



The Story of the Tour De France

Carol McGann Bill McGann

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"After forty years of study on the subject, I can with some confidence say Bill and Carol McGann's **The Story of the Tour de France** is the finest such work ever produced in the English language, and perhaps in any."

-From the preface by Owen Mulholland, author of *Uphill Battle*

"Besides towering over all bicycle races, the Tour de France endures for its unique Gaulic character, like Victor Hugo's Les Miserables. The McGann's passionate and insightful writing evokes the raucous cast of riders, promoters, and journalists thrusting through highs and lows worthy of opera. This volume stands out as a must-read book for anyone seeking to appreciate cycling's race of races."

-Peter Joffre Nye, author of *The Six-Day Bicycle Races: America's Jazz Age Sport and Hearts of Lions*

"There are LOTS of books on the Tour de France. An increasing number of them are actually written in English. However, of those, none educates Americans about this grand spectacle's rich past. The Tour de France has a history as fascinating and sordid as Rome's and it is high time someone undertook to explain this to our American sensibility. Our guide for the trip is a man with a ravenous appetite for both world history and bicycle racing, just the sort of person to paint a Tour champion with the dramatic grandiosity befitting Hannibal himself."

-Pat Brady, Editor, *Asphalt Magazine*

At the dawn of the 20th Century, French newspapers used bicycle races as promotions to build readership. Until 1903 these were one-day events. Looking to deliver a coup de grace in a vicious circulation war, Henri Desgrange—editor of the Parisian sports magazine L'Auto—took the suggestion of one of his writers to organize a race that would last several days longer than anything else, like the 6-day races on the track, but on the road.

That's exactly what happened. For almost 3 weeks the riders in the first Tour de France rode over dirt roads and cobblestones in a grand circumnavigation of France. The race was an electrifying success. Held annually (suspended only during the 2 World Wars), the Tour grew longer and more complex with an ever-changing set of rules, as Desgrange kept tinkering with the Tour, looking for the perfect formula for his race.

Each year a new cast of riders would assemble to contest what has now become the greatest sporting event in the world.

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