type of rider who can win a stage race because he can do well on the flats and time trials and not lose time (or even gain time) in the mountains. Examples: Fausto Coppi, Bernard Hinault, Lance Armstrong, and Eddy Merckx.

Passo: Italian for *mountain pass*. Plural is *Passi*.

Pavé: French for a *cobblestone road*. Riding the pavé requires skill and power.

Piano: Italian for *soft*. It can mean slow or easy when riding. The Giro often has "piano" stages where the riders intentionally take it easy until the final kilometres leading up to the sprint.

Pink Jersey: Worn by the rider who is currently leading in the General Classification in the Giro d'Italia. It was chosen because the sponsoring newspaper *La Gazzetta dello Sport* is printed on pink paper.

Podium: The top three places, first, second and third. Many racers know that they cannot win a race and thus their ambition is limited to getting on the podium. In major races such as the Tour, la Vuelta, and the Giro, attaining the podium is such a high accomplishment that it almost makes a racer's career.

Bicycle Racing Terminology

Poinçonées: Riders in early Tours who had their bikes hallmarked or stamped so that the officials could know that the competitors started and finished with the same bike.

Points: The usual meaning is the accumulation of placings in each stage. Today the Tour gives more points to the flatter stages so the winner of the points competition is a more likely to be sprinter. See *General Classification*. In the Tour the Points leader wears a green jersey, in the Giro he dons a purple jersey.

Polka-Dot Jersey: Awarded to the King of the Mountains.

Péloton. The main group of racers. With its dozens of colourful jerseys, manoeuvring for position and breakneck speeds, the *péloton* can be quite a site. Also called *the pack*.

Prologue. One type of beginning for a stage race, which is a relatively short time trial.

Popped. Blown; Had it; Knackered; Stuffed; Words used to describe the legs losing all power.

Pull: A stint at the front of a pace line.

Purple Jersey: In the Giro a purple, or more specifically cyclamen, jersey is awarded to the leader of the points competition.

Puncture. Flat tire.

R

Rainbow Jersey: The reigning world champion in a particular cycling event gets to wear a white jersey with rainbow stripes. The championships for most important events are held in the Fall. A former World Champion gets to wear a jersey with rainbow trim on his sleeves and collar. If a World Champion becomes the leader of the Tour, Giro or Vuelta he will trade his Rainbow Jersey for the Leader's Jersey.

Bicycle Racing Terminology

Revitaillement: French for taking on food and drink, usually in the feed zone. *Contrôl de revitaillement* is French for the Feed Zone.

Rifornimento: Italian for *taking on food and drink*. *Zona Rifornimento* is Italian for the Feed Zone.

Ritiro: Italian for *Abandon*.

Road Rash. Skin abrasions resulting from a fall or crash onto the road.

Rouleur: French for a rider who can turn a big gear with ease over flat roads. Rouleurs are usually bigger riders who suffer in the mountains.

Routier: French for *road racer*.

S

Saddle. The bike seat.

Same time: See "@"

Scalatore: Italian for one who climbs well.

Scattista: Italian for a climber who can explode in the mountains with a devastating acceleration. The most famous and extraordinary of these pure climbers were Charly Gaul and Marco Pantani.

Schwag. The free stuff competitors get when they race. May include water bottles, jerseys, food, or more expensive toys.

Slipstream. The area of least wind resistance behind a rider.

Soigneur: Today a job with many duties involving the care of the riders: massage, preparing food, handing up musettes in the feed zone and sadly, doping. Usually when a doping scandal erupts the soigneurs are deeply involved.

Souvenir Henri Desgrange: A prize to the first rider of the highest summit of the Tour. For example, in 2005 the Tour awarded Alexandre Vinokourov a

5,000 Euro purse when he was first over that year's highest point, the 2,645 m high Galibier.

Sprint. A quick scramble for the finish line or a mid-race king of the mountain or other competition. A professional road race sprint is fast, furious and tactical. Watch for riders to jockey for the second or third spot, or organize leadouts by their team mates. Teams with very fine sprinting specialists will employ a "lead-out train." With about 5 kilometres to go these teams will try to take control of the race by going to the front and stepping up the speed of the race in order to discourage last-minute flyers. Sometimes 2 or 3 competing teams will set up parallel pace lines. Usually the team's train will be a pace line organized in ascending speed of the riders. As the team's riders take a pull and peel off the next remaining rider will be a quicker rider who can keep increasing the speed. Usually the last man before the team's designated sprinter is a fine sprinter who will end up with a good placing by virtue of being at the front of the race in the final meters and having a good turn of speed himself.

Squadra: Italian for *team*.

Squalificato: Italian for disqualification. When Marco Pantani was found to have a high hematocrit near the end of the 1999 Giro he was tossed from the race. He suffered a "squalificato."

Squirrel. A small rodent, but also a rider who is erratic and 'squirrely' when riding in a group.

S.T.: Same time. See "@"

Stage Race. A cycling competition involving 2 or more separate races involving the same riders with the results added up to determine the winner. Today the victor is usually determined by adding up the accumulated time each rider took to complete each race, called a "stage." The one with the lowest aggregate time is the winner. Alternatively the winner can be selected by adding up the rider's placing, giving 1 point for first, 2 points for second, etc. The rider with the lowest total is the winner. The Tour de France used a points system between 1905 and 1912 because the judging was simpler and cheating could be reduced. Because points systems tend to cause

dull racing during most of the stage with a furious sprint at the end they are rarely used in determining the overall winner. Because points systems favour sprinters most important stage races have a points competition along with the elapsed time category. In the Tour de France the leader in time wears the Yellow Jersey and the Points leader wears green. In the Giro the time leader wears pink and the man ahead in points wear purple or more accurately "cyclamen." The race's ranking of its leaders for the overall prize is called the *General Classification*, or *GC*. It is possible, though rare, for a rider to win the overall race without ever winning an individual stage.

Switchback: In order to reduce the gradient of a mountain ascent the road engineer has the road go back and forth across the hill. The *Stelvio* climb is famous for its 48 switchbacks as is *L'Alpe d'Huez* for its 21. In Italian the term is *Tornante*.

T

Tappa: Italian for *stage*.

Team Leader. The rider for whom the team supports in order for the leader to win a stage or race.

Team Time Trial: See *Time Trial*. Instead of an individual rider, whole teams set off along a specific distance at intervals. It is a spectacular event because the teams go all out on the most advanced aerodynamic equipment and clothing available. To maximize the slipstream advantage the riders ride nose to tail as close to each other as possible. Sometimes a smaller front wheel is used on the bikes to get the riders a few valuable centimetres closer together. With the riders so close together, going so fast and at their physical limits, crashes are common. Some teams targeting an overall win practice this event with rigour and the result is a beautifully precise fast-moving team that operates almost as if they were 1 rider. Sometimes a team with a very powerful leader who is overly ambitious will shatter his team by making his turns at the front too fast for the others. Skilled experienced leaders take longer rather than faster pulls so that their team mates can rest.

Technical. A descent or other portion of a race that is twisty, steep or otherwise challenging from the point of view of bike handling.

Tempo: Usually means riding at a fast but not all-out pace. Teams defending a leader in a stage race will often go to the front of the *péloton* and ride tempo for days on end in order to discourage breakaways. It is very tiring work and usually leaves the domestiques of a winning team exhausted at the end of a *Grand Tour*.

Tifosi: Italian sports fans, sometimes fanatical in their devotion to an athlete or team. The term is said to be derived from the delirium of Typhus patients.

Time Bonus: see *Bonification*.

Time Cut. Mostly applicable to the *Grand Tours*. On each stage all riders must finish within a certain percentage of the winner's time to remain in the race. Those who are unable to make the cut are disqualified from the race

Time Limit: To encourage vigorous riding the Tour imposes a cut-off time limit. If a racer does not finish a stage by that time limit, he is eliminated from the race. This prevents a racer's resting by riding leisurely one day and winning the next. The time limit is a percentage of the stage winner's time. Because it is the intention of the Tour to be fair, the rules are complex. On flat stages where the riders have less trouble staying with the *péloton* and the time gaps are smaller, the percentage added to the winners' time is smaller. On a flat stage it can be as little as 5% of the winner's time if the speed is less than 34 kilometres an hour. In the mountain stages it can be as high as 17% of the winner's time. The faster the race is run, the higher the percentage of the winner's time allowed the slower riders. The Tour has 6 sets of percentage time limits, each a sliding scale according to the type of stage (flat, rolling, mountain, time trial, etc.) and the stage's speed. If 20 percent of the *péloton* fails to finish within the time limit the rule can be suspended. Also riders who have unusual trouble can appeal to the commissaires for clemency.

Time Trial: A race in which either an individual or team rides over a specific distance against the clock. It is intended to be an unpaced ride in which either the individual or team is not allowed to draft a competitor. The riders are started at specific intervals, usually 2 minutes. In the Tour the riders

Bicycle Racing Terminology

are started in reverse order of their standing in the *General Classification*, the leader going last. Usually the last 20 riders are set off at 3-minute intervals. If a rider catches a racer who started ahead of him the rules say that he must not get into his slipstream but must instead pass well to the slower rider's side. This is one of the more often ignored rules in cycling. The Tour's first time trial was in 1934.

Tornante: Italian for *switchbacks*.

Touriste-Routier: A class of riders in early Tours who did not ride on a team and were entirely responsible for their own lodging, food, and equipment. Various classes of independent or "individuel" and "isolé" riders persisted through 1937. As with all aspects of the Tour, the rules and designations regarding the riders constantly changed.

Track: See *Vélodrome*.

Trade Team: A team sponsored by a commercial entity. Until the mid-1950s, cycle team sponsorship was limited to companies within the bicycle industry. That changed in 1954 when Fiorenzo Magni's bicycle manufacturer fell into financial difficulty. Magni was able to supplement the shortfall by getting the Nivea cosmetic company to sponsor his team. The move was initially resisted but it is now the standard. Bicycle companies do not have the monetary resources to finance big-time racing teams. Because the Tour organization suspected collusion between the various trade teams the Tour banished them from 1930 to 1961, and 1967 and 1968. During those years the teams were organized under a national and regional team format. Riders rode for their country, such as France or Italy, or if need be to fill out the race's roster, regions such as Ile de France.

TTT: Team Time Trial.

Train. A fast moving pace line of riders.

Transfer: Usually a Tour stage will end in a city one afternoon and start the next morning from the same city. When a stage ends in one city and the next stage starts in another, the riders must be transferred by bus, plane, or train to the next day's starting city. This schedule is normally done so that

Bicycle Racing Terminology

both the finish and start city can pay the Tour organization for the privilege of hosting the Tour. The racers dislike transfers because this delays their massages, eating and resting.

Tubular. A high-performance racing tire with the inner tube sewn inside the tire. The tire is then glued to a low-profile rim. Tubulars offer weight and strength advantages, but are hard to fix and maintain. Plus a bad gluing job can mean a tire failure in a sharp turn, and an ugly crash. Also called *sew-ups*.

U

UCI. *Union Cycliste Internationale*, the international governing body of cycling.

Ultimo Kilometro: Italian for the *final kilometre*, the same as *Flamme Rouge* in French.

V

Vélo. French for *bicycle*.

Vélodrome: An oval bicycle-racing track with banked curves. They can be either indoors or outdoors. Olympic tracks are usually 333.33 meters around but indoor ones are smaller and have correspondingly steeper banking. Some road races like Paris-Roubaix have the riders ride onto the vélodrome and finish after a couple of laps on the track. In the past the Tour would regularly do this, often with the rider's time being clocked as he entered the vélodrome. With a 200-man field in modern Tours this is impractical. The disappearance of vélodromes is also a major factor in this trend.

Vertrek: Flemish for *start*.

Virtual Yellow Jersey: Not the leader of the Tour in fact. When a rider has a large enough lead on the Tour leader, so that if the race were to be ended at that very moment he would assume the leadership, he then is called the *Virtual Yellow Jersey*.

Virtuel Maillot Jaune: French for *Virtual Yellow Jersey*.

Voiture Balai: French. See *Broom Wagon*.

Volta a Portugal: A 2-week stage race, like the Tour de France. It is held in Portugal, traditionally in late July early August. It was first run in 1935.

Vuelta de España: A 2.5-3-week stage race, almost as well contested and famous as the Tour de France. It is held in Spain, traditionally in early August. Commonly known as *'la Vuelta.'*

W

Washboard: A rough riding surface with small bumps or irregularities. Like the *pavé*, riding on washboard requires a lot of power and puts the smaller riders with less absolute power at their disposal at a disadvantage.

Wheel Sucker. A somewhat dated term for someone who, while riding in a pace line, doesn't take a turn at the front of the line. These days they get called lots of other names. None are printable here.

White Jersey: *See Maillot Blanc.*

Y

Yellow Jersey: Worn by the rider who is leading in the General Classification in the Tour de France. Traditional history says that Eugène Christophe was awarded the first Yellow Jersey on the rest day between stages 10 and 11 during the 1919. It is further believed that Yellow was chosen because the pages of the sponsoring newspaper *L'Auto* was printed on yellow paper. Both may not be true. Philippe Thys said that he was given a Yellow Jersey by Tour founder Desgrange during the 1913 Tour. And Yellow may have been chosen because jerseys of that colour were unpopular and therefore cheap and easy to get.

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