## Races Within Races

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

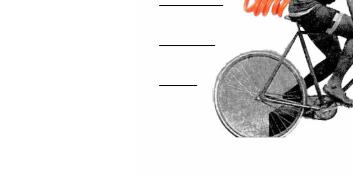
first, win the day.

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



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.



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Recharging the battery is

done by eating food and



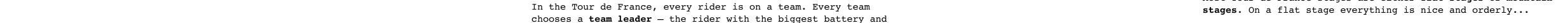
has, this simple principle of drafting, as it is known, creates an

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

ancient board game Go derives infinite complexity from a few



simple rules.



the best chance of winning the overall race. Every other rider o The Tour de France is a the team stays in front of that rider, using their own energy s stage race which means the team leader can save energy for the hardest days of the race. that every day for three Winning the Tour de France depends on team tactics — even if the weeks there is a separate

race on a new course.

There are many kinds of

bicycle races, and drafting is at the heart of (almost)

every race. Drafting strategy plays the biggest role in the biggest type of

race: Grand Tours — like

the Tour de France.

Winning on any day of the

Tour de France might be

reaching the finish li

for the day, the riders

their batteries to begin

at a new starting line

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.

Blue team sprinter Blue team climber domestiques Besides the team leader, there's other specialists on a team

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.

sprinters will move to the

Most Tour de France stages are either flat stages or mountain

accelerate the peloton with the racing is that your enemy Sprinters are faster than all be within sight of the finish line before they come out from behind their domestiques.

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

all of sports.



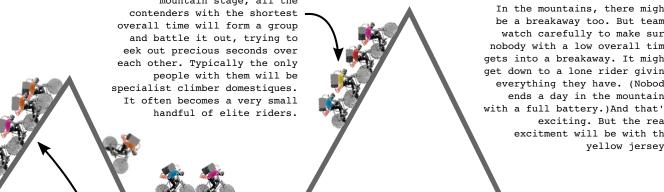
The end of a Tour de France flat stage Sometimes the sprinter's teams don't time the catch of the

make it to the finish line but sometimes they do. They who isn't a sprinter or a

the peloton. One special

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. Th 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 means sometimes there's a race



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

in the world might be riding at a