Information:

Hello everyone,

The grand départ in Florence is tomorrow. I hope you've been keeping up with the reading. Remember to do a little at a time and to avoid letting it all pile up! I've started grading Assignment 1 for those who've submitted early.

Normally, the first week of the Tour is predominantly for flat, sprint stages, which is why I'm having you look at material related to sprinting. However, this year, organizers have mixed it up, putting some tough stages right off the bat, making the general classification (GC=yellow jersey) race possibly start almost immediately. Stage 1 goes across hilly 206km from Florence to Rimini, so we might see separation.

Tadej Pogačar is this year's overwhelming favourite, despite Jonas Vingegaard having won the two previous Tours (last year emphatically). However, "Vingo" suffered a severe crash in the spring, and it's not clear how competitive he will be, due to imperfect training. On the other hand, Pogačar just won the Giro d'Italia in May, and it's hard to tell how he has recovered. No one has won both the Giro and Tour in the same year since Stephen Roche did in 1987. Grand Tours (GT) take a lot out of a rider's body. I expect "Poggy" to have excellent fitness at the beginning of the Tour, but we'll see about the accumulative fatigue of essentially 5 weeks of GT racing once he's in the last week. Assuming he can "keep the rubber side down," as we say in cycling, since crashes are more frequent than ever, for various reasons. Below my signature is a comment from Stephen Roche's son, Nicholas, who also was a World Tour pro, about how things have evolved in recent years.\*

Of course, one cannot discount Primos Roglič, who has won several GTs... except for the Tour. Will he finally win the Tour, especially now that he isn't on Vingo's team, and can try for himself? He recently won the warm-up race for the Tour, the Critérium du Dauphiné. Some might know about the penultimate stage in the 2020 Tour, the now infamous time trial up the Planche des Belles Filles that saw Pogačar take yellow from Roglič and win the Tour. It was heartbreaking, but also exciting to see a new superstar.

As for Evenepoel, I'm a skeptic. He has won the Vuelta, but no one really serious was there to challenge him. He is fast, but there are questions about his tactical intelligence and his lack of patience. I'd argue that Vingegaard's greatest power is his patience. Pogačar has also been impatient, and that's why he has lost the last two Tours to Vingo. But that's my point of view. However, spontaneous, unpredictable racing is very exciting, and that's why Pogačar is so popular. I think Evenepoel would be more popular if he didn't complain so much and always make excuses when he didn't win. Again, my POV ;)

So who will go into yellow tomorrow? We could see Pogačar go for it. There are seven classified climbs on the route, but a flat final 15km. It's possible a breakaway might get away on one of the final climbs, but the GC teams will want to control everything. I'm guessing it will be a sprinter who is able to handle the climbs. Someone such as Jasper Philipsen or his teammate and current world champion Matthieu van der Poel, or Australian Caleb Ewan. The winner gets the yellow jersey as well as the green (sprinter's) jersey, but likely won't keep yellow long. It's very strategic, because when you have yellow, it's great for sponsors, but your teammates have to work more to protect you and control the peloton. It's asking a lot from teammates if Pogačar goes for yellow right at the beginning and expects teammates to work like that for three weeks... which he is known to do (at this year's Giro), and for which he's been criticized by some. It's a delicate balance.

With 7 classified climbs and 23 points on offer, there will also be a race for the polka-dot (climber's) jersey. The likely scenario is a day-long breakaway with someone claiming the "maillot à pois" in the break; then the break getting caught, followed by a sprint. That might sound predictable, but things could turn out differently, and it's always exciting, but hopefully not marred by crashes (everyone is exciting in week one, so you get the highest amount of crashes).

That's all for now. I hope you have a great weekend and are able to watch stage 1 tomorrow.

NB: I've added a "Useful links" link below "Syllabus etc" on the content page. You can find various resources there, and I will update it as the course progresses.

Cheers,

Émile

\*Nicholas Roche via Lucas' blog:

I never really recovered from this crash in the Vuelta 2019. Its shaped the last years of my career but still today almost 5 vears after I still live with consequences. I have no need to name the rider who caused that crash, its not the point of this post.. i remember my first years as a pro cyclist, i was thought to drop back 2 km from the summit to get bottles that i would then work my way down and give on the descent to my teammates. Descending was made to recover. Refuel. Cycling has changed and already since a long time, evolution is also normal. Its 3 years since i follow cycling from a different angle. I am not sure if in the bunch it didn't look so bad although I admit been more scared in my last years. But i have come to fear for my friends racing. The speed is higher, the general level is higher, the battle for aero has also become on the edge of dangerous, the braking power is greater (meaning less reaction time behind to brake) riders ride closer, teams make the most of danger zones to put pressure, road furnitures are built to make vehicles go slower when cyclist are going faster.. the stakes for victory are so high that riders are ready to risk it all. Crazy doses of caffeine (most gel contain caffeine). I feel for many years riders were blaming organizers, but was most time a rider fault. But organizers are also looking for more spectacular routes! I dont believe there is one single reason to blame for causing all of these crashes. But every one and every thing plays a part. Crashes have been part of the sport, they created the drama but this is way out of hand. Its not normal that riders should risk there life if they hope to perform. Hopefully the sport can work all together to provide a safer job.

Good morning everyone,

Yesterday's stage 1 lived up to its promise! With a very hilly stage of 7 [categorized climbs](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fen.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2FMountains_classification_in_the_Tour_de_France&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7C157abdd38bd24fe38a2f08dc98f9d43f%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638553445981598302%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=D45d9fj2BaT7CnVdssoQJ5AZj%2B859lftpwduNzrOYxU%3D&reserved=0), totalling over 3000m of elevation, and a flat final 15km, this was going to be an intense stage. A race for the stage win and the chance to wear the first yellow jersey, but also for the polka-dot jersey for points accumulated on the climbs. It was looking like a reduced bunch sprint as predicted, with sprinters such as Wout van Aert who are able to make it over the climbs (I was surprised to see Jasper Philipsen not make it, but it must have been too much climbing). Added to the difficulties was the heat that saw Mark Cavendish suffer and nearly be eliminated, which would mean not being able to break the all-time record of 34 stage wins (record he shares with Eddy Merckx, whom most consider to be the greatest cyclist of all time).

But the story of the day broke expectations, just as the mountains broke many hopes. We saw a nail-biting finish as the reduced peloton almost caught the long-range breakaway of Romain Bardet and his teammate Frank van den Broek (Team dsm-firmenich-PostNL), missing them by 5 seconds! Bardet's win yesterday was a very popular win. Bardet, who has been chasing wins all his career, and who has himself been on the final podium in 2017. Bardet who will retire next year, and who had never worn yellow: “The yellow jersey has always been one of my career goals, honestly I had mourned [never having been able to wear] it” ("Le maillot jaune a toujours été l'un de mes buts de carrière, honnêtement j'en avais fait le deuil"). We also saw how important a teammate can be, in van den Broek, who selflessly worked for his captain yesterday. Van den Broek had been up the road in the day's break when Bardet attacked the main group and bridged up to his teammate. Van den Broek looked really strong, and there were question marks as to who would be given the stage win should they make it to the end. Would Bardet gift the stage to this neo-pro, or would van den Broek give it to this pro at the twilight of his career, who had never worn yellow? Van den Broek later said that he was cracking and that Bardet eased up a bit on the last climb so that he would be able to help him on the flats in the finale. In any case, it was clear that they had already agreed on the outcome. It was a beautiful gesture, and what is beautiful about this sport. No doubt about it, van den Broek will be given opportunities and will be rewarded for his sacrifice. He is an up-and-comer, and will now be considered highly valuable for any team.

Bardet had said prior to the Tour that, having given up on any GC ambitions, he would be hunting stages. Ironically, renouncing GC hopes gave him the lightness and confidence to win, and now he finds himself in yellow! He will try to hold onto it for as long as possible. I don't think he will be disappointed if (when) he loses it. Nevertheless, when riders wear yellow, they often ride with seemingly supernatural purpose, and fight in order to honour it.

As for the polka-dot jersey, it was an intense fight between Valentin Madouas (Groupama-FDJ) and Jonas Abrahamsen (Uno-X), and Madouas was just not able to hang on in the final climbs. Abrahamsen will likely also try to hold onto the jersey today, but it's very hard to race day-in, day-out this early and be able to keep it all the way to the end. And as the stages get more mountainous, the points increase, and the pure climbers show up.

Wout van Aert (Visma - Lease a Bike), is for now the favourite for the green sprinter's jersey, even though he is only third in the sprinter's classification. (Van den Broek and Bardet aren't sprinters, and are unlikely to do well in the sprint stages.) However, the truly fast (pure) sprinters will get a chance on the flat stages to go for wins, and I hope Cavendish (Astana) can get his 35th win. But, this being the Tour, most of the best sprinters are there, such as Philipsen (Alpecin-Deceuninck), who will have a lead-out from teammate and reigning world champion Matthieu van der Poel; but the newly crowned Belgian champ Arnaud De Lie (Lotto Dstny), on his maiden Tour, will give him a run for his money; and there's always former world champ and stage winner Mads Pedersen (Lidl Trek), who made it over the climbs yesterday to contest the final sprint, as well as Dylan Groenewegen (Jayco-AlUla), and many more.

Today's stage two is another hilly one, though not as mountainous. With six punchy climbs, there is likely to be some separation, with, again, the non-climbing sprinters not being able to keep up, and a reduced bunch (peloton) at the end. Will the break stay away like yesterday? The peloton will make sure not to make the same mistake as yesterday, underestimating the duo of Bardet and van den Broek. Further, will a GC rider go on the attack? It's hard to tell. Pogačar did sprint for third yesterday, so it's clear he is itching to win. That is, he can't help himself, and I worry that this will catch up with him (see previous email 🤷‍♂️).

Yesterday, the GC teams were watching each other. It's possible we'll see the same today. One thing that's nice this year is the higher number of GC contenders, and a higher number of strong teams, where Visma-Lease a bike have dominated the last four Tours (even when Poggy won). Ineos was looking very strong yesterday, and we'll see how Egan Bernal (2019 Tour winner who has struggled with injury) and Carlos Rodríguez stack up. But Poggy's UAE is looking very strong, as is Red Bull-Bora-Hansgrohe, Primoz Roglič's team. Surely Evenepoel is also going to be assisted by a strong Soudal-Quickstep.

Finally, it was a nice surprise to see Canadian Derek Gee in the main group. Gee was a revelation last year at the Giro, having four second places in various stages. This year, he confirmed his qualities by winning a stage of, and placing third overall in, the Dauphiné, that warm-up race for the Tour. Can he contend for Yellow? Maybe we'll finally see a Canadian in yellow again, the first since Steve Bauer in 1987!

Here are the highlights from stage 1: [https://youtu.be/Fz\_8BWYKUjk?si=0Gfk4GYgGCE9u20i](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2FFz_8BWYKUjk%3Fsi%3D0Gfk4GYgGCE9u20i&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7C157abdd38bd24fe38a2f08dc98f9d43f%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638553445981609048%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=p%2BjpzeVyjeqIE%2FnrpBWdf1l3RYsdgd2l%2FGU6Ive1PCc%3D&reserved=0), well worth watching.

There is one correction I need to make. In my previous email, I said Stephen Roche was the last to win the Giro-Tour double, but in fact Marco Pantani did in 1998. (Look up Pantani's tragic story... could be a good essay topic!) Roche is the last to have done the Giro-Tour double plus World Champs, an honour he shares with Eddy Merckx (1974).

**NB**: For the questionnaire (part 3 of week 1), I will make this available on Tuesday, and it will cover reading material plus emails.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to email me, whether about the Tour, the course, or if you have technical issues.

Have a nice Sunday, and I hope you get to watch the day's stage!

Émile

Well, stage 2 lived up to its promise, and so far we have seen an exciting Tour, with the first two stage victories going to two French riders, the first time since the 1960s. Here are the highlights: [https://youtu.be/YQLIHmF-v6Y?si=LNTjxJh8dtqMaQn4](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2FYQLIHmF-v6Y%3Fsi%3DLNTjxJh8dtqMaQn4&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7C09196cb22e094335df7108dc999b91c5%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638554140647617969%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=VQoD8cryyQMzgNyX4GalsIEONtVQUF%2FN0P43h7bOmLQ%3D&reserved=0).

Speaking of French victories, the French haven't won their own GT since Bernard Hinault in 1985, almost 40 years. It's the cycling equivalent of the Toronto Maple Leafs. Hinault, "the badger' ("le blaireau") is part of an exclusive club of five-time winners including Jacques Anquetil and Eddy Merckx ("the cannibal"). Well, Lance Armstrong won it seven times, but all his victories have been blanked out, and all the Tours between 1999 and 2005 are "non attribués" (not attributed), since all of the top-three riders from those years were caught doping. However, I wonder why Pantani's 1998 Tour is there, or any of the victories in the 1990s, because after a certain point, it was clear that anyone in the Tour doing well was using EPO and blood doping — and anyone speaking out, such as Christophe Bassons, would get snubbed and that would be the end of their career. There was an "omertà," a code of silence as in the mafia. (Pantani himself, it is said, was killed by the mafia.) All of this would make for a great history paper. There's a long history of cheating in the Tour, which will be covered in week 3.

I did make one big mistake in my stage prediction in my last email because I didn't look closely at the stage "parcours" (route). The stage might have had less total elevation than stage 1, but it was an extremely difficult stage. That final climb, with two ascents of it, was insanely steep, so it was never going to be a reduced bunch sprint. Chapeau (hats off) to Kévin Vauquelin (Arkéa - B&B Hotels) for pulling off a great victory. Abrahamsen as well for fighting hard and extending his lead in the polka-dot jersey.

As you can see, the GC/yellow jersey race is a race within a race (or vice versa, the day's stage is a race within the larger race of the GC battle). It was inevitable that Pogačar would attack, and if there were any questions about Vingegaard's fitness, they were quickly dispelled. Pogačar made a blistering attack, and Vingegaard, who was clearly watching him like a hawk, was the only one able to follow on that final ascent. It seems now that there's an established pattern or déjà vu: Pogačar takes yellow early on and Vingegaard rides into yellow later on as Poggy runs out of form — essentially what happened in 2022 and 2023. When will Poggy ever learn? Or is that really the case? Vingo might not have enough training "in the bank" due to his crash in early April, and might fade as the Tour progresses; and Poggy might just be on another level and take yellow all the way to Nice. Another question: was it really worthwhile using all that energy that early on? Now Poggy's team will have to control the peloton, while Vingegaard's team (likely overall a stronger team as we've seen in the first two stages) can sit and wait.

I was impressed with Evenepoel yesterday, and also with Carapaz (EF - Education First Easypost). Evenepoel doesn't have the 'snap" (sharp acceleration) of either Pogačar or Vingegaard, but he has incredible steady power, which is why he is the world time-trial champ. While we didn't see exactly what happened with the chase yesterday, no doubt Evenepoel did the bulk of the chasing to catch Carapaz who wasn't far behind Pog/Vingo after the last climb. Watch out for Evenepoel in the time trials (2 of them)! Though he hasn't historically shown himself to be at the same level as the other two on the climbs. Again, he might be at another level this year, considering his age and the possibilities of improvement. He now has the white jersey of best young rider (riders under 25).

Clearly a disappointment to see Primož Roglič fall behind, but managed to limit the damage to a 21-second deficit. As did many of the others, such as Egan Bernal.

As for Canadian riders, Québec's Hugo Houle, former stage winner (2022), was in the break and managed a top-10 on the day. Derek Gee is now in 28th position in GC, 1:22 behind Pogačar. It's possible he will be given a bit of a longer leash by the GC group because of that time gap, so I wouldn't count him out of the running for a top-ten GC placing. For instance, on the final climb of a stage, if he attacks, the GC group might let him go, though he won't be allowed to go in a given day's breakaway. This is the Tour, however, and he has never seen this level of racing, so I would limit expectations, even though he has enormous potential.

Today's stage 3 is a 231km sprint stage from Piacenza to Turin. The sprinters have suffered patiently in the "grupetto," the "bus": the group of riders, mostly sprinters and their helpers, plus others stragglers, who have fallen behind in the hilly/mountainous stages and who fight to stay within the time cut on the day so as not to be eliminated from the Tour and live to fight another day. Most of these riders will be allowed to go in long breakaways because they aren't threats on the GC.

Will Cavendish have recovered from the two hard days and win his 35th stage? Others to look out for:

* Jasper Philipsen
* Fabio Jakobsen
* Mads Pedersen
* Arnaud De Lie
* Fernando Gaviria
* Dylan Groenewegen
* Sam Bennett
* Pascal Ackermann
* Arnaud Démare
* Biniam Girmay

Biniam Girmay, the only black African rider in the peloton (more on that soon), hopes to become the first black African to win a stage of the Tour.

I am surprised not to see Australian Caleb Ewan in this year's Tour. But he has struggled to impose himself at the Tour since 2020.

NB: Week 2 is now available. Note the deadline change to the 10th for assignment 1. Questionnaire 1 will be available in a few hours and you'll be given 48 hours to complete it.

Bonne route!

Émile

This Tour keeps on giving! Something has been right in the way the Tour organizers planned this year's Tour. First, the Tour always finishes in Paris, but since the Olympics are happening there, no dice. So for the first time, there will be an individual time trial (ITT) on day 21 in Nice. An ITT that could see an upset, the way Greg Lemond upset two-time Tour winner Laurent Fignon in 1989... by 8 seconds! So organizers seem to have decided to make some changes. Never have we seen such hard stages at the beginning of the Tour. Today, however, was just going to be a normal stage, the longest, but very flat and fast, heading to Turin near the base of the Alps. If you love geography, urge you to watch the stage previews at the beginning and at the end of these highlights. Here's today's: [https://youtu.be/hiH3FpEtPjo?si=5Os2bWdzYqjCkY9R](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2FhiH3FpEtPjo%3Fsi%3D5Os2bWdzYqjCkY9R&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7C24c9e4d437c64bf8c83e08dc9a184a3e%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638554676318276288%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=CaepbPhJlg1X3ceSmtiDC6aXBgywN0dw1FK3R1VQJdY%3D&reserved=0).

I'll be brief today. I asked yesterday whether Biniam Girmay would be the first black African to win a Tour stage, and that answer came very quickly, like Girmay's after-burners in that sprint finale. Granted, not every sprinter was there due to a crash within the last 1200m, including Cavendish and Philipsen, two out-and-out favourites. Nevertheless, Girmay's patience was impeccable, as were his nerves as he squeezed fearlessly between Mads Pedersen and the barriers. Pedersen had gone out too soon, and it was clear that Girmay had more than enough explosiveness to blow past everyone into history as the first ever black African to win a Tour stage, to add to his Giro stage. Timing is key in sprinting, and today Girmay was perfect. No doubt this victory will inspire many black cyclists. As US cyclist Justin Williams said, "History made. Crazy to watch it happen and it's hard to put into words what this means. @biniam\_girmaye\_hailu\_ you are hope." (IG: @juswilliamz. BTW, if you're on instagram, you could follow my account @tdf325 because I share a lot of accounts and news daily via stories.)

Another first on the day was Richard Carapaz going into yellow, being the first ever Ecuadorian do wear yellow. Carapaz is also the reigning Olympic Champ. Pogačar lost yellow because of placing today. I think this will actually help him as his team will no longer have to work as much (see my message yesterday). In any case, the GC race is heating up! Tomorrow, the Tour heads into the Alps, ascending the famed Col du Galibier.

Best,

Émile

Well, as predicted, Pogačar did what Pogačar does best, which is to attack, be aggressive, and always go for the win. Never a dull moment as they say. However, some are worried that it's basically over, that Poggy will just do what he did in the Giro, and hold on and even extend all the way to the end of the Tour. But is this really so? As I've said before, let's see what happens in week three. In some ways, this isn't any different than 2022 and 2023. It's not the first time Vingegaard has been dropped by Poggy early in the Tour. Indeed, Vingo himself says that "our time will come," and that he was surprised to not have lost that much time, 8 sec, at the top. He lost more on the downhill, which is normal when you're recovering from a major crash that happened in the spring while racing downhill (imagine the psychological work sprinters have to do when they have major crashes and have to go back to their work of taking massive risks at high speed in dangerous situations).

As far as the other GC contenders go, Evenepoel was again impressive; and Roglič, while 1:14 back now, is definitely still in the running. We'll see what the "race of truth" (ITT) on Friday reveals. All top four pre-race favourites are excellent time-trialists: Roglič is the reigning Olympic champ, Evenepoel the current World Champ, Vingegaard dominated ITTs in both 2022 and 2023, and Pogačar destroyed the competition in the Giro this year.

The other remarkable thing we saw yesterday was how Pogacar's UAE team dominated. This is quite a reversal, since Vingegaard's Team Visma - Lease a Bike (TVL) has been the dominant team for the last few years. UAE set the devastating pace up the Galibier yesterday, seeing the yellow jersey Richard Carapaz drop off and eventually lose over 4 minutes. An interesting role reversal for TVL, leaving us wondering what's missing at TVL. As you can see, cycling is a team sport, and having teammates there for you, either when you're in trouble or you need to put rivals in trouble, is essential! It's dangerous to use up your teammates too soon. Perhaps Vingegaard will ride back into his level, and so will his team. Perhaps TVL needed another real contender like Roglič (who used to be teammates with Vingo) as a backup, as well as American Sepp Kuss, who had to pull out due to illness this year.

As for downhills, I've posted footage on IG of riders doing 110km/hr. Legendary descender Tom Pidcock had the fastest time on the downhill to the finish, though his max was "only" 106 kph. It's all in how you limit deceleration on the switchbacks, and how fast you can accelerate out of those, which preserves speed. I've done stupid things in my youth such as draft off trucks on highways at 110+ and it's extremely dangerous. If you get a speed wobble, you're done. These riders are doing those speeds on narrow mountain roads. As for their bikes, apparently they're designed to be able to climb fast and to maximize stability at top speeds while descending. No details are overlooked. A far cry from the steel frames of the 1980s. This could be a good topic for a project.

Besides Friday's 25km ITT stage, we will be having sprint stages until stage 11 (perhaps the rolling stage 9 will see some separation or a breakaway staying away). Pederson is looking good for green. While he lost to Girmay on stage 3, on paper Pederson is a better sprinter, as we saw in the intermediate sprint yesterday. I'd like to see Fernando Gaviria finally win a stage. He came close on stage 3 (2nd), and has been "knocking at the door" of a win for ages. Will Cavendish win his 35th? Personally, while I want to see this, I have doubts. He just isn't the "Cav" of old, and he seems to lack the gas for the finales. However, he has an uncanny ability to turn things around.

As for Derek Gee, well, he's over 4 minutes down, but has moved up from 28th to 21st in GC. It would be nice to see him hunt for a stage win. He will be given more leeway by the GC teams, so hopefully he has the legs to pull something off.

...

A note about racism and sexism in competitive cycling, since many of you will write about these and related topics:

Someone shared (thanks Tanesha!) and article in the discussions that is interesting regarding the history of black riders, in light of Girmay being the first Black African rider to win a stage of the Tour: [https://procyclinguk.com/the-history-of-black-riders-at-the-tour-de-france/](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fprocyclinguk.com%2Fthe-history-of-black-riders-at-the-tour-de-france%2F&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7C4ad096d9969e472aac3608dc9b4a01d2%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638555989366473503%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Gz2OTNEatPh6C3GTGHGMiD5vWF5s%2F2Lu6mng5B1OPAk%3D&reserved=0). This is a challenging topic to take on since it requires asking the right questions. Is there systemic racism in the professional cycling? Teams tend to ignore non-European riders till they do well in European races. Are there actual acts of racism? Yes, e.g. Gianni Moscon's behaviour towards Kevin Reza a few years ago; as well as teams' behaviours toward non-European riders. Why are there so few non-white riders in professional cycling? There are historical and cultural reasons for this. In the US, African-Americans were in many cases forbidden from riding, though there is no evidence this happened in Europe. Why is cycling such a white sport? I'd argue this is for historical and cultural reasons — beyond the fact that competitive cycling was born in Europe (just like Canada dominates hockey... because Canadians play it more than anyone else). There are hundreds of thousands of licensed racers in France, but very few in African countries, which prefer other sports. A lot of it has to do with infrastructure and access, but also simple interest. Since World War 2, North Americans in general haven't had that much interest in cycling, whereas prior to the mass adoption of cars, cycling was a top sport. Especially track cycling. Madison Square Gardens was not originally an ice rink — it was a velodrome! In North America, the car killed the bike. No such thing happened in Europe. Further, cycling is a working-class sport in Europe, while it's a middle-class sport in North America. Cycling is also part of legend in Europe, connected to masculinity and World War 1 (see the Dauncey and Hare chapter). So this explains in part the passion Europeans have for cycling, which sustains it as a major sport.

All of this is to say that, while we are able to claim that there is systematic racism and acts of racism in cycling, please be careful and avoid simplistic arguments. If your overall conclusion is going to be that "cycling is racist," well, that's neither interesting nor is it accurate. There are many topics around this, and the more concrete the better. In the 2020 and 2022 versions of this course, while there were many papers about racism or sexism in cycling, it was disappointing to see so very few or none of them actually write about individual non-white cyclists or female cyclists. It's important to get concrete, to use examples, and to have a nuanced view of these topics. If you're going to say that the Tour is sexist, which it is both historically (again, see the Dauncey and Hare chapter) and structurally, you still have to look at the various factors that create that structure. I myself have actively tried to promote women's cycling in Victoria as vice president of the Greater Victoria Velodrome Association years ago. I was also involved in the Victoria Cycling League programming discussions, and there was an earnest attempt to promote women's cycling. But so few women showed up to races. On another note, saying the Women's Tour is sexist because the courses are shorter ignores that the female professionals themselves don't want longer courses. So, again, nuance is required.

If the Tour has tried to have a women's Tour, this has been very difficult because the Tour, after all, is a business; and if the women's Tour loses money, which it has, then it will get canceled, which it has been. Some sports have more money, due to sponsorship (the Tour's highest revenue has been €90M in a year, while the latest Soccer World Cup made $7.5Bn USD), and in many cases cycling struggles. That doesn't mean there isn't sexism in cycling, but rather that there are cultural, historical and systemic issues that need examination. Perhaps we can say that society as whole doesn't respect women's sport, and cycling is a symptom of that. Nuance, above all! Again, if your overwhelming point is that "cycling is sexist," that's neither interesting nor fully accurate.

The Tour de France Femmes avec Zwift, the third of its kind, is happening in August this year. Second year was extremely successful, and super exciting to watch. Let's hope the organizers can build on that. So far so good. Let's hope women's cycling gets to a level that women's tennis has — parity with men's tennis.

Cheers,

Émile

Well, there we have it: a Cavendish win! He now has to most stage victories ever in the Tour. It's har to explain how significant that is, Or, as Cav said in his interview, "the Tour is Greater than cycling": [https://youtu.be/A96DFEWvo0Q?si=2aKI0TwgqsX\_tTaY](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2FA96DFEWvo0Q%3Fsi%3D2aKI0TwgqsX_tTaY&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7C2930c83ccf46489f2fe808dc9baae6cc%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638556405516379924%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2BTli8bo7HXwCRX7UlJw30qkXP%2FZmq0lSk%2BzfldE9y3Y%3D&reserved=0)

Indeed, many riders will care more about a big cycling win than an Olympic gold. No exaggeration. Love him or hate him, this is a major historic event in the Tour. I used to despise Cavendish because he was cocky, arrogant and rude. But he's gone through a lot of suffering since 2016, when he got Empstein-Barr, and reached a low point in 2020. That's when the controversial (for his outspokenness) Quickstep boss Patrick Lefevere decided to give him a chance. The following year, Cav delivered 4 wins. Insanely, he was excluded from Tour selection in 2022, even though he'd just won British champs and was looking to beat the record. Then last year, on a new team, he nearly won his 25th, behind Pedersen, then broke his collarbone the following stage. It was never a given that he'd get that 35th win. You can sense that suffering behind his words today in that interview.

Cav is hugely respected in the pro peloton and you can hear that in Girmay's interview (he is now in the green sprint jersey): [https://youtu.be/aGNChF\_SCCw?si=UNRN01fQEwun1Itm](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2FaGNChF_SCCw%3Fsi%3DUNRN01fQEwun1Itm&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7C2930c83ccf46489f2fe808dc9baae6cc%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638556405516394984%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=EyjzeLxSywW9AIhkz4aNOX4IEWaajnAlyFQZUXIEeF4%3D&reserved=0)

It would be amazing if Girmay kept green all the way to Nice.

Check out the last 15 km of today's stage: [https://tiz-cycling.io/video/tour-de-france-2024-stage-05-last-15-km/](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ftiz-cycling.io%2Fvideo%2Ftour-de-france-2024-stage-05-last-15-km%2F&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7C2930c83ccf46489f2fe808dc9baae6cc%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638556405516404591%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=wX2s0VOSHq7WO4SHOjSKyu9sKL5p5OazI0K0OPwPSwg%3D&reserved=0)

Since you"ve been doing the readings etc, you'll be able to fully appreciate that bunch sprint. The aerial footage shows just how savvy Cav is.

Émile

PS. I've been in Europe since early June, so if you're wondering why I send things at 3 in the morning... I'm currently in Paris, and will be in Annecy next week, and hope to get to a stage soemhow.

Hi again,

Apologies for all the typos in my previous message (I'm sure you can figure out what i meant).

In any case, here's an IG story showing Cav saying it was the last race of his career back in 2020:

[https://www.instagram.com/reel/C8-cCjiM4oW/?igsh=OTB0NXZvM2hlNHli](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.instagram.com%2Freel%2FC8-cCjiM4oW%2F%3Figsh%3DOTB0NXZvM2hlNHli&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7Cbee5fc2695fa4bd4554f08dc9bb682b4%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638556455374629722%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=sgF1q3QRLPFRG%2FDV83m9upk9If%2BcIirrjzQFqGyUrHE%3D&reserved=0)

Here's a question: why are cyclists so much more emotional than, say, football (soccer) players, or any other athletes for that matter? Why is it so common to see tears, of joy, sadness, of great collective/team feeling? Here's an interview after stage 19 last year with Matej Mohoric (for context, his team-mate Gino Mäder had died in a crash a month prior at the Tour de Suisse): [https://youtu.be/pjTROQR9pHQ?si=6mAftJReFWOAsUer](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2FpjTROQR9pHQ%3Fsi%3D6mAftJReFWOAsUer&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7Cbee5fc2695fa4bd4554f08dc9bb682b4%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638556455374636728%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=ErXBlrz08PFCSwXPJISQVNP4Bj%2BraKbGO%2FUC9miNBAM%3D&reserved=0)

Mohoric manages to capture the feelings and the lived experience of professional cyclists. Yes, they have an amazing lifestyle, living the dream, but that comes with an enormous amount of dedication, sacrifice, and very few opportunities for success.

Émile

Dear students,

There are some administration issues, so I thank you for your patience. First, there is a record number of enrolments, so responding to emails might take a while! Please check emails that I've sent to make sure that you're not asking a question that isn't already in the instructions or in the emails. However, if there is a problem, don't hesitate to email me. Some have noted issues, and I appreciate the heads up! Second, with the discussion forum, the groups are all messed up. I'll try to fix that for the week-two discussions. I'm enjoying the discussions! Third, I am working slowly through reflective pieces, and should be done by tomorrow (Friday). For these, due to high volume, feedback is limited. I am going to tweak the criteria so that it's more clear when you get feedback.

Please remember to get your project proposal in on time, on July 10th. This is a way for me to screen projects to make sure they are viable. You can change projects, however. Typical issues in proposals are:

1. overly general and vague, something that could be said about anything (I like concrete and specific);
2. topic or problem is not clearly defined;
3. too ambitious (e.g. instead of focusing on the whole doping issue, try to look at a specific aspect or period); simple is good, and itself can be complex enough;
4. not well articulated: make sure everything hangs together logically, that your topic is defined, how you will approach it, and what you think is important about it;
5. bibliography is not appropriate (there's a lot out there, so try to get as specific as possible);
6. FOR ALTERNATIVE PROJECTS: all of the above, plus a justification or rationale for the project

Note that the use of AI/ChatGPT is strictly forbidden. Besides, learning to analyze and articulate complex ideas is a valuable skill that will serve you in countless ways in your future. Relying on AI leads to mental atrophy. Indeed, while many skills might become obsolete in the next few years due to AI, the soft skills acquired by analysis and writing are invaluable and will give you an edge. It's your choice.

I'm looking forward to reading YOU!

Cheers,

Émile

Sprinting is an art, but also sometimes involves luck, and luck is also something that you can create for yourself. Cavendish, in some ways, was lucky yesterday, in that, looking at the arial view, some openings might not have happened. But he knew how to seize those opportunities. You could say the same of Girmay's win on stage 3. When there are so many sprinters of high quality, making your luck isn't magic. It's about skill. Cavendish might not be the fastest, but there's a reason why he's won 35 stages. Knowing where and when to be, and having an almost sixth sense (or "lizard brain") to read the situation. Normyay the actual fastest be able to be so consistent.

The opposite of luck might be breaking the rules. If luck resembles grace, breaking the rules is a lack of grace. Maybe that's too abstract or theological. In any case, Jasper Pederson broke the rules, whereas in previous years he could do no wrong.

A fundamental rule in sprinting is to NOT deviate from your line, and certainly not alongside the barriers the way Pedersen did today (contrast with Girmay slipping through on stage 3; contrast also with Cavendish's swinging to the left in stage 5; yet he was far enough ahead to not impede a rival's sprint).

In today's stage, one of the strangest I've seen, crosswinds were a factor. Yet since no GC htrat was isolated, it didn't have an effect. I was also intrigued by the almost neutral way the pack rode for much of the day. Is everyone already tired? Makes sense,since the first five days have been so brutal.

Today's winner was perhaps due to luck, insofar as the noise of the right side of the pack led to an almost neutral dynamic.

BTW, look up Dylan "Groenewegen + tour de Pologne 2020" to get a sense of what can happens when you break the rules...

Anyway, more bad luck for Pedersen, Cavendish out of sight, and most others wanting their first win!

Cheers,

Émile

In cycling, the individual time trial (ITT) is called "the race of truth." This is because the rider is alone against the wind, against gravity, against the "parcours" (the course). No team tactics, no outsmarting opponents, no drafting. Just one person against the clock, "contre la montre" as we say in French (ITT is CLM in French). However, while ITTs are about pure speed against the clock, they do require a lot of preparation and thought so that the rider can use their energy most efficiently. In last year's Tour, it was clear that Vingegaard had done his homework for the 16th stage where he did a historic performance to extend his lead over Pogačar (see[this video](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2FUk9KXpe06Ts%3Fsi%3DR1PfR21P5f7P5gIx&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7C15c891594203471bd74908dc9dbc01f5%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638558678010160514%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=jNxorQYERYom02zlMRrcby65G3nD0U7WNMa4pyLSm0A%3D&reserved=0) about it).

This year's Tour doesn't have a team time trial (TTT), but those have been a key feature of Tours in the past. The TTT also used to be an Olympic event, with teams of five racing 100km. Those days are gone. The standard World Champ or Olympic distance for the ITT is usually about 40km. Sometimes the Tour has had 55km ITTs which, depending on the course, riders can complete in an hour. Think about that speed! Retired rider and former World Champ Tony Martin averaged 56kph in the Vuelta one year. Some Tours have started with a prologue stage 1, usually of shorter distance of about 10km, making for a super fast ITT. This year's Tour has two ITTs, yesterday's and the final stage in Nice, which is a 33.7km beast involving a category 2 climb ([8.1km at 5.7%](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.letour.fr%2Ffr%2Fetape-21&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7C15c891594203471bd74908dc9dbc01f5%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638558678010170930%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=HkmXNhtufUMSPkJNaHTnWu8a2I8KuGrKP%2BsqDhL2J1s%3D&reserved=0)), which means that the GC drama will go all the way to the end, unlike most years which end with a sprint stage on the Champs Élysées. As you know, the Tour can't end at the Champs Élysées this year due to the Olympics. I was there just two days ago, and large sections of it are cordoned off for Olympics events, like many other parts of Paris.

If you haven't watched parts of yesterday's ITT, I would recommend you do. As somewhat of an ITT specialist myself, I'll be the first to admit that they are usually quite boring (I feel the same way about the individual pursuit on the track, or the 1500m freestyle in the pool, which was also one of my events — why do I choose such boring events!? Nature chose me, I guess). In any case, the race for the stage and for the GC was anything but boring, as we saw a nail-biting race between the top four favourites! Chapeau to Evenepoel for the win, but also to the other three for pulling off amazing performances. It's such a mental game, being able to pull off a top performance. Vingegaard rode impressively considering his injuries and his inability to prepare for that course, and was definitely competitive yesterday; Roglič managed to move up to fourth overall; and Pogačar ceded only 12 seconds to Evenepoel, who is now 33 seconds back.

Evenepoel's position was also a thing of beauty (see it [here](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.midilibre.fr%2F2024%2F07%2F05%2Ftour-de-france-2024-remco-evenepoel-remporte-le-chrono-devant-tadej-pogacar-et-signe-un-premier-succes-sur-la-grande-boucle-12063736.php&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7C15c891594203471bd74908dc9dbc01f5%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638558678010178970%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=E48UkjN%2BXgU0%2BSN3kMIJ1YE99uR0H7LW0vP3Do8bK6Q%3D&reserved=0)). Regarding bike positions, riders at that level will get tested in a wind tunnel on a regular basis, and they need to train in that position frequently in order to be able to ride at maximal power output. You can't just jump on that bike and expect to ride fast, but have to train at least 3 or 4 times a week. That's why you'll often see riders jump on their TT bikes before and after the stages. I used to do "shoulder intervals" in the off season in order to get my shoulders used to being squeezed together in order to improve my frontal area, drag coefficient, and drag area. If you're fascinated by this stuff, there is lots of research on that, and it could make for an interesting paper.

Evenepoel was the favourite yesterday, but we'll see how stage 21 goes, when everyone will be fatigued. I don't think Evenepoel would be the favourite for that stage even without fatigue since it has a lot of climbing. Indeed, in yesterday's stage, Evenepoel was slowest of the top 4 on the short climb, let alone that cat 2 beast of stage 21. In any case, so much can happen between stages 7 and 21.

Speaking of, I'd underestimated tomorrow's stage 9 (again because I hadn't studied the parcours): turns out it involves not just a hilly parcours, but gravel sections thrown in for the second part of the stage, making for a dangerous stage for the GC riders because of potential crashes and flats. As they say, they might not win the Tour, but can definitely lose it on Sunday.

In any case, as I write, stage 8 is happening, and there are about 110km to go to Colombey-les-deux-Églises. I will try to get a report to you soon.

Cheers,

Émile

Like British Columbia, Western Europe has had an unusually cool summer so far. Admittedly, while Parisians tend to be "frileux," it's been odd to see people wearing coats in July. Even though there was a short heatwave just over a week ago, when you could still see some eccentric Parisians wearing scarves and coats... (all the others tend to wear linen, myself included — one thing I like about Parisian style is how simple yet elegant it is — though all the white sneakers are getting a bit predictable).

Today's stage into Colombey-les-deux-Églises, associated with the Général de Gaulle, was for much of it a cool, wet affair. I was worried we'd see nasty crashes, but it seemed the peloton (pronounced "pleuton" in French = "eu" being a bit like the German "ö" or the "o" in "worth") was calm and patient. So much so that yet again Jonas Abrahamsen went on a long, 130km solo breakaway, collecting some minor points to add to his polka-dot jersey. As I've said previously, it's very unlikely he will keep it; but, he will keep it as long as he can, before the Tour hits the real mountains and the real climbers come out to play! It's estimated that Abrahamsen has spent about 500km in breaks so far. Wild.

The sprint today was fairly simple: a straight road to the finish line, but with a short climb at the end that would cancel out most pure sprinters like Cavendish, who was effectively nowhere to be seen in the finale. unfortunately, Mads Pedersen had to abandon the Tour due to a shoulder injury sustained in stage 5 where he crashed as Cav won. Usually, Michael Matthews would have been a favourite for such a finish, but he was dropped, along with Pascal Ackermann and others, making me worried about whether they will be able to continue in the Tour. It's been a rather tough first week!

I wonder if Bryan Coquard (Cofidis) will ever win a Tour stage. He's been trying for years! Well, today was another missed opportunity, because his lead-out was way too early and he ended up running out of gas. It's all about timing, and Biniam Girmay and Jasper Philipsen have it. But clearly, this type of finish suited Girmay more due to the gradient, because he clearly (and cleanly) out-sprinted Philipsen, and now he has his second Tour stage victory!

Tomorrow is a dangerous day for GC. Hopefully no main contenders lose time due to crashes or mechanicals. I hate it when that happens. But, as they say, "that's bike racing!" If you're interested in that type of parcours, read about the key spring "classic," the [Strade bianche](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fen.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2FStrade_Bianche&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7C68599414d03b40d737b908dc9e0dda24%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638559029534492799%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=AxgJ4AIr7ztnB4czFYFakAnCR4gayULA%2B3O2QXEw2tE%3D&reserved=0) (the "white roads," a relatively new race, so technically doesn't count as a classic, but is now considered a sixth "[monument](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fen.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2FCycling_monument&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7C68599414d03b40d737b908dc9e0dda24%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638559029534504341%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=2uDrG5ZbnHLwbsRMkFtZt6vXuulDJscyZ88PWZda0fo%3D&reserved=0)"). Many of the strong [classics-style](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fen.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2FClassic_cycle_races&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7C68599414d03b40d737b908dc9e0dda24%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638559029534513186%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=E16A%2F4e%2BJJvbEvAqDjZ37VZr%2F%2B7H6nkSiGwiEExssTc%3D&reserved=0) riders will be targeting that stage, such as Matthieu van der Poel, Wout van Aert, Tom Pidcock, Michał Kwiatkowski, and maybe even Pogačar!

Émile

"Le Tour m'a beaucoup pris... ce serait bien qu'il me donne"... "The Tour has taken a lot from me... It would be nice that it give me [something back]." Such were the words today's stage winner, Anthony Turgis, who uttered them 24 hours ago only to repeat them today, teary eyed, in his interview with the French press. A third victory for the French, a first for his team since 2019.

What a magnificent stage, and what a magnificent victory in Troyes, after 189km and 32 hard kilometres of "white roads" (gravel). It was tough to see Derek Gee lose that sprint but, again, the Tour takes everything from these riders: they all give their full passion, in their training, and in their racing. Some say Gee went too soon, but maybe he lost that stage by being too eager throughout the day, covering moves and spending a lot of time in the wind. He was clearly a top candidate for the win. Silver lining? He moves up from 14th in GC to 9th! We'll se what he can produce in the mountains.

Speaking of GC, and of eagerness... The GC battle was even more insane today. While the day's breakaway yo-yoed up front, always within two minutes, then one, the GC battle was initially about not losing time, as we saw Roglič get distanced on the first difficult gravel sector, which meant he had to be pulled for several kilometres to rejoin the GC group. He was clearly not on a good day. Then, inexplicably (since he had no teammates), Evenepoel attacked with 73km to go. This was only apparently going to go the distance when Pogačar bridged up to him, but Vingegaard was in tow and not willing (quite rightly) not to contribute. Why did Vingo not work with the other two to further distance Roglič? First, he was on his teammate's bike; second, he was isolated, with teammates far away. It was too risky. So a frustrated Evenepoel and Pogačar had to concede, because they weren't going to go all the way and have Vingegaard just sit on their wheels. Pogačar would end up trying a couple of times to no avail. Poggy and Remco later expressed their frustrations, Poggy saying that his rivals are scared of him, that "they will follow me to the end, but it might cost them." Strong words. We'll see what happens in the next two weeks.

The way I see it, Evenepoel races like a one-day racer, and this was quite a stupid attack because he was also isolated. To think he could stay away for 73km while the other two teams would regroup and give the chase, is a sign of pure hubris. Maybe he will mature. And sure, it shows "panache," style in attacking, but if the goal is to win the Tour, then a little more "sang froid," the kind Anthony Turgis showed today in the sprint, is needed. Vingo has it in spades, has consistently had it in the last three Tours. Poggy too, racing with his heart, impatient, making silly attacks, wasting energy. We love it, but winning the Tour is more often not done with panache, but with a sort of miserly approach to energy expenditure. Jean de la Fontaine's fable, "[La Cigale et la fourmi](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ffr.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2FLa_Cigale_et_la_Fourmi_(La_Fontaine)&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7C4746c60539f446c69fe308dc9ea86c48%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638559693411543924%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=c%2BxFNBLrkl1ha91YB3oWLc6HAiZJ5toc9zajozzQ4Qw%3D&reserved=0)" ("[The Cicada and the Ant](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.frenchtoday.com%2Ffrench-poetry-reading%2Fpoem-la-cigale-et-la-fourmi-la-fontaine-audio%2F&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7C4746c60539f446c69fe308dc9ea86c48%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638559693411553954%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=MANz43OATRQZ%2FZglGltxaYrsLDIxhlD2xKJJHAwEn0o%3D&reserved=0)"), comes to mind. Don't get me wrong — I'm not rooting for Vingo (I actually don't have a favourite at this point, but a soft spot for Roglič). We can sense Poggy's frustration, and assuming he can back that up with his legs, we are sure to see a real battle in the next two weeks. The knives are out!

Jasper Stuyven, who did the late attack only to be caught by the rest of the breakaway, looked very dejected on the stage when receiving his combativity award. Indeed, these riders give all of their heart, all of their passion, to the Tour, but the Tour rarely gives back.

Émile

In other news, today was the first day of the Giro Donne, the [Giro d'Italia Women](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.giroditaliawomen.it%2Fen%2F&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7Cadf9e36bc73a445b770508dc9eab0089%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638559704490189093%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=tzSdwvH43Zl%2B%2F6H%2BTONu2e3wt7nsixRlKpZlbcCTyYw%3D&reserved=0). The Stage 1 ITT was won by the great Elisa Longo Borghini ("Lamborghini," as she's sometimes nicknamed).

Victoria's own Riley Pickrell [won the second stage](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcyclingmagazine.ca%2Fsections%2Fnews%2Friley-pickrell-wins-in-romania%2F&data=05%7C02%7Ctanujd%40uvic.ca%7Cadf9e36bc73a445b770508dc9eab0089%7C9c61d3779894427cb13b1d6a51662b4e%7C0%7C0%7C638559704490200599%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=rjAdGCzORdXrNIf55eZMOqQUmzuTUN79hJPS5bs42OM%3D&reserved=0) of the Sibiu Cycling Tour in Romania. Riley participated in the Giro this year, but had to abandon early on due to a crash. It's great to see him succeed. He has the potential of being a great sprinter, but i think has a lot to learn about the World Tour peloton.

Yesterday was also a sad day as André Drege died, aged 25, following crash at Tour of Austria. Two deadly crashes in the last 13 months. It's worrisome, because the racing is getting faster (see my email from before about how crashes are more frequent and cycling is increasingly dangerous).

Also, the famed French rider from the 1950s, Raphaël Geminiani, died at 99 yesterday.