

= 2012 Tour de France =

The 2012 Tour de France was the 99th edition of the Tour de France , one of cycling 's Grand Tours . It started in the Belgian city of Liège on 30 June and finished on the Champs @-@ Élysées in Paris on 22 July . The Tour consisted of twenty @-@ one race stages , including an opening prologue , and covered a total distance of 3 @, @ 496 @. @ 9 km ( 2 @, @ 173 mi ) . As well as the prologue , the first two race stages took place in Belgium , and one stage finished in Switzerland . Bradley Wiggins ( Team Sky ) won the overall general classification , and became the first British rider to win the Tour . Wiggins 's teammate Chris Froome placed second , and Vincenzo Nibali ( Liquigas ? Cannondale ) was third .

The race leader 's yellow jersey was worn for the first week by Fabian Cancellara ( RadioShack ? Nissan ) , who won the prologue . Wiggins , second in the prologue , took the leadership of the race on stage seven , the first mountainous stage , which was won by Froome , and maintained his lead for the remainder of the race , winning the two longest time trials , and not losing time to his main challengers for the overall title in the mountains . Froome came second in both the long time trials , and was alongside Wiggins on the mountainous stages .

The points classification was won by Nibali 's teammate Peter Sagan , who won three stages . André Greipel of Lotto ? Belisol and Team Sky rider Mark Cavendish both also won three stages . Team Europcar 's Thomas Voeckler , winner of two mountain stages , won the mountains classification . BMC Racing Team 's Tejay van Garderen , in fifth place overall , won the young rider classification . The team classification was won by RadioShack ? Nissan and Chris Anker Sørensen ( Saxo Bank ? Tinkoff Bank ) was given the award for the most combative rider .

= = Teams = =

Twenty @-@ two teams participated in the 2012 edition of the Tour de France . All eighteen UCI ProTeams were entitled , and obliged , to enter the race . On 6 April 2012 , the organiser of the Tour , Amaury Sport Organisation ( ASO ) , announced the four second @-@ tier UCI Professional Continental teams given wildcard invitations , of which one was Dutch @-@ based and three French . The presentation of the teams ? where each team 's roster are introduced in front of the media and local dignitaries ? took place outside the Prince @-@ Bishops ' Palace in Liège , Belgium , on 28 June , two days before the opening stage held in the city .

The number of riders allowed per squad was nine , resulting in a start list total of 198 riders . From the riders that began the race , 153 crossed the finish line in Paris . The riders came from 31 countries ; France , Spain , Netherlands , Italy , Belgium , Germany and Australia all had 12 or more riders in the race . The average rider age was 30 @. @ 17 , with 22 @-@ year @-@ old Thibaut Pinot ( FDJ ? BigMat ) as the youngest rider , and 40 @-@ year @-@ old Jens Voigt ( RadioShack ? Nissan ) as the most senior . Saur ? Sojasun was the youngest team and RadioShack ? Nissan the oldest .

The teams entering the race were :

= = Pre @-@ race favourites = =

According to many observers before the race the favourite for the general classification was Bradley Wiggins . His closest rivals were thought to be Cadel Evans ( BMC Racing Team ) and Vincenzo Nibali ( Liquigas ? Cannondale ) . 2007 and 2009 winner Alberto Contador was serving a doping suspension and did not start in 2012 Tour . 2010 winner and 2011 runner @-@ up Andy Schleck was not able to recover from an injury suffered in the Critérium du Dauphiné . The riders considered outsiders for the general classification were Ryder Hesjedal ( Garmin ? Sharp ) , Fränk Schleck ( RadioShack ? Nissan ) , Samuel Sánchez ( Euskaltel ? Euskadi ) , Jurgen Van den Broeck ( Lotto ? Belisol ) , Tony Martin ( Omega Pharma ? Quick @-@ Step ) , Denis Menchov ( Team Katusha ) , Levi Leipheimer ( Omega Pharma ? Quick @-@ Step ) , Alejandro Valverde ( Movistar Team ) and Robert Gesink ( Rabobank ) .

Wiggins 's highest finishes in a Grand Tour were fourth in the 2009 Tour ( later promoted to third after Lance Armstrong 's result was annulled in 2012 ) and third in the 2011 Vuelta a España . He had shown his form in the season by winning the general classifications in three stage races , the Paris @-@ Nice , Tour de Romandie and Dauphiné . Being a time trialist , Wiggins was thought to have been the rider most suited the race 's course . The 2011 Tour winner Evans came back from an illness earlier in the season to win the two @-@ day Critérium International and place third at the Dauphiné . The 2010 Vuelta a España winner Nibali had shown his form in the season by winning the Tirreno ? Adriatico stage race .

The sprinters considered favourites for the points classification and wins in bunch sprint finishes were Mark Cavendish ( Team Sky ) , André Greipel ( Lotto ? Belisol ) , Matthew Goss ( Orica ? GreenEDGE ) , Peter Sagan ( Liquigas ? Cannondale ) and Marcel Kittel ( Argos ? Shimano ) . Cavendish was the world road race champion and defending points classification winner , but would not have the full support of Team Sky , with the focus being with Wiggins ' general classification ambitions . He had won the four @-@ stage race Ster ZLM Toer thirteen days before the start of the Tour . Greipel , who would have the full backing of his team , had shown his form in the season with thirteen victories . Goss was second to Cavendish at the world championships and was the new sprint leader of his team , although he had only one win in the year . Sagan was equal in wins with Greipel , of which five came in the Tour of California and four in the Tour de Suisse . Kittel won two stages in both the Tour of Oman and Ster ZLM Toer .

= = Route and stages = =

On 29 October 2010 , the ASO announced that Liège would host the 2012 edition 's Grand Départ ( the Tour 's opening stages ) , before further details of the first three stages held in Belgium at an event at the city 's Prince @-@ Bishops ' Palace on 18 November . It was the first time a Grand Départ outside France had been hosted in the same location twice , with other occasion in 2004 . The entire route of the race was accidentally published on the ASO website on 10 October 2011 , eight days before the official presentation at the Palais des Congrès in Paris . Due to a clash with the start of the Olympics in the end of July , the Tour was moved forward a week earlier than usual .

After the opening prologue in Liège , stage one left the city with the finish in Seraing . The second stage took place between Visé to Tournai , before the race moved into north @-@ west France . The third stage ended in the coastal city of Boulogne @-@ sur @-@ Mer , before the fourth ending in Rouen , and fifth in Saint @-@ Quentin . Stage six took the race east , with the seventh ending in the Vosges Mountains . Stage eight entered Switzerland the finish in Porrentruy . A return to France saw the next stage take place between Arc @-@ et @-@ Senans to Besançon . The next stages , ten and eleven , went into the Alps , with the two after taking the Tour down to the Mediterranean Sea at Cap d 'Agde . Stage fourteen moved the race into the east of Pyrenees , before a transitional stage taking it to the western side for the next two in the mountain range . The eighteen stage was between Blagnac to Brive @-@ la @-@ Gaillarde in the south of the country , before an air transfer took the race back to the north east to finish with the Champs @-@ Élysées stage in Paris .

There were 21 stages in the race , covering a total distance of 3 @, @ 496 @. @ 9 km ( 2 @, @ 173 mi ) , 133 @. @ 1 km ( 82 @. @ 7 mi ) shorter than the 2011 Tour . The longest race stage was the twelfth at 226 km ( 140 mi ) , and stage 21 the shortest at 120 km ( 75 mi ) . The race featured a total of 101 @. @ 1 km ( 63 mi ) in individual time trials and three summit finishes : stage 7 , to La Planche des Belles Filles ; stage 11 , to La Toussuire - Les Sybelles ; and stage 17 , to Peyragudes . The Col du Grand Colombier in the Alps , was included for the first time , and was among six hors catégorie ( English : beyond category ) rated climbs in the race . The rest days were after stage 9 , in Mâcon , and 15 , in Pau .

= = Race overview = =

The opening 6 @. @ 4 km ( 4 mi ) prologue stage in Liège was won by RadioShack ? Nissan 's Fabian Cancellara . Bradley Wiggins and Sylvain Chavanel ( Omega Pharma ? Quick @-@ Step )

placed second and third respectively , both seven seconds in arrears , with Wiggins fractionally faster . Cancellara claimed the yellow jersey as leader of the general classification and the green jersey as leader of the points classification . In stage one a large group of riders reached the ending climb , the Côte de Seraing . Cancellara attacked 1 @. @ 5 km ( 0 @. @ 9 mi ) out , followed by Peter Sagan and Edvald Boasson Hagen ( Team Sky ) , before Sagan won the sprint finish at the summit . Michael Mørkøv of Saxo Bank ? Tinkoff Bank took the first polka dot jersey as leader of the mountains classification . The next stage was won by Mark Cavendish from a bunch sprint finish in Tournai , Belgium , with Sagan taking the green jersey . Stage three , the first in France , saw the Sagan win again , crossing the finish line with a comfortable margin on the short steep climb in Boulogne @- @ sur @- @ Mer . The fourth ended with a bunch sprint won by André Greipel . A crash with 3 km ( 1 @. @ 9 mi ) remaining took Cavendish out of contention . Another bunch finish came in the next stage , with Greipel victorious again . The sixth stage was won by Sagan in another field sprint .

In the stage seven , the first at altitude , the last of the day 's breakaway riders were caught with 1 @. @ 5 km ( 0 @. @ 9 mi ) remaining , on the final climb to La Planche des Belles Filles . A select group of five ? Wiggins and his compatriot and teammate Chris Froome , Cadel Evans , Vincenzo Nibali and Rein Taaramäe of Cofidis ? then pulled clear in the final kilometre , before Evans attacked and Froome countered and to win stage and take the polka dot jersey . Cancellara lost almost two minutes on the day and surrendered the yellow jersey to Wiggins , who became the fifth British rider to wear the jersey , and first since David Millar in 2000 . The eighth stage saw breakaway rider Thibaut Pinot attack a reduced break on the final climb , the Col de la Croix , and solo to the finish in Porrentruy , Switzerland , taking the victory by margin of twenty @- @ six seconds . Breakaway rider Fredrik Kessiakoff ( Astana ) took the polka . Stage nine 's 41 @. @ 5 km ( 25 @. @ 8 mi ) individual time trial was taken by Wiggins , with Froome 35 seconds down in second and Cancellara a further 22 . Froome moved up to third overall . The next day was the first rest day of the Tour .

The tenth stage was the first classified as mountainous . The Col du Grand Colombier broke apart a 25 @- @ rider breakaway , leaving small group to contest the finish at Bellegarde @- @ sur @- @ Valserine ; Thomas Voeckler ( Team Europcar ) claimed the stage win and the polka dot jersey . Another mountain stage followed the next day , which again saw a large breakaway . The break crossed the two hors catégorie climbs ? the col de la Madeleine and the Col de la Croix de Fer ? before being caught chasing group containing the overall contenders . A number of attacks followed , until Team Europcar 's Pierre Rolland escaped with 10 km ( 6 @. @ 2 mi ) to go and took the win at the Les Sybelles ski resort . The group of overall contenders followed , 55 seconds later . Evans was absent and dropped from second to fourth overall , over three minutes in arrears . Kessiakoff took back the lead of the mountains classification . In stage twelve , a large breakaway formed 20 km ( 12 @. @ 4 mi ) in , later reduced to five riders across the Col du Granier . They stayed together until the finish , where , with a kilometer remaining David Millar ( Garmin ? Sharp ) escaped to take victory , closely followed by Jean @- @ Christophe Péraud ( Ag2r ? La Mondiale ) . A transitional stage came next , with a bunch sprint finish in Cap d 'Agde . Greipel took the win , with Sagan second .

In the first stage in the Pyrenees , the fourteenth , a large breakaway escaped 50 km ( 31 @. @ 1 mi ) in , and had at one point amassed a lead of fifteen minutes . Of five remaining riders from the final climb of Mur de Péguère , Luis León Sánchez of Rabobank attacked on an ascent with 11 @. @ 5 km ( 7 @. @ 1 mi ) remaining and soloed to the finish in Foix . As the peloton ( the main group ) passed the Mur de Péguère , the race was sabotaged as a large number of riders had suffered tyre punctures from carpet tacks . Evans waited over a minute to get a replacement wheel , then had a further two punctures on the descent . Wiggins then forced the peloton to wait for Evans to return to the group . The next stage ran through the foothills of the Pyrenees . A five @- @ rider breakaway made it to the finish in Pau , where with 6 km ( 3 @. @ 7 mi ) to go , Christian Vande Velde ( Garmin ? Sharp ) and Pierrick Fédrigo ( FDJ ? BigMat ) escaped and Fédrigo won the sprint finish . The following day was the Tour 's second rest day .

In the sixteenth stage , the race entered the high mountains with the queen stage crossing two hors

catégorie climbs ? the Col d'Aubisque and the Col du Tourmalet ? followed by the first @-@ category climbs of the Col d'Aspin and the Col de Peyresourde , completing the so @-@ called " Circle of Death " . A 38 @-@ rider breakaway crossed the Aubisque , before fracturing on the Tourmalet . Voeckler attacked on the Peyresourde and took the stage win with a margin of one minute forty seconds . His stage victory and maximum points over all summits , put Voeckler in the lead of the mountains classification . Wiggins , Froome and Nibali came in seven minutes after Voeckler , while Evans lost almost five minutes to the trio , falling from fourth to seventh in the general classification . In the final stage in the Pyrenees , after a number on the leading group containing the overall contenders , Alejandro Valverde moved clear over the hors categorie Port de Balès . He held his lead to the summit finish at the Peyragudes ski resort . In the group behind Wiggins and Froome attacked their rivals to finish nineteen seconds later . Nibali came in seventh , a further eighteen down . In the following stage , six riders from a breakaway were caught on finishing straight in Brive @-@ la @-@ Gaillarde by the head of the chasing peloton , with Cavendish taking the victory ahead of Matthew Goss and Sagan respectively . Wiggins secured the general classification in penultimate stage 's 53 @-@ 5 km ( 33 @-@ 2 mi ) individual time trial . Froome place second , one minute and sixteen seconds in arrears , with Sánchez a further thirty @-@ four .

In the final stage , Cavendish won a fourth consecutive Champs @-@ Élysées stage , his third stage win of the race . Wiggins finished the race to become the first British rider to win the Tour de France . Wiggins finished three minutes and twenty @-@ one seconds clear of compatriot and teammate Froome . Nibali placed third at six minutes and nineteen seconds . Sagan won the points classification with a total of 421 , 141 ahead of Greipel in second . Voeckler the mountains classification with 135 points , 12 ahead of second @-@ placed Kessiakoff . The best young rider was BMC Racing Team rider Tejay van Garderen , followed by Pinot and Steven Kruijswijk ( Rabobank ) respectively . RadioShack ? Nissan finished as the winners of the team classification , over five minutes and forty @-@ six seconds ahead of second @-@ placed Team Sky .

= = Classification leadership = =

There were four main individual classifications contested in the 2012 Tour de France , as well as a team competition . The most important was the general classification , which was calculated by adding each rider 's finishing times on each stage . The rider with the least accumulated time is the race leader , identified by the yellow jersey ; the winner of this classification will be considered the winner of the Tour . If a crash happened within the final 3 km ( 1 @-@ 9 mi ) of a stage , not including time trials and summit finishes , the riders involved received the same time as the group they were in when the crash occurred . There were no time bonuses given for this edition of the Tour .

The points classification leader was identified with a green jersey . Riders received points for finishing among the highest placed in a stage finish , or in intermediate sprints during the stage . The points available for each stage finish were determined by the " coefficient " ranking scale .

No changes were made to the mountains classification , where points were awarded to the riders that reached the top of the most difficult ascents first . The climbs were categorised as either hors catégorie , first , second , third , or fourth @-@ category , with more points available for the higher @-@ categorised climbs . The overall leader wore a polka dot jersey . Double points were awarded on the summit finishes on stages 1 , 11 and 20 .

The young rider classification , denoted by a white jersey , was calculated the same way as the general classification , but the classification was restricted to riders who were born on or after 1 January 1988 . The team classification was calculated using the finishing times of the best three riders per team on each stage ( not the team time @-@ trial ) ; the leading team was the team with the lowest cumulative time . The number of stage victories and placings per team determined the outcome of a tie . The riders in the team that lead this classification were identified with yellow number bibs on the back of their jerseys . For the time in the Tour 's history the leading wore yellow helmets . In addition , there was a combativity award , given after each stage to the rider considered

, by a jury , to have " made the greatest effort and who has demonstrated the best qualities of sportsmanship " . The winner wore a red number bib the following stage . At the conclusion of the Tour , Chris Anker Sørensen won the overall super @-@ combativity award .

A total of ? 2 @,@ 414 @,@ 246 was awarded in cash prizes in the race . The overall winner of the general classification received ? 450 @,@ 000 , with the second and third placed riders getting ? 200 @,@ 000 and ? 100 @,@ 000 respectively ; all finishers of the race were awarded with money . The holders of the classifications benefited on each stage they lead ; the final winners of the points and mountains were given ? 25 @,@ 000 , while the best young rider and most combative rider got ? 20 @,@ 000 . Team prizes were available , with ? 10 @,@ 000 for the team time trial and ? 50 @,@ 000 for the winners of the team classification . There were also two special awards each with a prize of ? 5000 , the Souvenir Jacques Goddet , given to the first rider to pass Goddet 's memorial at the summit of the Col du Tourmalet in stage sixteen , and the Souvenir Henri Desgrange , given to first rider to pass the summit of the highest climb in the Tour , the Col de la Croix de Fer in stage eleven . Thomas Voeckler won the Jacques Goddet and Pierre Rolland the Henri Desgrange .

= = Final standings = =

= = UCI World Tour rankings = =

The race was the eighteenth of the twenty @-@ nine events in the UCI World Tour , with riders from the WorldTeams competing individually for points that contributed towards the rankings . Points were awarded to the top twenty finishers in the general classification and to the top five finishers in each stage . Wiggins moved in to the lead of the individual ranking , with Joaquim Rodríguez dropping to second . The points accrued by Chris Froome moved him from 52nd to 6th . Team Sky retained their lead of the team ranking , ahead of Liquigas ? Cannondale . Spain remained as leaders of the nations ranking , with Italy second .