



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob: Hello, welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Rob.

Finn: And I'm Finn. Hi Rob.

Rob: It's that time of the year for the famous Tour de France cycle race and today we're discussing research that says successful cyclists are seen as more **handsome** than their struggling colleagues.

Finn: Yes, we're talking about professional cyclists – people who get paid for taking part in cycle races. Not something you'd find me doing!

Rob: Nor me. Although I do enjoy cycling for fun – as a hobby and as a **work-out** to keep fit. And I believe you bought a bike once Finn?

Finn: You're right, I did – I was hoping to ride into work every day to save money and, like you, to keep fit. But, sadly, I got a flat tyre and have never been on it since.

Rob: Oh dear. Well, this new research will make you feel even more **deflated** – or sad and disappointed – and I'll tell you why soon. We'll also explain some vocabulary related to keeping fit. But first let's start with a question.

Finn: A very fine idea, Rob.

Rob: This is about the Tour de France, which this year starts in the UK. The first stage begins in the city of Leeds but do you know how long the first stage is? Is it:

- a) 151 km
- b) 191 km
- c) 221 km

Finn: I'll say 151, a).

Rob: Well, we'll find out if you're right or wrong later on. One thing we do know is the winner of this first stage will be the most attractive man in the race – that's if we believe this research.

Finn: Yes, this is the research published in the Royal Society journal, *Biology Letters*.

- Rob:** That's right. Women were asked to rate – or score – facial attractiveness among riders in the 2012 Tour de France, which was won by Britain's Bradley Wiggins.
- Finn:** Yes, a man known for his distinctive **sideburns**, that's the hair on the side of his cheeks! And, being a world-class cyclist, he does of course have a **lean** body – one without any fat.
- Rob:** Like me?!
- Finn:** No, not at all like you, or me!
- Rob:** Now, Dr Erik Postma, from the Institute of Evolutionary Biology at the University of Zurich, who carried out the test, found the 10% best riders were considered, on average, to be 25% more attractive than the worst 10%.
- Finn:** OK, I see. So this would suggest that healthy, physically fit and successful men would, on average, be seen as more attractive by women. So, not really very good news for us is it Rob?
- Rob:** No. Other studies have also shown that women **fancy** – or are attracted to – men with good sporting skills. Well, this study hasn't just looked at physical skills, but more essential and basic characteristics such as **stamina** and **endurance**.
- Finn:** Yes. Stamina is the ability to keep going over a long period of time without getting tired. And endurance is the ability to do something that's hard, or difficult, also for a long period of time. Now, these are important things in a long-distance cycle race.
- Rob:** Yes, they are. But going back to the research, in total 800 women were asked to score attractiveness – how the cyclists looked – not just stamina or endurance. And, as we mentioned...
- Finn:** ...the best cyclists were seen as more attractive. So the man who was voted the most attractive, did he win the Tour de France in 2012?
- Rob:** No, you mean Bradley Wiggins, he wasn't included in the research. It was actually French rider Amael Moinard who came top – perhaps not the fastest competitor but still much fitter than we'll ever be. I don't know what it is about his looks, and nor does Dr Postma, but scientists conclude that humans have evolved to recognise athletic performance in faces.
- Finn:** Well, I'm not a woman but I can see that all the men who take part in a race like the Tour de France are fit and healthy and tough.
- Rob:** Well, your feelings are pretty normal. The researchers also found that men who took part had a fairly similar view on who was handsome as the women did. I think it's just **jealousy**!
- Finn:** Maybe, I think so.

- Rob:** But one thing that didn't make much difference was smiling. It was rated as likeable but not attractive.
- Finn:** So, you're saying I should wipe the smile off my face and get on my bike for a bit of training?
- Rob:** Well, before you pedal off, let's reveal the answer to today's question. Earlier I said the first stage of the Tour de France begins in the city of Leeds but do you know how long the first stage is?
- Finn:** I had no idea, and I said a) 151 km.
- Rob:** You'd be cheating because the answer is actually 191 km.
- Finn:** Oh yeah, taking a shortcut.
- Rob:** Yes. There are a total of 21 stages, covering a distance of 3,656 kilometres. And it all finishes in Paris on July 27th. Now, before we go, Finn, could you remind us of some of the vocabulary that we've heard today?
- Finn:** Yes, today we heard:
- handsome**
 - work-out**
 - deflated**
 - sideburns**
 - lean**
 - fancy**
 - stamina**
 - endurance**
 - jealousy**
- Rob:** Well, that brings us to the end of today's 6 Minute English. We hope you've enjoyed today's programme. Please join us again soon. Bye.
- Finn:** Bye.

Vocabulary and definitions

handsome	good-looking and attractive (usually only referring to a man)
work-out	physical exercise
deflated	(here) feeling less confident and unhappy
sideburns	hair that grows on a man's cheeks
lean	thin, with no fat
fancy	(here) to be attracted to (someone)
stamina	the ability to do something over a long period of time without getting tired
endurance	the ability to do something that is hard or difficult for a long period of time
jealousy	an unhappy feeling because someone has something that you would like or can do something that you would like to do

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