



General classification in the Tour de France

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The **general classification** is the most important classification, the one by which the winner of the Tour de France is determined. Since 1919, the leader of the general classification wears the **yellow jersey** (French: *maillot jaune* pronounced [majo ʒon]).

History

The winner of the first Tour de France wore a green armband, not a yellow jersey.^[1] After the second Tour de France, the rules were changed, and the general classification was no longer calculated by time, but by points. This points system was kept until 1912, after which it changed back into the time classification. At that time, the leader still did not wear a yellow jersey.

There is doubt over when the yellow jersey began. The Belgian rider Philippe Thys, who won the Tour in 1913, 1914 and 1920, recalled in the Belgian magazine *Champions et Vedettes* when he was 67 that he was awarded a yellow jersey in 1913 when the organiser, Henri Desgrange, asked him to wear a coloured jersey. Thys declined, saying making himself more visible in yellow would encourage other riders to ride against him.^{[1][2]}

He said:

"He then made his argument from another direction. Several stages later, it was my team manager at Peugeot, (Alphonse) Baugé, who urged me to give in. The yellow jersey would be an advertisement for the company and, that being the argument, I was obliged to concede. So a yellow jersey was bought in the first shop we came to. It was just the right size, although we had to cut a slightly larger hole for my head to go through." ^{[2][3][4]}

He spoke of the next year's race, when "I won the first stage and was beaten by a tyre by Bossus in the second. On the following stage, the maillot jaune passed to Georget after a crash."

Yellow jersey



The 2013 yellow jersey, worn by Simon Gerrans

Sport	<u>Road bicycle racing</u>
Competition	<u>Tour de France</u>
Awarded for	Overall best time
Local name	<i>Maillot jaune</i> (French)
History	
First award	<u>1903</u>
Editions	104 (as of <u>2017</u>)
First winner	 <u>Maurice Garin</u> (FRA)

The Tour historian Jacques Augendre called Thys "a valorous rider... well-known for his intelligence" and said his claim "seems free from all suspicion". But: "No newspaper mentions a yellow jersey before the war. Being at a loss for witnesses, we can't solve this enigma."^[5]

According to the official history, the first yellow jersey was worn by the Frenchman Eugène Christophe in the stage from Grenoble to Geneva on July 18, 1919.^[6] The colour was chosen either to reflect the yellow newsprint of the organising newspaper, *L'Auto*, or because yellow was an unpopular colour and therefore the only one available with which a manufacturer could create jerseys at late notice.^[1]

The two possibilities have been promoted equally but the idea of matching the colour of Desgrange's newspaper seems more probable because Desgrange wrote: "This morning I gave the valiant Christophe a superb yellow jersey. You already know that our director decided that the man leading the race [*de tête du classement général*] should wear a jersey in the colours of *L'Auto*. The battle to wear this jersey is going to be passionate."^[7]

Christophe disliked wearing it, anyway, and complained that spectators imitated canaries whenever he passed. It was a habit encouraged by his nickname of Cri-Cri (from "Christophe") which is French babytalk for a bird.^[1] Christophe remembered riders and spectators teasing: "Ah, the yellow jersey! Isn't he beautiful, the canary? What are you doing, Madame Cri-Cri", adding, "And that lasted the whole course."^[8]

There was no formal presentation when Christophe wore his first yellow jersey in Grenoble, from where the race left at 2am for the 325 km to Geneva. He was given it the night before and tried it on later in his hotel.^[1]






In the next Tour de France in 1920, the yellow jersey was initially not awarded, but after the ninth stage, it was introduced again.^[9]

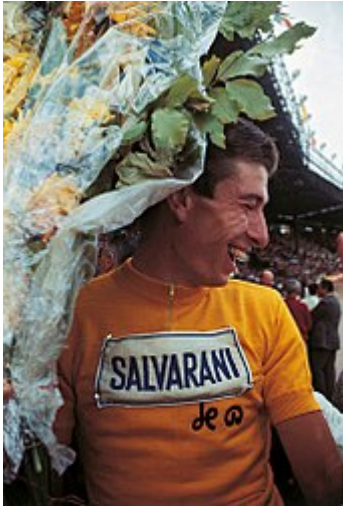
After Desgrange's death, his stylized initials were added to the yellow jersey,^[6] originally on the chest. They moved in 1969 to the sleeve to make way for a logo advertising Virlux. A further advertisement for the clothing company Le Coq Sportif appeared at the bottom of the zip fastener at the neck, the first supplementary advertisement on the *maillot jaune*.

Desgrange's initials returned to the front of the jersey in 1972, some years on the left, others on the right. They were removed in 1984 to make way for a commercial logo but Nike added them again in 2003 as part of the Tour's centenary celebrations. One set of initials is now worn on the upper right chest of the jersey.^[1]

In 2013, a nighttime finish on the Champs-Élysées for the final stage was done to commemorate the race's 100th edition. Race leader Chris Froome wore a special yellow jersey covered in small translucent sequins into Paris as well as on the podium to allow him to be more visible under the lights.

The original yellow jerseys were of conventional style. Riders had to pull them over their head on the rostrum. For many years the jersey was made in only limited sizes and many riders found it a struggle to pull one on, especially when tired or wet. The presentation jersey is now made with a full-length zip

Most wins	 <u>Jacques Anquetil</u> (FRA)
	 <u>Eddy Merckx</u> (BEL)
	 <u>Bernard Hinault</u> (FRA)
	 <u>Miguel Indurain</u> (ESP)
	5 wins
Most recent	 <u>Chris Froome</u> (GBR)



Winner of the 1965 Tour's general classification Felice Gimondi wearing the yellow jersey with the initials of Henri Desgrange, the first organiser of the Tour de France

at the back and the rider pulls it on from the front, sliding his hands through the sleeves rather like a strait-jacket. He then receives three further jerseys each day, plus money (referred to as the "rent") for each day he leads the race.

There is no copyright on the yellow jersey and it has been imitated by many other races, although not always for the best rider overall: in the Tour of Benelux yellow is worn by the best young rider. In professional surf, the current male and female leaders of the World Surf League get to wear a yellow jersey on all the heats of a tour stop.

In American English it is sometimes referred to as the *mellow johnny*, a mispronunciation of its French name originally by Lance Armstrong, who wore it many times while riding in the 1999-2005 races. Armstrong also uses the name "Mellow Johnny" for his Texas-based bike shop. The Lance Armstrong Foundation donated the yellow jersey from Armstrong's fourth Tour de France win (2002) to the National Museum of American History.^[10]

Rules

The Tour de France, and other bicycle stage races, are decided by totalling the time each rider takes on the daily stages. Time can be added or subtracted from this total time as bonuses or penalties for winning individual stages or being first to the top of a climb or for infractions of the rules. The rider with the lowest overall time at the end of each stage receives a ceremonial yellow bicycling jersey and the right to start the next stage, usually the next day, of the Tour in the yellow jersey.^[11]

The rider to receive the yellow jersey after the last stage in Paris, is the overall (or ultimate) winner of the Tour.

Similar leader's jerseys exist in other cycling races, but are not always yellow (the color being chosen by the individual race organizers). The Tour of California uses gold, the Giro d'Italia uses pink and the Tour Down Under uses an ochre-coloured jersey, as ochre is a colour strongly associated with Australia, particularly its desert regions. Until 2009 the Vuelta a España used gold; since 2010 the leader's jersey is red.

More than one rider leading the general classification

In the early years of the Tour de France, the time was measured in minutes. Although usually cyclists were seconds apart, sometimes several cyclists shared the same time. In 1914, before the introduction of the yellow jersey, this had happened with the two leaders, Philippe Thys and Jean Rossius.^[12]

After the introduction of the yellow jersey in 1919, the situation occurred twice. The first time was in 1929, when three riders had the same time when the race reached Bordeaux. Nicolas Frantz of Luxembourg and the Frenchmen Victor Fontan and André Leducq all rode in yellow, although none held it to the finish in Paris.^{[13][14]} In 1931, Charles Pélissier and Rafaele di Paco were both leading with the same time.^[15]

The problem of joint leaders was resolved in later Tours by giving the jersey to whichever rider had the best daily finishing places earlier in the race. The introduction of a short time trial at the start of the race in 1967 - the prologue time trial — meant riders have since been divided by fractions of seconds recorded in that race, excepting the 2008, 2011 and 2013 editions. According to the ASO rules^[11]

"In the event of a tie in the general ranking, the hundredth of a second recorded by the timekeepers during the individual time trial stages will be included in the total times in order to decide the overall winner and who takes the yellow jersey. If a tie should still result from this, then the places achieved for each stage are added up and, as a last resort, the place obtained in the final stage is counted."

No riders in yellow

Riders who became race leader through the misfortune of others have ridden next day without the yellow jersey.^[13]

In 1950, Ferdi Kubler of Switzerland rode in his national jersey rather than yellow when the race leader, Fiorenzo Magni abandoned the race along with the Italian team in protest at threats said to have been made by spectators.

Eddy Merckx declined the jersey in 1971 after its previous wearer, Luis Ocaña, crashed on the col de Mente in the Pyrenees.^[16]

The Dutchman Joop Zoetemelk did not wear the yellow jersey that passed to him in 1980 when his rival, Bernard Hinault retired with tendonitis.^[16]

In 1991, Greg LeMond rode without the jersey after a crash eliminated Rolf Sørensen of Denmark.^[16]

In 2005, Lance Armstrong refused to start in the yellow jersey after the previous owner, David Zabriskie, was eliminated by a crash, but put it on after the neutral zone on request of the race organizers.^[17]

In 2015, there was no yellow jersey in stage 7 after Tony Martin had crashed in the previous stage. Martin had finished the previous stage after the crash (and officially retained the yellow jersey as a result), but had broken his collarbone in the crash and did not start stage 7. Chris Froome became the overall leader with Martin's non-start.^[18]

The yellow jersey on the first day of the Tour is traditionally permitted to be worn by the winner of the previous year's race; however, wearing it is a choice left to the rider, and in recent years has gone out of fashion. If the winner does not ride, the jersey is not worn. The previous year's winner traditionally has race number "1" (with his teammates given the other single-digit racing numbers), with subsequent sets of numbers determined by the highest classified riders for that team in the previous Tour. The lead riders for a particular team will often wear the first number in the series (11, 21, 31 and so forth), but these riders are not necessarily contenders for the general classification — teams led by sprinters will often designate the maillot vert contender as their lead rider.

In 2007 there was neither a yellow jersey at the start of the race nor a number 1; the previous winner, Floyd Landis of the United States failed a doping control after the race and organisers declined to declare an official winner pending arbitration of the Landis case. On September 20, 2007, Landis was officially stripped of his title following the arbitration court's guilty verdict, and the 2006 title passed

to Óscar Pereiro; in 2008, the runner-up in 2007, Cadel Evans was given the race number "1" when the 2007 winner, Alberto Contador was unable to defend his title due to a dispute between the organisers ASO and his new team Astana barring that team from riding the Tour.

Scandal in yellow

In 1978 the Belgian rider Michel Pollentier became race leader after attacking on the Alpe d'Huez. He was disqualified the same day after trying to cheat a drug test.

In 1988, Pedro Delgado of Spain won the Tour despite a drug test showing he had taken a drug what could be used to hide the use of steroids. News of the test was leaked to the press by the former organiser of the Tour, Jacques Goddet.^[19] Delgado was allowed to continue because the drug, probenecid, was not banned by the Union Cycliste Internationale.^[1]

The 1996 winner Bjarne Riis of Denmark said, in 2007, that he used drugs during the race. He was asked to stay away from the 2007 Tour in his role as directeur sportif of the Danish Team CSC (now called Team Saxo-Tinkoff).

The 2006 winner Floyd Landis was disqualified more than a year after the race. After he failed a doping control test following his stunning Stage 17 victory, an arbitration panel declared him guilty of doping in September 2007; the official title for the 2006 Tour passed to Óscar Pereiro. Landis appealed his case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, but lost this appeal at the end of June 2008^[20] allowing Oscar Pereiro to start the 2008 edition of Le Tour de France as the unqualified 2006 Tour champion.

In 2007, the Danish rider Michael Rasmussen was withdrawn from the race by his team after complaints that he had not made himself available for drug tests earlier in the year. Rasmussen said that he was in Mexico but there were reports that he was seen training in Italy. He later admitted doping for more than a decade.^[21]

Maurice Garin won the Tour de France before yellow jerseys were awarded; but in 1904, he was disqualified as winner after complaints that he and other riders cheated. The allegations disappeared with the Tour de France's other archives, when they were taken south in 1940 to avoid the German invasion. But a man, who knew Garin as a small boy, recalled that the Garin admitted catching a train part of the way.^[22]

In 2012, Lance Armstrong was stripped of his seven Tour de France titles by UCI, following a report by the United States Anti-Doping Agency revealing that Armstrong had systematically used performance-enhancing drugs for much of his career, including all seven Tour victories.^[23]

Record days in yellow

The rider who has most worn the yellow jersey is the Belgian Eddy Merckx, who wore it 96 days. The greatest number of riders to wear the jersey in a single edition of Le Tour de France is eight, which happened in 1958 and 1987.

The man who refused the yellow jersey

The yellow jersey was made for decades, like all other cycling jerseys, from wool. No synthetic fibres existed which had both the warmth and the absorption of wool. Embroidery was expensive and so the only lettering to appear on the jersey was the H.D. of Desgrange's initials. Riders added the name of the team for which they were riding or the professional team for which they normally rode (in the years when the Tour was for national rather than sponsored teams) by attaching a panel of printed cloth to the front of the jersey by pins.

While synthetic material didn't exist in a way to create whole jerseys, synthetic thread or blends were added in 1947, following the arrival of Sofil as a sponsor. Sofil made artificial yarn.^[19] Riders, especially the Frenchman Louison Bobet (Louis Bobet as he was still known), believed in the pureness of wool. Bobet insisted that cyclists needed wool for their long days of sweating in the heat and dust. It was a matter of hygiene. Artificial fabrics made riders sweat too much. And, in his first Tour de France, he refused to wear the jersey with which he had been presented.

Goddet recalled:

"It produced a real drama. Our contract with Sofil was crumbling away. If the news had got out, the commercial effect would have been disastrous for the manufacturer. I remember debating it with him a good part of the night. Louison was always exquisitely courteous but his principles were as hard as the granite blocks of his native Brittany coast."^[19]

No compromise was possible. Goddet had to get Sofil to produce another jersey overnight, its logo still visible but artificial fabric absent.

"Elegance in yellow"

For the veteran writer and television broadcaster Jean-Paul Ollivier, the woollen yellow jersey...

"...gave the riders a rare elegance, even if the way it caught the air left something to be desired. In wool, then in Rovyl — a material used for making underwear — it entered into legend for the quality of those who wore it. Those were the years of national teams. In 1930 Henri Desgrange, the organiser, decided that commercially-sponsored teams were contriving to spoil his race and opted instead for teams representing countries. The Tour de France stayed that way until 1962, when it reverted to commercial teams with the exception of 1967 and 1968 and the riders knotted on their jerseys a spare tyre [across the shoulders] A narrow slip of white cotton placed on the chest showed discreetly the name of the sponsor outside the Tour: La Perle, Mercier, Helyett..."^[6]

The advent of printing by flocking, a process in which cotton fluff is sprayed on to stencilled glue, and then of screen printing, combined with the domination of synthetic materials to increase the advertising on jerseys: the domination which Ollivier regrets. "All sorts of fantasies such as fluorescent jerseys or shorts," he said.^[6] Such was the quantity of advertising when Bernard Thévenet accepted the yellow jersey when the Tour finished for the first time on the Champs Elysées in 1975 that the French sports minister counted all the logos and protested to broadcasters. Since then the number of people with access to the podium has been restricted.^[19]

Sponsorship

The French bank, Crédit Lyonnais, has sponsored the *maillot jaune* since 1987.^[24] The company has been a commercial partner of the Tour since 1981. It awards a toy lion - *le lion en peluche* - to each day's winner as a play on its name. In 2007, sponsorship of the jersey was credited to LCL, the new


name for Crédit Lyonnais following its takeover by another bank, Crédit Agricole.

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