

The African Telatelist

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The 1997 and 1998 Tour de France

The 1997 Tour de France was the 84th Tour de France and took place between 5 July and 27 July 1997. Jan Ullrich's victory margin, of 9' 09" was the largest margin of victory since Laurent Fignon won the 1984 Tour de France by 10' 32". Ullrich's simultaneous victories in both the General Classification category and the young riders category marked the first time the same rider had won both categories in the same Tour since Laurent Fignon in 1983. Despite the doping case against Ullrich, he has not been officially removed from the results yet.

Results

There were several classifications in the 1997 Tour de France. The most important was the general classification, calculated by adding each cyclist's finishing times on each stage. The cyclist with the least accumulated time was the race leader, identified by the yellow jersey; the winner of this classification is considered the winner of the Tour.

Additionally, there was a points classification, which awarded a green jersey. In the points classification, cyclists got points for finishing among the best in a stage finish, or in intermediate sprints. The cyclist with the most points lead the classification, and was identified with a green jersey.

There was also a mountains classification. The organisation had categorized some climbs as either hors catégorie, 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th category; points for this classification were won by the first cyclists that reached the top of these climbs first, with more points available for the higher-categorized climbs. The cyclist with the most points lead the classification, and was identified with a polkadot jersey.

The fourth individual classification was the young rider classification, which was not marked by a jersey. This was decided the same way as the general classification, but only riders under 26 years were eligible.

For the team classification, the times of the best three cyclists per team on each stage were added; the leading team was the team with the lowest total time.

The 1998 Tour de France was the 85th Tour de France and took place between 11 July and 2 August 1998. The tour started in Ireland for the very first time. The 1998 tour was marred by several doping scandals throughout, together known as the Festina affair, starting with the arrest of Willy Voet, a soigneur in the French

Festina team. Initially the doping suspicion only surrounded the two teams Festina and TVM, but later investigations and retrospective tests revealed the doping abuse was far more widespread. Therefore this edition of the Tour also became nicknamed by many media sources, as the "Tour du Dopage" (Tour of Doping).

In 2004, 60 remaining antidoping samples given by riders during the 1998 Tour, were tested retrospectively for recombinant EPO by using three recently developed detection methods. The results of these tests were published to have returned 44 positives and 9 negatives, with the remaining 7 samples not returning any result due to sample degradation. At first, the rider names with a positive sample were not made public, as it had only been conducted as scientific research.

In July 2013, the antidoping committee of the French Senate however decided it would benefit the current doping fight to shed full light on the past, and so decided - as part of their "Commission of Inquiry into the effectiveness of the fight against doping" report - to publish all sample IDs along with the result of the retrospective test. This publication revealed, that the 9 negative samples belonged to 5 riders (of whom two nevertheless had confessed using EPO in that Tour), while the 44 positive samples belonged to 33 riders - including race winner Marco Pantani, runner-up Jan Ullrich, 3rd on the podium Bobby Julich, and points-competition winner Erik Zabel. Bobby Julich had already one year prior publication of his positive test, admitted using EPO from August 1996 to July 1998. When combining the EPO abuse confessions of the 2 riders testing negative with all the positive test results, it was indicated that 35 out of the 38 retrospectively tested riders (92%) had been using EPO in the 1998 Tour.

In addition to those 92% of the 38 riders in the retrospective test, who either tested EPO positive or confessed EPO abuse, 9 out of 9 Festina riders and 2 out of 9 TVM riders, who were not tested by the retrospective test but implicated in prior police investigations, also confessed using EPO in the Tour. Finally at least five more riders, who were neither retrospectively tested nor a part of TVM/Festina, opted later on also to confess having doped with EPO in the 1998 edition of the Tour. All in all, more than 50 riders have now been confirmed either by tests/confessions, to have used EPO doping during the 1998 Tour de France.

The 1998 edition of Tour de France was won by Marco Pantani, with podium placing of Jan Ullrich, the defending champion, and American Bobby Julich. Erik Zabel won his third consecutive green jersey in the points classification. Christophe Rinero claimed the polka dot jersey as the winner of the mountains classification.

Results

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There was also a mountains classification. The organisation had categorized some climbs as either hors catégorie, first, second, third, or fourth-category; points for this classification were won by the first cyclists that reached the top of these climbs first, with more points available for the higher-categorized climbs. The cyclist with the most points lead the classification, and was identified with a polkadot jersey.

The 4th individual classification was the young rider classification, which was not marked by a jersey. This was decided the same way as the general classification, but only riders under 26 years were eligible.

For the team classification, the times of the best three cyclists per team on each stage were added; the leading team was the team with the lowest total time.

For the combativity classification, a jury gave points after each stage to the cyclists they considered most combative. The cyclist with the most votes in all stages lead the classification.

Doping

1998 marks the year cycling was fundamentally shattered by doping revelations. Paradoxically no riders were caught doping positive by any of the ordinary doping controls in place at the time. Never-the-less several police searches and interrogations, managed to proof existence of organized doping at the two teams Festina and TVM, who consequently had to withdraw from the race. After stage 16, the police also forced the virtual mountain jersey holder Rodolfo Massi to leave the race, due to having found illegal corticosteroids in his hotel room. The intensive police work, then led to a peloton strike at stage 17, with a fallout of 4 Spanish teams and one Italian team deciding to leave the race in protest. Many years later, retrospective tests and rider confessions confirmed the common suspicion, that consumption of EPO had not been limited to those being caught by the police, but in fact was

something the majority of the peloton had used, at this point of time.

Police investigations and arrests

Three days ahead of the Tour start, the masseur of Team Festina, Willy Voet, was found at the Belgian border to have his car full of large quantities of syringes and controlled substances, including narcotics, erythropoietin (EPO), growth hormones, testosterone and amphetamines.

When raiding the Festina headquarters in France, the police also found a document with systematic drug programmes for the Festina riders. As the Tour had started in Ireland, the French police waited to the 1st stage in France before arresting the Festina Team's directeur sportif and doctor: Bruno Roussel and Eric Rijckaert. Faced by the evidence, Roussel and Rijckaert soon confessed, leading to all 9 Festina riders being forced to withdraw after stage 6.

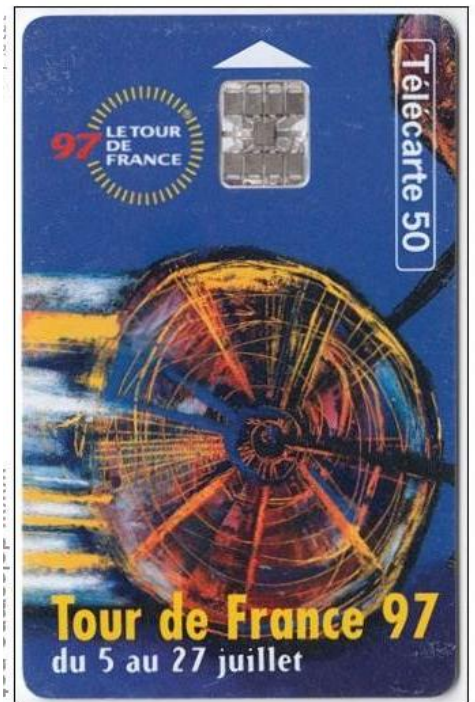
At the first rest day, after stage 11, the Festina affair got extended, with several other teams being searched by the police, and a 2nd police investigation leading to long interrogations of TVM riders and imprisonment of the 3 TVM staffs: manager, doctor and soigneur. As a reaction to the treatment by the French police, the peloton staged a solidarity sit-down protest both during stage 12 and stage 17. The Tour directors later nullified the results of stage 17, as the peloton in a gesture had let all TVM-riders pass the finish line a couple of seconds ahead of the peloton. All four Spanish teams (ONCE, Banesto, Vitalicio Seguros, Kelme) and one Italian team (Riso Scotti) even decided to pull out of the race, at the urging of the ONCE team, led by the French National Champion Laurent Jalabert. After the stage, the police due to a suspicion of organized doping also at other teams, decided to search their hotels and arrested rider Rodolfo Massi (Casino) and 2 team managers (Française des Jeux and Casino). Massi was at this point of time nr.7 in the GC and wearing the mountain jersey, but had to leave the race due to the police finding illegal corticosteroids in his hotel room. He was also charged by the police for having sold EPO and other medicines to some riders in the peloton, as Voet had named him as one of his "business relation-ships", but this criminal charge was later drop-ped - due to no additional proof found by police. The Italian Olympic Committee subsequently only banned him six months for doping possession.

After stage 17, all the six remaining TVM-riders in the race were escorted by the police to the nearest hospital, for submission of samples to an extra judicial ordered doping control. One day later, the TVM team decided also collectively to withdraw from the race, and thus became the final 7th team to withdraw.

Above: French Phonocard

1997 Tour de France	
Route of the 1997 Tour de France	
Race details	
Dates	5 July – 27 July 1997
Stages	21+Prologue
Distance	3,943.8 km (2,451 mi)
Winning time	100h 30' 35" (39.188 km/h or 24.350 mph)
Palmares	
Winner	Jan Ullrich (Germany) (Team Telekom)
Second	Richard Virenque (France) (Festina)
Third	Marco Pantani (Italy) (Mercatone Uno)
Points	Erik Zabel (Germany) (Team Telekom)
Mountains	Richard Virenque (France) (Festina)
Youth	Jan Ullrich (Germany) (Team Telekom)
Team	Team Telekom

Above: German Phonocard



Above: France Phonocard

1998 Tour de France



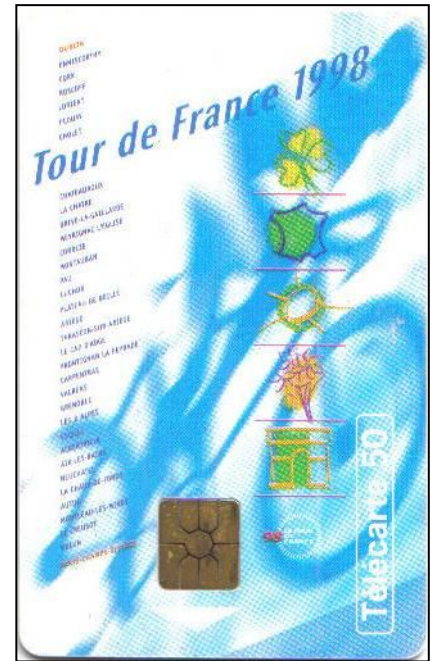
Route of the 1998 Tour de France

Race details

Dates	11 July – 2 August 1998
Stages	21+Prologue
Distance	3,877.1 km (2,409 mi)
Winning time	92h 49' 46" ^[1] (41.765 km/h or 25.952 mph)

Palmares

Winner	Marco Pantani (Italy)	(Mercatone Uno)
Second	Jan Ullrich (Germany)	(Team Telekom)
Third	Bobby Julich (USA)	(Cofidis)
Points	Erik Zabel (Germany)	(Team Telekom)
Mountains	Christophe Rinero (France)	(Cofidis)
Youth	Jan Ullrich (Germany)	(Team Telekom)
Team	Cofidis	



Above: French Phonecard

Above: Irish Phonecard

