12 THE TOUR DE FRANCE

Each year in July, more than 200 cyclists from 22 teams compete in an epic bicycle race across France: the Tour de France. The race winds its way through sprawling cities, cobbled streets, picturesque countryside and even snow-capped mountains to its climax in Paris. It is divided into stages of different lengths and with types of track.

The first race

The race was first held in July 1903 and was won by a French man, Maurice Garin. Over 100 years later, the Tour has become one of the most high-profile sporting events in the world.

Winning jerseys



Instead of medals, cyclists in the Tour de France are awarded jerseys for their achievements in different categories as the race goes on.

- The yellow jersey is awarded to the rider with the lowest total time of all the stages that have been raced so far. At the end, this cyclist is the winner of the Tour de France.
- The green jersey is awarded to the rider who has accumulated the most points by finishing high in individual stages of the race and winning sprints.
- The polka-dot jersey is awarded to the best-performing racer in stages where difficult hills and mountains are involved.
- The white jersey is awarded to the best-placed rider under 26 years of age at the end of each stage.

British icons of cycling

Philippa York, who competed as Robert Millar, was an early hero, winning the title 'King of the Mountain' for being best at cycling up the steep mountain inclines of the 1984 Tour de France – the first time a British rider won a Tour de France classification. York finished fourth overall, achieving the highest-ranked British position in the Tour de France for over 20 years.

Bradley Wiggins was the first Briton to win the Tour de France in 65 years, in 2012. Wiggins rode for Team Sky and won the race by over a minute. He also won an Olympic gold medal in the same year.

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Mark Cavendish, unlike Wiggins, was a specialist sprint cycler. Some of the stages of the Tour de France are short, and so are better suited for riders like him. He won thirty individual stages of the Tour de France, and was awarded an MBE in 2011.

Chris Froome won four Tour de France titles for Team Sky, in 2013, 2015, 2016 and 2017. He also won the other two 'grand tour' European cycling races: the Vuelta a España, in 2017, and the Giro d'Italia, in 2018. He took bronze in the 2017 World Championships, and was given an OBE.

Allegations

The Tour de France hasn't always been known for glory, sporting greatness and human resilience. Some riders are apparently willing to do anything to win, and the sport has been rocked by allegations of cheating – mainly the use of performance-enhancing drugs.

One of these drugs is called EPO. EPO makes the body produce more red blood cells so it can absorb more oxygen. As a result, athletes can produce more energy for longer, giving them an unfair advantage.

Perhaps the most famous conviction for use of EPO was American cyclist Lance Armstrong's. He won seven Tour de France titles, but had all of them invalidated after he tested positive for the drug. After initially denying that he had used it, he finally admitted his sporting crimes on TV, in 2013.

Record winners

Winning the Tour de France is a dream that few riders achieve. However, winning once just wasn't enough for some! The table below shows the Tour's most prolific riders – some of whom won the prestigious title no less than five times. As you will notice, Lance Armstrong is no longer present on this list.

5	Jacques Anquetil	1957, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964
	Eddy Merckx	1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1974
	Bernard Hinault	1978, 1979, 1981, 1982, 1983
	Miguel Indurain	1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995
4	Chris Froome	2013, 2015, 2016, 2017
3	Phillipe Thys	1913, 1914, 1920
	Louison Bobet	1953,1954, 1955
	Greg LeMond	1986, 1989, 1990

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FIND AND COPY



These questions are about *The Tour de France*.

Look at paragraph one. Find and copy a word that suggests that teams are fighting against each other to win.

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Look at paragraph one. Find and copy a word that suggests that the race is very big and exciting.

_____

Look at the 'Winning jerseys' section. Find and copy a word that suggests that riders earn points in each stage.

_____

Look at the paragraph beginning 'Philippa York...'. Find and copy a word that suggests that the mountains are very tough to ride up.

_____

Look at the paragraph beginning 'Chris Froome...'. Find and copy a word that suggests that Chris Froome finished in third place in the 2017 World Championships.

_____

Look at the 'Allegations' section. Find and copy a word that suggests that cycling was negatively affected by cheating allegations.

_____

Look at the paragraph beginning 'Perhaps the most famous...'. Find and copy a word that suggests that Lance Armstrong's titles were taken away and no longer stand.

_____

Look at the paragraph beginning 'Winning the Tour de France...'. Find and copy a word that refers to the Tour's most successful riders.

_____

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