

= 1903 Tour de France =

The 1903 Tour de France was the first cycling race set up and sponsored by the newspaper L 'Auto , ancestor of the current daily , L 'Équipe . It ran from 1 to 19 July in six stages over 2 @, @ 428 km ( 1 @, @ 509 mi ) , and was won by Maurice Garin .

The race was invented to boost the circulation of L 'Auto , after its circulation started to plummet from competition with the long @-@ standing Le Vélo . Originally scheduled to start in June , the race was postponed one month , and the prize money was increased , after a disappointing level of applications from competitors . The 1903 Tour de France was the first stage road race , and compared to modern Grand Tours , it had relatively few stages , but each was much longer than those raced today . The cyclists did not have to compete in all six stages , although this was necessary to qualify for the general classification .

The pre @-@ race favourite , Maurice Garin , won the first stage , and retained the lead throughout . He also won the last two stages , and had a margin of almost three hours over the next cyclist . The circulation of L 'Auto increased more than sixfold during and after the race , so the race was considered successful enough to be rerun in 1904 , by which time Le Vélo had been forced out of business .

= = Origin = =

After the Dreyfus affair separated advertisers from the newspaper Le Vélo , a new newspaper L 'Auto @-@ Vélo was founded in 1900 , with former cyclist Henri Desgrange as editor . After being forced to change the name of the newspaper to L 'Auto in 1903 , Desgrange needed something to keep the cycling fans ; with circulation at 20 @, @ 000 , he could not afford to lose them .

When Desgrange and young employee Géo Lefèvre were returning from the Marseille ? Paris cycling race , Lefèvre suggested holding a race around France , similar to the popular six @-@ day races on the track . Desgrange proposed the idea to the financial controller Victor Goddet , who gave his approval , and on 19 January 1903 , the Tour de France was announced in L 'Auto .

It was to have been a five @-@ week race , from 1 June to 5 July , with an entry fee of 20 francs . These conditions attracted very few cyclists : one week before the race was due to start , only 15 competitors had signed up . Desgrange then rescheduled the race from 1 to 19 July , increased the total prize money to 20 @, @ 000 francs , reduced the entry fee to 10 francs and guaranteed at least five francs a day to the first 50 cyclists in the classification . After that , 79 cyclists signed up for the race , of whom 60 actually started the race .

Géo Lefèvre became the director , judge and time @-@ keeper ; Henri Desgrange was the directeur @-@ général , although he did not follow the race .

= = Rules and course = =

The 1903 Tour de France was run in six stages . Compared to modern stage races , the stages were extraordinarily long , with an average distance of over 400 km ( 250 mi ) , compared to the 171 km ( 106 mi ) average stage length in the 2004 Tour de France ; cyclists had one to three rest days between each stage , and the route was largely flat , with only one stage featuring a significant mountain . The cyclists were not grouped in teams but raced as individuals , and paid a fee of ten francs ( ? 87 @. @ 50 at 2003 prices ) to compete in the race for general classification , or five francs to enter a single stage . Because the stages were so long , all but the first started before dawn : the last stage started at 21 : 00 the night before .

The first Tour de France crossed no mountain passes , but several lesser cols . The first was the col des Echarmeaux ( 712 m ( 2 @, @ 336 ft ) ) , on the opening stage from Paris to Lyon , on what is now the old road from Autun to Lyon . The stage from Lyon to Marseille included the col de la République ( 1 @, @ 161 m ( 3 @, @ 809 ft ) ) , also known as the col du Grand Bois , at the edge of St @-@ Etienne .

In 1903 , it was normal for a professional cyclist to hire pacers , who would lead them during the

race . Desgrange forbade this : it was originally intended that in the final , longest , stage pacers would be allowed , but this was rescinded after the fifth stage .

To ensure that the cyclists rode the entire route , stewards were stationed at various points around the course . The yellow jersey for the leader in the general classification had not yet been introduced , but the leader was identified by a green armband .

The fastest eight cyclists on each stage received a prize between 50 francs and 1 @, @ 500 francs , varying per stage . The fourteen best cyclists in the general classification received a prize from 3 @, @ 000 francs for the winner to 25 francs for fourteenth place . The remaining seven cyclists to finish in the general classification each received 95 francs , 5 francs for each of the 19 days that the race took , provided that they had not won more than 200 francs in prize money and did not have an average speed below 20 km / h ( 12 mph ) on any stage .

= = Participants = =

In contrast to modern stage races , a cyclist who gave up during a stage was allowed to start again the next stage , although he would no longer be in contention for the general classification . Thus Hippolyte Aucouturier , who gave up during the first stage , was able to return , and won the second and third stages . Charles Laeser , winner of the fourth stage , had not completed the third stage .

Sixty cyclists , all professionals or semi @-@ professionals , started the race , of whom 49 were French , 4 Belgian , 4 Swiss , 2 German , and one Italian ; 21 of them were sponsored by bicycle manufacturers , while 39 entered without commercial support . 24 other cyclists took advantage of the opportunity to enter specific stages : one rode in both the second and fourth stages , and additionally three cyclists took part in the second stage , one in the third stage , fifteen in the fourth stage only , and a further four only competed in the fifth stage .

= = Race details = =

The pre @-@ race favourites for the victory were Maurice Garin and Hippolyte Aucouturier . Garin dominated the race from the start by winning the first stage , a 471 km ( 293 mi ) parcours from Paris to Lyon . The stage started at 15 : 16 , and the cyclists initially rode with a speed of 35 km / h . The first cyclists abandoned after around 50 km ( 31 mi ) . At 23 : 00 , Garin and Emile Pagie , leading the race , reached the control point in Nevers . Garin expected at that point that they would finish at 8 : 00 the next morning . During the night , Garin 's main rival , Aucouturier , had stomach cramps , and was unable to finish the stage . Also during that first stage , the first breach of the rules occurred : Jean Fischer had used a car as pacer , which was illegal . Pagie fell down , but got up again ; he and Garin kept leading the race during the night . Around 9 : 00 in the morning , both reached Lyon . Garin got away from Pagie , and finished one minute ahead .

Although Aucouturier had abandoned in the first stage , and so was not eligible for the general classification , he could still start the rest of the stages . In the second stage , Aucouturier was able to win the sprint . In the third stage , the cyclists who were competing for the general classification started one hour earlier than the other cyclists , including Aucouturier . At the end of that stage , a group of four cyclists had broken away , and Eugène Brange won the sprint . Aucouturier finished 27 minutes later , but this meant that he had run the course 33 minutes faster , so he was declared the winner of the stage . Garin retained the lead , helped by a crash of second @-@ placed Pagie in the second stage , which eliminated him from the race . In the fourth stage , Aucouturier had a clear lead and seemed set to win a third successive stage , but was caught using the slipstream of a car , and was removed from the race . Swiss Charles Laeser ( who had abandoned in the 3rd stage ) took the victory , becoming the first non @-@ French winner . As in the third stage , the cyclists departed in two groups , and Laeser was in the second group because he was no longer contending for the general classification . Laeser finished more than 50 minutes after a group of six cyclists , but he had travelled the distance 4 minutes faster than them , so he was declared the winner .

At that point , Garin was leading , with Émile Georget almost two hours behind . In the fifth stage , Georget had two flat tires , and fell asleep when he stopped at the side of the road to rest ; he failed

to finish . Thus Garin extended his lead by winning this stage , carrying nearly three hours ' advantage into the final day 's racing . Garin had requested other cyclists in the leading group to let him win the stage , but Fernand Augereau refused to do this . Garin then had Lucien Pothier throw down his bicycle in front of Augereau , who fell , and Garin then bent Augereau 's rear wheel . Augereau quickly obtained a spare bike and continued to the finish , however Garin easily won the sprint . Augereau still received a prize of 100 francs from Velo @@ Sport Nantes for the fastest final kilometer of the stage in the Nantes velodrome . The last stage was the longest , at 471 km ( 293 mi ) , and ran from Nantes to the small town of Ville @@ d 'Avray , which lies between Versailles and Paris , instead of at the Parc des Princes velodrome . This was because of a bylaw forbidding road races to end on cycling tracks ( a bylaw subsequently repealed in light of the race 's success ) . Garin took his third stage win , and sealed overall victory by 2 hours 59 minutes 31 seconds : this remains the greatest margin of victory in the Tour de France . After celebrating with champagne , the riders cycled to Parc des Princes , where they made several laps of honour before an adoring crowd , to the sound of a bugle .

= = Results = =

= = = Stage results = = =

In 1903 , there was no distinction in the rules between plain stages and mountain stages ; the icons shown here indicate whether the stage included mountains .

= = = General classification = = =

There were 21 cyclists who had completed all six stages . For these cyclists , the times taken for each stage were added up for the general classification . The cyclist with the least accumulated time was the winner . The cyclists officially were not grouped in teams ; some cyclists had the same sponsor , even though they were not allowed to work together .

= = Aftermath = =

The circulation of L 'Auto increased significantly due to this event ; a special edition of 130 @,@ 000 copies was made after the race was over , and normal circulation increased from 25 @,@ 000 to 65 @,@ 000 . The big success made sure that the Tour de France was scheduled again for 1904 . The cyclists had also become national heroes . Maurice Garin returned for the 1904 Tour de France but his title defence failed when he was disqualified . With the prize money that he won in 1903 , which totalled 6 @,@ 075 francs , ( approximately US \$ 40 @,@ 000 and GBP £ 23 @,@ 000 in 2006 values ) Garin later bought a gas station , where he worked for the rest of his life .