Races Within Races

How to get a grip on bicycle racing and the Tour de France

first, win the day.

game on wheels.

Bicycle Racing seems like a simple sport: go fast, cross the finish line

But winning a bike race is actually all about saving energy, not riding fast. And the techniques to save energy in a bike race are complex and often surprising. They result in tactics that make bike racing one of the most

Scroll that way





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In terms of bike racing, the human body is just a big battery storing enery. Bike racing is a contest to see who has the biggest battery.



Riding into the wind drains a racer's battery faster. So a racer

ride behind someone (more or less, depending on who you ask).

Because a racer never really knows how much energy another rider

amazing array of complex strategy. Kind of like the way the

ancient board game Go derives infinite complexity from a few

has, this simple principle of drafting, as it is known, creates an

A racer never wants to be in first place — until they are

crossing the finish line.

simple rules.

always wants to be behind another racer. It's about 40% easier to



Recharging the battery is

done by eating food and



The Tour de France is a

stage race which means

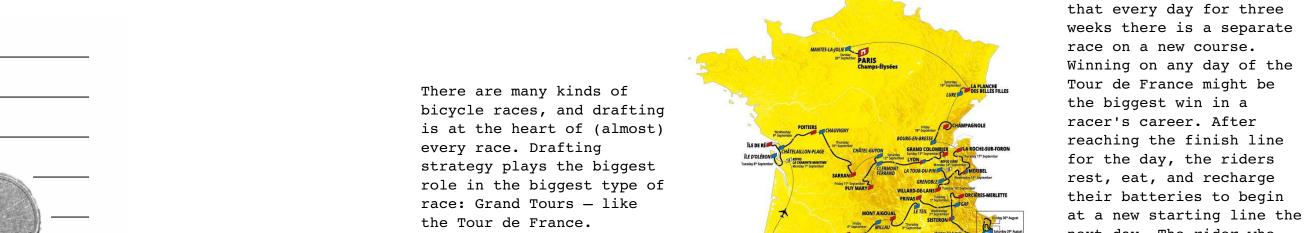
next day. The rider who

has the shortest overall

of racing days added up,

is the winner of the Tour

time for all three weeks



team leader gets most of the glory. Besides the team leader, there's other specialists on a team

Most Tour de France stages are either flat stages or mountain stages. On a flat stage everything is nice and orderly...

chooses a team leader - the rider with the biggest battery and the best chance of winning the overall race. Every other rider o the team stays in front of that rider, using their own energy s the team leader can save energy for the hardest days of the race. Winning the Tour de France depends on team tactics — even if the

Blue team sprinter Blue team climber domestiques

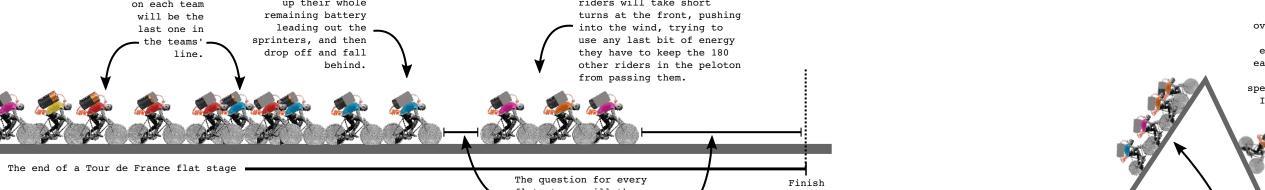
There's big sprinters who use their heavy load of muscles to burn up lots of energy in the last few hundred feet towards the finis' line, and there's lightweight mountain climbers who leave the bigger riders struggling up steep slopes. There's other riders who are just there to block the wind and fetch water from the cars that follow behind. They are called domestiques.

In the last quarter mile of a flat stage, things get intense..



sprinters will move to the the peloton. One special accelerate the peloton with the racing is that your enemy

Sprinters are faster than all make it to the finish line but sometimes they do. They be within sight of the finish who isn't a sprinter or a line before they come out from behind their domestiques.



Sometimes the sprinter's teams don't time the catch of the breakaway correctly. Then, if they are strategic and cooperative, the breakaway has a chance to reach the finish line before t peloton comes charging down on them. In most cases it ends i

neartbreak for the breakaway, and turns into a bunch sprint. The domestiques of each of the sprinter's teams peel off one-by-one as they use up their battery until all that's left are sprinters raging in at over 40 mph. The run-up to the finish line on a flat stage in the Tour de France is one of the most tense moments in all of sports.

in the world might be riding at a

jogging pace. Mountain racing might ot be fast, but it's where the racers with the biggest batteries get to shine, and the overall winner of the Tour de France will be determined.