



Stage 6, Briançon – Barcelonnette

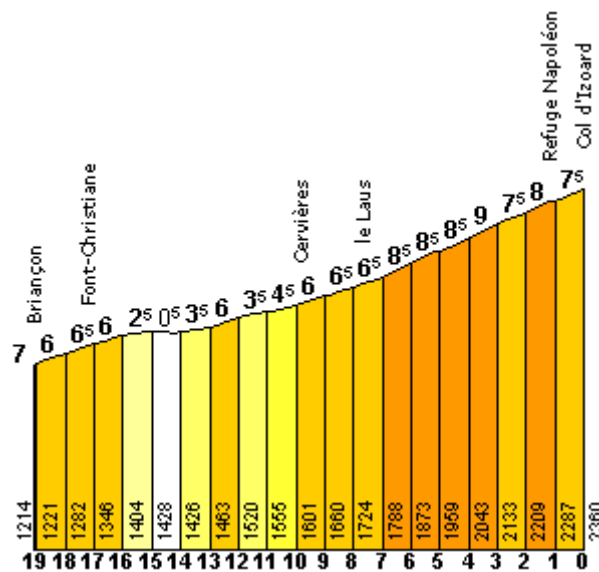
Col d'Izoard

Col d'Izoard (elevation 2361 metres) is a high mountain pass in the Alps. It is accessible in summer via the D902 road, connecting Briançon on the north and the valley of the Guil in Queyras, which ends at Guillestre in the south. There are forbidding and barren scree slopes with protruding pinnacles of weathered rock on the upper south side. Known as the Casse Desert this area has formed a dramatic backdrop to some key moments in the Tour de France, and often feature in iconic 1950s black and white photos of the race.

Tour de France

The Col d'Izoard is frequently on the route of the Tour de France. It is classified as an Hors Categorie climb. The southern climb from Guillestre is 15.9 kilometres in length and has an average gradient of 6.9%. The climb from Briancon to the north is 20 kilometres in length and has an average gradient of 5.8%.



Several of the Tour de France's more memorable moments have occurred on the Col d'Izoard, particularly the exploits of Fausto Coppi, Bernard Thevenet and Louison Bobet. A small cycling museum is at the summit, along with a memorial to Coppi and Bobet.



2007	Danilo di Luca (ITA)	S
2006	Stefano Garzelli (ITA)	S
2003	Aitor Garmendia (SPA)	N
2000	Santiago Botero (COL)	S
2000	Gilberto Simoni (ITA)	S
1996	Pascal Richard (SWI)	S
1994	Marco Pantani (ITA)	S
1993	Claudio Chiappucci (ITA)	N
1989	Pascal Richard (SWI)	S
1986	Eduardo Chozas (SPA)	S
1982	Lucien Van Impe (BEL)	S
1976	Lucien Van Impe (BEL)	S

1975	Bernard Thévenet (FRA)	S
1973	José Manuel Fuente (SPA)	N
1972	Eddy Merckx (BEL)	S
1965	Joaquín Galera (SPA)	S
1964	Franco Bitossi (ITA)	S
1962	Federico Bahamontes (SPA)	S
1960	Imerio Massignan (ITA)	S
1958	Federico Bahamontes (SPA)	S
1956	Valentin Huot (FRA)	S
1954	Louison Bobet (FRA)	S
1953	Louison Bobet (FRA)	S
1951	Fausto Coppi (ITA)	S

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 1950	Louison Bobet (FRA)	S
 1949	Fausto Coppi (ITA)	S
 1948	Gino Bartali (ITA)	S
 1947	Jean Robic (FRA)	N
 1939	Sylvère Maes (BEL)	S
 1938	Gino Bartali (ITA)	S
 1937	Julián Berrendero (SPA)	N
 1936	Antonin Magne (FRA)	N

 1927	Nicolas Frantz (LUX)	S
 1926	Bartolomeo Aimo (ITA)	S
 1925	Bartolomeo Aimo (ITA)	S
 1924	Nicolas Frantz (LUX)	S
 1923	Henri Pélissier (FRA)	S
 1922	Philippe Thys (BEL)	S

Louison Bobet, “Louison”, “Zonzon”

Louis ("Louison") Bobet (born Saint-Méen-le-Grand, Brittany, France, 12 March, 1925, died 31 March, 1983) was a French professional road cyclist. He was the first great French rider of the post-war period and the first rider to win the Tour de France in three successive years, from 1953 to 1955. His career included the national road championship (1950 and 1951), Milan-Sanremo (1951), Giro di Lombardia (1951), Critérium International (1951 & 52), Paris-Nice (1952), Grand Prix des Nations (1952), world road championship (1954), Ronde van Vlaanderen (1955), Dauphiné Libéré (1955), Tour de Luxembourg (1955), Paris-Roubaix (1956) and Bordeaux-Paris (1959).



Origins

Louis Bobet was born one of three children above his father's baker's shop in the rue de Monfort, Saint-Méen-le-Grand, near Rennes. His father gave him a bicycle when he was two and after six months he could ride it 6 kilometres. Bobet's father was also called Louis and the son was called Louison - little Louis - to avoid confusion. The ending -on is a diminutive in French but outside Brittany Louison refers more usually to a girl. He was known as Louis in his early years as a rider, even as a professional, until the diminutive Louison gained in popularity.

His sister played table tennis, his brother Jean football, although he became a professional cyclist. Louison played both table tennis and football and became Brittany champion at table tennis. It was his uncle, Raymond, who was president of a cycling club in Paris who persuaded him to concentrate on cycling.

Bobet raced in his local area and won four events for unlicensed riders in 1941. He qualified for the final of the unofficial youth championship, the Premier Pas Dunlop in 1943 at Montluçon and came sixth. The winner was Raphaël Géminiani, who would become a professional team-mate and rival.

Bobet is said to have carried messages for the Resistance during the second world war. After D-Day he joined the army and served in eastern France. He was demobilised in December 1945.

Racing career

Bobet applied for racing licence on leaving the army and by error was sent one for an independent, or semi-professional. He benefited from the right to compete against professionals as well as amateurs. He came second in the Brittany championship and rode the national championship in Paris. There he came up against a veteran professional, Marcel Bidot, who on retirement became Bobet's manager in the national team. Bobet left the field to catch two riders who had broken clear. He dropped one and outsprinted the other to become national champion. He turned fully professional for Stella, a bicycle factory in Nantes.

Tour de France 1947

Stella was a small team that rode mainly in Brittany. In May 1947, however, two from the team rode the Boucles de la Seine race in Paris. He won alone by six minutes. It brought him an invitation to ride the Tour de France, at that time disputed by national and regional teams. The

unexpected toughness of the race forced him to go home on the ninth day, in the Alps and to cry when the going got hard. It brought him the nickname "cry-baby" in the bunch and René Vietto referred to him as La Bobette, a mock feminisation of his name, for his tears and complaining. The historian Dick Yates wrote:

He brought down the scorn of the press and everyone quickly wrote off this 'cry-baby'. René Vietto was in the yellow jersey and he looked like he was going to win - he was a real man. As France forgot about him, Bobet went home to lick his wounds and listen to words of advice from his father.

Tour de France 1948

The former rider, Maurice Archambaud, took over management of the team from Léo Véron and took a chance on Bobet. Much had changed since the previous summer and he took the lead after the third stage, which finished near Stella's factory in Nantes. Bobet lost the yellow jersey the following day but regained it by winning the sixth stage, to Biarritz. He had 20 minutes' lead over the veteran Italian, Gino Bartali as the race entered the Alps. And then happened one of the most outstanding periods in the history of the Tour.

(See Gino Bartali for full story.)

A political crisis in Italy threatened to overthrow the government and bring the country to anarchy. The prime minister asked Bartali to distract Italians by dominating the Tour. Bartali won three stages in a row and the Tour by 14 minutes. Bobet's 20 minutes on Bartali was cut to a 32-minute deficit by the time the race finished in Paris. Bobet had twice worn the yellow jersey and won two stages, however, and with the money he won he moved to Paris and bought a drapery shop for his wife.

Tour de France 1950

Bobet did not finish in 1949, struggling from the start. He dropped out on the first day in the mountains, along with four other members of the national team. In 1950 he won the national championship at Montlhéry south of Paris the week before the Tour and rode in the national team with Géminiani, the rider who had beaten him as a boy in the Premier Pas Dunlop. He and Bobet developed a rocky friendship, Géminiani's rough, instinctive character a contrast to the more thoughtful, quieter Bobet. The two argued frequently but remained friends. Géminiani, following the French habit of creating nicknames by doubling a syllable of a name referred to Bobet as Zonzon, a name that Bobet hated but tolerated. Géminiani had the confidence that Bobet lacked.



Bobet and Géminiani were second and third early in the race. Both hoped to profit from the absence of Fausto Coppi, who was injured, but found themselves instead up against an unbeatable Ferdi Kübler. Bobet finished third, winning the mountain competition.

Tour de France 1953

Bobet rode the 1951 Tour in the blue-white-red of national champion again but cracked in the mountains. Jean Bidot, the manager, sent riders to help him but in the end abandoned him to concentrate on Géminiani, the best placed. Bobet came 20th, although with a stage win. He lost 40 minutes on the last day in the mountains even though the race was taking it easy, Hugo Koblet already being unbeatable. Dick Yates said:

It was a terrible performance for a man of his class, but although he had suffered and suffered he had not given up the struggle. While this showed character, nobody was prepared to make allowances for it. 'He is just not a stage rider,' they said. 'He'll never win the Tour. No matter how brilliant you may be, if you're not consistent you haven't got a

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chance.' The sensitive Bobet was stung by this criticism. He had given his all for the Tour but everyone had turned against him. Even Jean Robic, who was not really in Bobet's class, was now more popular and it really hurt.

And then in 1953, after a year without the Tour, Bobet left the field behind on a stage that crossed the Vars. He climbed the Col d'Izoard alone on roads still rutted and strewn with stones and when the gearing on his bicycle forced him to fight to keep it moving. The historian Bill McGann wrote:

Stage 18 is etched in the history of the Tour. It was 165 kilometres from Gap to Briançon... Bobet knew this was the time to strike. One of Bobet's team-mates, Adolphe Deledda, went clear on the Vars with two other riders. Bobet stayed with the other leading climbers as they ascended the Vars. Spanish rider Jesus Lorono attacked. The alert and very capable Bobet jumped on his wheel and the pair disappeared up the mountain. Bobet was a good descender and dropped Lorono on the way down the Vars. Meanwhile Deledda, upon being told that Bobet was on his way, eased up and waited for his captain. The two hooked up and took off across the 20 kilometres valley floor leading to the Izoard. In doing so they caught and then dispatched Deledda's two original breakaway companions. Bobet and Deledda, knowing the importance of the moment, were men on a mission. Deledda, fulfilling the team contract in both letter and especially in spirit, buried himself towing Bobet to the great mountain. Bobet flew up the Izoard as if he had wings. Bobet had finally arrived as the premier stage racer in the world. As he crested the Izoard there was a very well known cycling fan by the side of the road. Fausto Coppi with his mistress, Giulia Locatelli (the "woman in white", was watching the race. As he rode past the great man, Bobet shouted thanks to Coppi for coming.

He won that day by more than five minutes in Briançon, took the yellow jersey, then won the time trial and finished the Tour with 14 minutes' lead. He was greeted in Paris by Maurice Garin, winner of the first Tour in 1903, celebrating the Tour's 50th anniversary. He had, however, won a Tour without stars. Kübler was not riding and nor was Coppi, who was standing on the Izoard to watch Bobet pass. . Koblet was riding badly and dropped out after a crash. Bartali was too old. Yates' assessment is that "Bobet had won the Tour and won it well but the opposition was hardly top drawer.



Tour de France 1954

The 1954 race was different, without Italians but with a strong team from Belgium. The race started fast and didn't ease up. Bobet took the lead after four days, then lost it on day eight. The jersey changed hands until Bobet again dominated on the Izoard. Winning the time-trial cemented his lead and he got to Paris 15 minutes before Kübler. A few weeks later he became world champion in Germany. He left Stella after eight years to ride for Mercier, the team riding bicycles carrying Bobet's name and sold by him but made in the Mercier factory in St-Étienne.

Tour de France 1955

Bobet completed his hat-trick of successive wins in 1955, having that year won the Ronde van Vlaanderen and Dauphiné Libéré. The strongest French rider at first was Antonin Rolland and the manager, Marcel Bidot, asked the team to ride for him. Rolland, however, grew weaker as the race approached the Pyrenees. Bobet won the Tour but with a saddle boil that needed surgery. "His flesh was full of holes", said a report. "Dead tissue had to be removed to within several millimetres of vital organs. Nobody dared speak the word 'cancer'" Bobet believed that enduring the sores during the Tour made him a lesser rider for the rest of his life.

He learned to fly a plane while forced not to ride.

Tour de France 1958

The 1958 was the last that Bobet finished. One account said:

He has 400,000 kilometres in his legs. He has conquered glory and fortune but he is badly ill. Despite the formal advice of his doctor, he has decided to ride the 1958 Tour de France. He will suffer. He knows that. In the heart of the gigantic rocks of the Cassé Déserte, Bob is arced on his bicycle, his kidneys crushed by the effort and his head, like a heavy, painful balance, oscillates above his handlebars. The sun beats down on him. Around him, the whole mountain smokes like a giant witch's cauldron. As he breathes, what burns his throat and his lungs is the dust that rises around him... Abandoned, alone, without help, streaming with sweat, he has no other weapon against his adversaries but the mountain, the bad weather and his crazy willpower.

He came seventh.

Personality

The most striking feature of Bobet the man rather than rider was his ambition to behave like a Hollywood matinée idol, a sort of David Niven character in a dinner suit tuxedo. It brought him much ribbing from other French riders. Géminiani says Bobet's diffident and elegant manner made him less popular even in his own Brittany than the more rustic, forthright manners of other Breton people such as Jean Robic. The British professional Brian Robinson called Bobet "a private man and a little moody" and said he would sulk if things went wrong. The French journalist René de Latour said of Bobet in *Sporting Cyclist* that "he didn't look good on a bike" and that he had "the legs of a football [soccer] player".

Bobet spoke out against French involvement in a war against communists in Indo-China. He said he wasn't a Marxist but a pacifist. Géminiani said Bobet lacked humility. "He really thought that, after him, there'd be no more cycling in France", he said. Bobet occasionally talked of himself in the third person.

Bobet was driven by personal hygiene and refused to accept his first yellow jersey because it had not been made with the pure wool he believed the only healthy material for a sweating and dusty rider. Synthetic thread or blends were added in 1947 following the arrival of Sofil as a sponsor. Sofil made artificial yarn. The race organiser, Jacques Goddet wrote:

It produced a real drama. Our contract with Sofil was crumbling away. If the news had got out, the commercial effect would have been disastrous for the manufacturer. I remember debating it with him a good part of the night. Louison was always exquisitely courteous but his principles were as hard as the granite blocks of his native Brittany coast.

Godet had to get Sofil to produce another jersey overnight, its logo still visible but artificial fabric absent. Bobet's concern with hygiene and clothing was accentuated by frequent problems with saddle sores.

Raymond Le Bert



Bobet was one of the first riders to employ a personal soigneur, taking his lead from Coppi. He took on Raymond Le Bert, a physiotherapist from St-Brieuc, as well as a secretary and a driver. Le Bert booked him hotel rooms between half-stages of the Tour, against the Tour's rules. Riders were supposed to use a dormitory provided for them. When the Tour insisted riders carry spare tyres, usually round their shoulders, Le Bert gave Bobet tubulars with the inner tubes taken out, useless to ride on but lighter to carry if that's what the rules insisted.

Le Bert said he had met Coppi, whom Bobet admired for his "modern" techniques but

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refused to have anything to do with the Italian's suitcase of drugs. Bobet insisted he never took drugs. But the journalist and race organiser, Jean Leulliot, remembered a dinner organised by Jacques Goddet and Félix Lévitan, the organisers of the Tour de France, for the race's former winners. Leulliot wrote:

One table attracted particular attention. Around it were Anquetil, Merckx and Bobet, 13 victories in the Tour between them. The conversation at the table was particularly lively and Louison Bobet was being challenged for saying that he had never taken the slightest drug or stimulant. He was obliged to admit that he had drunk the small bottles prepared for him by his soigneur at the time without knowing exactly what they contained. Which produced laughter from Jacques Anquetil and Eddy Merckx.

Bobet and Britain

Bobet presented prizes at the annual presentation of the British Best All-Rounder time-trial competition at the Royal Albert Hall, London, in 1954. He gave a yellow jersey to a veteran competitor, Vic Gibbons. Bobet flew from Paris to London in a de Havilland Dove chartered by a London timber-merchant and cycling enthusiast, Vic Jenner. Jock Wadley, the editor of Sporting Cyclist was with Jenner. He remember that the two Britons arrived at Le Bourget airport without having brought passports - but that immigration staff gave them no attention because they were too busy trying to get an autograph from Bobet.

Retirement and death

Bobet's career effectively ended when the car carrying him and his brother Jean crashed outside Paris in the autumn of 1960.

Louison Bobet had a succession of businesses after he stopped racing, including a clothes shop, but he became best known for investing in and developing the little-known seawater health treatment of thalassotherapy. He had used it when recovering from his car crash. He opened the Louison Bobet centre beside the sea at Port du Crouesty at Quiberon. He fell ill, however, and died of cancer the day after his 58th birthday. Cancer had been speculated during the operation for his saddle boils. There is a museum to his memory in Saint-Méen-le-Grand, the idea of village postmaster Raymond Quérat.

Bernard Thévenet, “Nanard”

Bernard Thévenet, born January 10, 1948, in Saint-Julien-de-Civry, France, is a retired bicycle racer. He is a two-time winner of the Tour de France and known for ending the reign of five-time Tour champion Eddy Merckx. He also won the Dauphiné Libéré in 1975 and 1976.

Origins

Thévenet was born to a farming family in Saône-et-Loire in Burgundy and lived in a hamlet called Le Guidon (The Handlebar). It was there in 1961 that he saw the Tour de France for the first time, on, a 123 kilometres stage from Nevers to Lyon. Thévenet was a choir boy in the village church. He said: "The priest brought forward the time for Mass so that we could watch the riders go by. The sun was shining on their toe-clips and the chrome on their forks. They were modern-day knights. I had already been dreaming of becoming a racing cyclist and that magical sight convinced me definitively. It was never that magical when I was actually in the peloton of the Tour!"

From the age of six he went to school on the rack of his sister's bike. He got his own bike a



Bernard Thévenet

year later and pedalled the 10 kilometres round journey himself. His first adult bike, not a racing machine but a sporty cross between a racer and a touring bike, came as a present for passing school examinations at 14. His parents needed him on the farm too much to be keen on his racing, but they knew their son's ambitions. Thévenet rode his first race and his parents found out only when they read the local paper. There was a row and the club president intervened by inviting the parents to see their son's next race. Thévenet won it.

He was champion of Burgundy in 1965 and 1966 and French junior champion in 1968. In 1967 the manager of the ACBB club in Boulogne-Billancourt Mickey Weigant, drove to his house to enrol him. The ACBB was an accepted development team for professionalism, particularly for the Peugeot team. During 1968, he rode for the amateur team of Jean de Gribaldy, Cafés Ravis-Wolhauser-de Gribaldy, which won the amateur Route de France. After that Thévenet did his military service in 1969.

Racing career

He turned professional with Peugeot-BP-Michelin in 1970. He rode the Tour de France for the first time in 1970, as a last-minute stand-in. He said: "I wasn't even a reserve in 1970 but, because two riders in the team had fallen ill at Peugeot, the directeur sportif picked me two days before the start." Gaston Plaud had to call a neighbour in the village because neither Thévenet's nor many other families had telephones. Thévenet had left to train with a friend, Michel Rameau, and his mother got a message to him at Rameau's house.

Thévenet asked the advice of Victor Ferrari, a friend who rode the Tour in 1929. Thévenet said: "He was probably afraid that I'd hesitate and he said: 'You're not going to say No, are you crazy? Go on, go...'" Thévenet remembered:

I can remember perfectly getting to Limoges [for the start]. I was anxious and scared at the same time, but full of pride. I was given a new suitcase, seven jerseys, six pairs of shorts, overclothes, sweaters, shirts and so on and so on. Everyone else had a brand new bike, but not me, because I wasn't on the team's entry list.

Thévenet won a mountain stage ending at the ski resort of La Mongie, most of the way up the Tourmalet in the Pyrenees. He said: "That evening, it was all clear [j'ai compris bien des choses]. That I'd saved my season and, because of that, my job, because the obligatory two-year contracts for new professionals didn't exist then."

In the 1972 Tour he crashed badly on a descent and was temporarily amnesic. As he began to regain his memory, he looked down at his own Peugeot jersey and wondered whether he might be a cyclist. On recognizing the team car, he exclaimed: "I'm riding the Tour de France!"



He refused to abandon the race and four days later won a stage over Mont Ventoux. In the 1973 Tour, he finished second, behind Luis Ocaña, but in 1974 he did not enter the Tour due to illness.

In the 1975 Tour, Thévenet attacked Eddy Merckx on the col d'Izoard on 14 July, France's national day. Merckx, who was suffering back pain and from a punch by a spectator, fought back but lost the lead and never regained it. Pierre Chany wrote:

Those who were there will be slow to forget Bernard Thévenet's six successive attacks in the never-ending climb of the col des Champs, Eddy Merckx's immediate and superb response, the alarming chase by the Frenchman after a puncture delayed him on the descent of the col, the Belgian's attack on the way to the summit of the Allos, his breath-taking plunge towards the Pra-Loup valley, his sudden weakening four kilometres from the top and, to finish, Thévenet's furious push. The end of the race was frenetic. Has Eddy Merckx's long

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reign in the Tour de France come to an end on the Pra-Loup. Some think so; others believe that it will happen tomorrow.

A British writer, Graeme Fife, wrote:

Thévenet caught Merckx, by now almost delirious, 3 kilometres from the finish and rode by. The pictures show Merckx's face torn with anguish, eyes hollow, body slumped, arms locked shut on the bars, shoulders a clenched ridge of exertion and distress. Thévenet, mouth gaping to gulp more oxygen, looks pretty well at the limit, too, but his effort is gaining; he's out of the saddle, eyes fixed on the road. He said he could see that one side of the road had turned to liquid tar in the baking heat and Merckx was tyre-deep in it.

Beside the road, a woman in a bikini waved a sign that said: "Merckx is beaten. The Bastille has fallen." Thévenet - who had taken the climb on the larger chainring - went on to win the Tour, which that year finished on the Champs-Élysées for the first time. Merckx finished second, three minutes behind.

Thévenet won his second and last Tour in 1977. That winter was hospitalized with a liver ailment he attributed to long-term use of steroids. Several months later Thévenet lined up for the 1978 Tour de France but had to abandon the second mountain stage in an ambulance. He left the Peugeot cycling team after 1979 and signed for the Spanish team Teka, where he won two races and a six days race with the Australian rider Danny Clark.

He returned to a French team in his final year, 1981, where he won a stage in the Circuit de la Sarthe.

Doping



Thévenet insisted "I have never taken drugs; they wouldn't be any use." Then he was caught taking drugs, in the 1977 Paris-Nice.

His 1978 season was a shadow of his years of winning the Tour de France. He had trouble finishing even minor races. When a journalist at the radio station France Inter wondered aloud if Thévenet's repeated poor performances might be due to doping, Thévenet and his team-mates refused to talk to the station.

Thévenet went to hospital, where tests showed serious trouble with his surrenal

glands. He admitted taking steroids and called for an end to drugs in the sport. "I was doped by cortisone for three years and there were many like me," he told Pierre Chany in *Vélo-France*. The steroids had been prescribed to him by François Bellocq, the Peugeot doctor, who had qualified only in 1976. Thévenet told Chany:

We were all convinced we were doing the right thing [être dans le vrai] and we were certain we were a step ahead of the rest so far as what we were doing to prepare for competition. The young doctor with our team had taken the time to explain to us how the body reacted to effort, which nobody had done before him. His words convinced us of his competence, and maybe we were overconfident, but I had the feeling that he was taking us out of the continual experimentation [l'empirisme habituel] to get us on a more methodical and scientific road. From then on, everything that was said around us seemed to come from ignorance, jealousy or malveillance. I was at ease with myself, satisfied deep down that I was doing my job seriously. That was how it was from 1975 until just recently.

Retirement

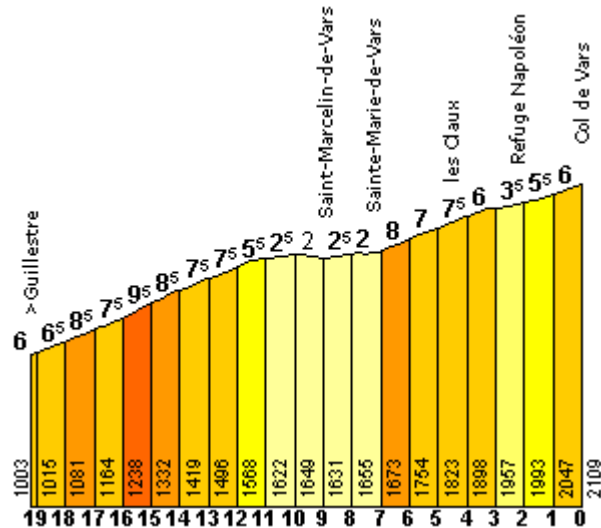
Thévenet became directeur sportif in 1984 of the La Redoute team of Stephen Roche, then of RMO in 1986 and 1987. He became a television commentator and opened a company selling cycling clothes bearing his name. He was asked whether it was hard being a racing cyclist; his reply was that being a French farmer was harder.

Col de Vars

Col de Vars, elevation 2108 metres is a high mountain pass in the Alps between the departments of Hautes-Alpes and Alpes-de-Haute-Provence.

It connects the Ubaye Valley with the Queyras valley and Embrun. The pass is open only from May to October. It is traversed by highway D 902, which leads from Saint-Paul-sur-Ubaye in the southeast to Vars and on to Guillestre in the northwest.

The pass has been included in the Tour de France 33 times.



2000	Jens Heppner (GER)	S
1996	Rodolfo Massi (ITA)	S
1993	Davide Cassani (ITA)	N
1989	Bruno Cornillet (FRA)	S
1986	Eduardo Chozas (SPA)	S
1982	Isidro Juarez del Moral (SPA)	S
1975	Joop Zoetemelk (NED)	S
1972	Raymond Delisle (FRA)	S
1969	Gabriel Mascaro (SPA)	N
1967	Georges Chappe (FRA)	N
1965	Cees Haast (NED)	S
1964	Julio Jiménez (SPA)	N
1964	Antonio Gómez Del Moral (SPA)	S
1962	Eddy Pauwels (BEL)	S
1960	Imerio Massignan (ITA)	S
1958	Nino Catalano (ITA)	S
1955	Charly Gaul (LUX)	N
1953	Adolphe Deledda (FRA)	S

1951	Fausto Coppi (ITA)	S
1950	Louison Bobet (FRA)	S
1949	Ferdi Kübler (SWI)	S
1948	Jean Robic (FRA)	S
1947	Jean Robic (FRA)	N
1939	Edward Vissers (BEL)	S
1938	Gino Bartali (ITA)	S
1937	Edward Vissers (BEL)	N
1936	Federico Ezquerria (SPA)	N
1935	Felicien Vervaecke (BEL)	N
1934	René Vietto (FRA)	N
1933	Vicente Trueba (SPA)	N
1927	Nicolas Frantz (LUX)	S
1926	Bartolomeo Aimo (ITA)	S
1925	Bartolomeo Aimo (ITA)	S
1924	Nicolas Frantz (LUX)	S
1922	Philippe Thys (BEL)	S

Jacques Anquetil, “Monsieur Chrono”

Jacques Anquetil (8 January 1934 – 18 November 1987), was a French road racing cyclist and the first cyclist to win the Tour de France five times, in 1957 and from 1961 to 1964. He stated before the 1961 Tour that he would gain the yellow jersey on day one and wear it all through the tour, a tall order with two previous winners in the field - Charly Gaul and Federico Bahamontes -

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but he did just that. His victories in stage races such as the Tour were built on an exceptional ability to ride alone against the clock in individual time trial stages.

French record

Jacques Anquetil was:

- the first rider to win the Tour de France five times
- the first French rider to win the Giro d'Italia (1960)
- the first French rider to wear the yellow jersey of the Tour de France from the first day to the last (1961)
- the first rider to win all three Tours, with victory in the Vuelta (1963)

Early life

Anquetil was the son of a builder in Mont-Saint-Aignan, in the hills above Rouen in Normandy, north-west France. He lived there with his parents, Ernest and Marie, and his brother Philippe and then at Boisguillaume in a two-storey house, "one of those houses with exposed beams that tourists think are pretty but those who live there find uncomfortable."

In 1941, his father refused contracts to work on military installations for the German occupiers and his work dried up. Other members of the family worked in strawberry farming and Anquetil's father followed them,



moving to the hamlet of Bourguet, near Quincampoix. Anquetil had his first bicycle - an Alcyon - at the age of four and twice a day rode the kilometre and a half to the village and back. There he was taught by a teacher wearing clogs in a classroom heated by a smoking stove.

Anquetil learned metal-turning at the technical college at Sotteville-lès-Rouen, a suburb of the city, where he played billiards with a friend named Maurice Dieulois. His friend joined the AC Sottevillais club with the encouragement of his father and began racing. Anquetil said:

" ... was impressed by the way girls were attracted to Dieulois because he had become a coureur cycliste ... so I gave up my first choice - running - and joined the club as well."

He was 17 and he took out his first racing licence on 2 December 1950. He stayed a member the rest of his life and his grave in the churchyard at Quincampoix has a permanent tribute from his clubmates.

Anquetil passed his qualifications in light engineering and went to work for 50 old francs a day at a factory in Sotteville. He left after 26 days following a disagreement with his boss over time off for training. The AC Sottevillais, founded in 1898, was run by a cycle-dealer, André Boucher, who had a shop in the Place du Trianon in Sotteville. The club had not just Anquetil but Claude LeBer, who became professional pursuit champion in 1955, Jean Jourden, world amateur champion in 1961, and Francis Bazire, who came second to Eddy Merckx in the world amateur championship in 1964.

Boucher trained his group first from a bicycle and then by Deryn. Anquetil made fast progress and won 16 times as an amateur. His first victory was the Prix Maurice Latour at Rouen on 3 May 1951. He also took the Prix de France in 1952 and the Tour de la Manche and the national road championship the same year.

The Grand Prix des Nations

Anquetil rode in the French team in the 100 kilometres time trial at the 1952 Summer Olympics in Helsinki and won a bronze medal. Impressed by his protégé's progress, André Boucher sent an envelope of Anquetil's press cuttings to the local representative of the Perle bicycle company and asked him to send them to the firm's cycling team manager, the former Tour de France rider, Francis Péliissier.

Pélissier called Anquetil, who was surprised and flattered to hear from him, and offered him 30,000 old francs a month to ride for La Perle as an independent, or semi-professional. Anquetil accepted and immediately ordered a new car, a Renault Fregate, which he crashed twice in the first 12 months.

Pélissier wanted Anquetil for the 1953 Grand Prix des Nations, a race started by the newspaper Paris-Soir which since 1932 had risen to the status of an unofficial world time-trial championship. It was held on a 142 kilometres loop of rolling roads through Versailles, Rambouillet, Maulette, St-Rémy-les-Chevreuse and then back to Versailles before, originally, finishing on the Buffalo track in Paris.

Anquetil was aware that one of his rivals was an Englishman named Ken Joy, who had broken records in Britain but was unknown in France. He would ride with another Englishman, Bob Maitland. The historian Richard Yates says:

Many of the 'against-the-clock' fraternity in the United Kingdom sincerely believed that the British time triallists were as good as, if not better than, their Continental counterparts and here was the chance to prove it. When the final result was known the British fans were disappointed and saw the race as a total failure for Britain as both Englishman had finished nearly 20 minutes down.

To rub salt in the wounds, the event had been won by an unknown, curly-haired teenager from Normandy.

Anquetil caught Joy - the moment he realised he was going to win the race - even though Joy had started 16 minutes earlier. At 19, Anquetil had become unofficial time-trial champion of the world.

The win pleased Pélissier but did not convince him. Next year he drove his team car not behind Anquetil but his Swiss star, Hugo Koblet. Anquetil was not amused. When he beat Koblet, he sent his winner's bouquet to Pélissier's wife "in deepest sympathy".

Anquetil rode the Grand Prix des Nations nine times without being beaten.

Hour record

On 22 September 1954, Anquetil started two years' compulsory service in the army, joining the Richepanse de Rouen barracks as a gunner of the 406th artillery regiment. The army accorded him few great favours but there was an exception:

"In June 1956, my chiefs finally gave me an order more to my liking, the strangest, the most unusual that a gunner has ever been asked to carry out; it was nothing less than to beat the world hour record. I knew what that meant: to storm a veritable fortress. For 14 years, since 7 November 1942, the date on which Fausto Coppi planted the Italian flag on it, it had discouraged all assailants. One figure sums up the difficulty of the enterprise: 45.848 kilometres."

Should he break the record, he and the army agreed, he would give half the rewards to the army and the rest to the mother of a soldier, André Dufour, who had been killed while fighting at Palestro, in Algeria. The chances of breaking it were far from guaranteed, not only because Coppi's record had already defied Gerrit Schulte and Louison Bobet but also Anquetil himself, on 23 November 1955, when he had started too fast, faded and finished 696 metres short of Coppi. His second attempt also flopped. He again started too fast. After 54:36 his helpers called him to a stop after 41.326 kilometres. His legs failed him when he got off his bike and he had to be carried to a chair in a corner of the Velodromo Vigorelli, the velodrome in Milan, Italy. The Italian crowd chanted: "Coppi! Coppi! Coppi!"

"I was like a child's lead soldier that has lost its horse."



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Next day he received a telegram: "Congratulations on a good performance. Sure of your success. Take your time. Captain Gueguen will arrive tomorrow with instructions. Signed: Commander Dieudonné".

At 7:30pm on 29 June 1956, riding a lighter bike made in three days to the same design as Coppi's, and using a 7m40 gear (52x15), Anquetil tried again and finally broke his hero's record, riding 46.159 kilometres. Coppi was the first professional to give Anquetil his autograph. When the two next met, Anquetil was also a professional. He went to Italy to meet Coppi and, for reasons never explained, dressed as a simple country boy rather than in the smart clothes that he normally wore.

"The grandstands fell quiet. They were preparing to take Coppi to the cemetery. I liked that silence. On the 84th lap, Boucher gave me my release. "Allez, môme, tout!" ["Go, kid, give it everything!"] Until then I had been well within myself [J'ai fumé ma pipe]... On a big school blackboard, Captain Gueguen wrote 46.159 kilometres. I could lift my arms, sit up and breathe a bit of fresh air. Ah, the public! Those who were whistling me four laps earlier kissed my bike, my jersey, reaching out to touch me in the way they do during processions of holy relics."

In 1967, 11 years later, Anquetil again broke the hour record, with 47.493 kilometres, but the record was disallowed because he refused to take the newly-introduced post-race doping test. He objected to what he saw as the indignity of having to urinate in a tent in front of a crowded velodrome and said he would take the test later at his hotel. The international judge ruled against the idea and a scuffle ensued that involved Anquetil's manager, Raphaël Gémiani. Cycling reported:

Wonderful Jacques Anquetil has broken the world hour record as he said he would... and then ran into official trouble when he refused to take a trackside dope test demanded by the Italian authorities. An Italian Dr Giuliano Marena asked for the urine sample, but Anquetil refused and asked him to come to his hotel. Dr Marena refused and, after waiting a couple of hours at the track, left town to go home to Florence. Anquetil said at his hotel: 'I didn't and don't intend to escape the test, but it must take place under circumstances far different from those at the velodrome. I'm still here and ready to undergo the test.' While Italian officials talked of taking the matter to the UCI, Dr Tanguy of the FFC [French cycling federation] took a sample from Anquetil on his return to Rouen, pointing out afterwards that it would be valid up to 48 hours after the record attempt. But Raphaël Gémiani, his manager, had all but lost his temper with the Italian medical man and had tried to throw him out of the cabin, though Jacques had remonstrated mildly. Later he said that he understood the tests would be valid for up to 48 hours and said he was trying to locate another doctor for the test.



Tour de France

In 1957 Anquetil rode - and won - his first Tour de France. His inclusion in the national team - the Tour was still ridden by national rather than commercial teams - was what the French broadcaster Jean-Paul Ollivier called "a forceps operation".

Louison Bobet and Raphaël Gémiani wished to rule the Tour de France and had no desire to have Anquetil. But Louison, worn out from his battle of nerves that he suffered in the Tour of Italy, where he used all his energy in defending the maillot rose [leader's jersey] against Italian hatred [déferlante], declared, on the banks of the Adriatic; "I am not prepared, mentally, to take part in the Tour de France. I am 32 in a world of youth."

Anquetil recognised the allusion and accepted the invitation to ride. He finished nearly 15 minutes ahead of the rest, having won 4 solo stages plus the team stage.

In 1959, Anquetil was whistled as he finished the Tour on the Parc des Princes because spectators had worked out that he and others had contrived to let Federico Bahamontes win rather than the Frenchman Henry Anglade. The French team was unbalanced by internal rivalries. Anglade, whose bossy nature earned him the nickname Napoleon, was particularly unusual in that he was represented by the agent Roger Piel while the others had Daniel



Jacques Anquetil in the middle

Dousset. The two men controlled all French racing. Dousset soon worked out that his riders had to either beat Bahamontes or make sure that Anglade didn't win. Since they couldn't beat Anglade, they contrived to let Bahamontes win because Bahamontes, a poor rider on the flat and on small circuits, would be no threat to the post-Tour criterium fees that made up the bulk of riders' - and agents' - earnings.

Anquetil was jeered and showed his coldness to public reaction by buying a boat that he named "The Whistles of 59" and by pointing out that he was a professional and that his first interest was therefore money. It was an attitude that other riders could understand but made it hard for fans to love him.

In 1960 Anquetil stayed away from the Tour, returning in 1961 and winning the Tour de France thereafter until 1964. He won in 1962 at a speed not bettered until 1981. He was the first rider to win four successive times, breaking the record of three set by Philippe Thys and Louison Bobet. He was also the first to win five times in total, a feat since emulated by Eddy Merckx, Bernard Hinault and Miguel Indurain. Only Lance Armstrong has won more Tours.

His last Tour victory (in 1964) was also his most famous, featuring an elbow-to-elbow duel with public favourite Raymond Poulidor on the road up the Puy de Dôme mountain on 12 July. Suffering indigestion after his excesses on a rest day, Anquetil is reputed to have received treatment from his team manager in the form of a swallow of champagne - a story that Anquetil's wife says is untrue.

The Tour organiser, Jacques Goddet was behind the pair as they turned off the main road and climbed through what the police estimated as half a million spectators. Goddet recalled:

The two, at the extreme of their rivalry, climbing the road wrapped like a ribbon round the majestic volcano, terribly steep, in parallel action... I've always been convinced that in these moments that supreme player of poker, the Norman [Anquetil], used his craftiness and his fearless bluffing to win his fifth Tour. Because, to me, it was clear that Anquetil was at the very limit of his strength and that had Poulidor attacked him repeatedly and suddenly then he would have cracked... Although his advisers claim that his error in maintaining steady pressure rather than attacking was the result of using slightly too big a gear, which stopped his jumping away, I still think that it was in his head that Pou-Pou should have changed gears.

Anquetil rode on the inside by the mountain wall while Poulidor took the outer edge by the precipice. They could sometimes feel the other's hot gasps on their bare arms. At the end, Anquetil cracked, after a battle of wills and legs so intense that at times they banged elbows. Of Anquetil, Pierre Chany wrote:

"His face, until then purple, lost all its colour; the sweat ran down in drops through the creases of his cheeks."

Anquetil was only semi-conscious, he said. Anquetil's manager, Raphaël Gémiani, said:

Anquetil's head was a computer. It started working: in 500 metres, Poulidor wouldn't get his 56 seconds. I'll never forget what happened when Jacques crossed the line. Close to fainting, he collapsed on the front of my car. With barely any breath left, exhausted, but 200

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per cent lucid, he asked me: 'How much?' I told him 14 seconds. 'That's one more than I need. I've got 13 in hand'.

In my opinion Poulidor was demoralised by Anquetil's resistance, his mental strength. There were three times when he could have dropped Anquetil. First, at the bottom of the climb. Then when Julio Jimenez attacked [and left the two Frenchmen, accompanied by the rival climber Federico Bahamontes]. Finally in the last kilometre. The nearer the summit came, the more Jacques was suffering. In the last few hundred metres, he was losing time. At the top of the Puy it's 13 per cent. Poulidor should have attacked: he didn't. Poulidor didn't attack in the last 500 metres - it was Jacques who got dropped, and that's not the same thing.

Poulidor gained time but when they reached Paris, Anquetil still had a 55-second lead and won his last Tour de France. The writer Chris Sidwells said:

The race also ended the Anquetil era in Tour history. He could not face riding it the following year, and in 1966 he retired from the Tour with bad health - once he'd made sure that Poulidor could not win either. Poulidor may not have managed to slay his dragon, in fact so bloodied was he by his battle that he never did win the Tour, but he did manage to wound his rival, and in so doing brought down the curtain on the rule of the first five-times winner - the first great super-champion of the Tour de France.

Anquetil won all three of the Grand Tours - the first cyclist to do so. Anquetil twice won the Giro d'Italia (1960, 1964) and won the Vuelta a España once (1963). He also won the season-long Super Prestige Pernod International competition four times, in 1961, 1963, 1965 and 1966 - a record only surpassed by Eddy Merckx.

Anquetil-Poulidor: the social significance

Anquetil unfailingly beat Raymond Poulidor in the Tour de France and yet Poulidor remained the more popular. Divisions between their fans became marked, which two sociologists studying the impact of the Tour on French society say became emblematic of France old and new.

The extent of those divisions is shown in a story, perhaps apocryphal, told by Pierre Chany, who was close to Anquetil:

The Tour de France has the major fault of dividing the country, right down to the smallest hamlet, even families, into two rival camps. I know a man who grabbed his wife and held her on the grill of a heated stove, seated and with her skirts held up, for favouring Jacques Anquetil when he preferred Raymond Poulidor. The following year, the woman became a Poulidor-iste. But it was too late. The husband had switched his allegiance to Gimondi. The last I heard they were digging in their heels and the neighbours were complaining.



Jean-Luc Boeuf and Yves Léonard, in their study, wrote:

Those who recognised themselves in Jacques Anquetil liked his priority of style and elegance in the way he rode. Behind this fluidity and the appearance of ease was the image of France winning and those who took risks identified with him. Humble people saw themselves in Raymond Poulidor, whose face - lined with effort - represented the life they led on land they worked without rest or respite. His declarations, full of good sense, delighted the crowds: a race, even a difficult one, lasts less time than a day bringing in the harvest. A big part of the public therefore finished by identifying with the one who symbolised bad luck and the eternal position of runner-up, an image that was far from true for Poulidor, whose record was particularly rich. Even today, the expression of the eternal second and of a Poulidor Complex is associated with a hard life, as an article by Jacques Marseille showed in Le Figaro when it was headlined "This country is suffering from a Poulidor Complex".

Dauphiné and Bordeaux-Paris double



In 1965, Anquetil won the eight-day Alpine Critérium du Dauphiné Libéré stage race at 3pm, sat through two hours of interviews and receptions, took a 6:30pm chartered flight to Bordeaux and won the world's longest single-day classic, Bordeaux-Paris the following day. The race started at night and continued, from soon after dawn, behind deryn motorcycle pacers.

Anquetil was upset, said Raphaël Géminiani in his autobiography, that his rival, Raymond Poulidor was always more warmly regarded even though he had

never won the Tour de France. In 1965, when Poulidor was perceived to have received more credit for dropping Anquetil the previous year on the Puy-de-Dôme than Anquetil had received for winning the whole Tour, Géminiani persuaded him to ride the Dauphiné Libéré and, next day, the 557 kilometres Bordeaux-Paris. That, he said, would end any argument over who was the greater athlete.

Anquetil won the Dauphiné, despite bad weather which he disliked, at 3pm. After two hours of interviews and receptions he flew from Nîmes to Bordeaux. At midnight, he ate his pre-race meal and then went to the start in the city's northern suburbs.

He could eat little during the night because of stomach cramp and was on the verge of retiring. Géminiani swore at Anquetil and called him "a great poof" to offend his pride and keep him riding. Anquetil felt better as morning came and the riders dropped in behind the deryn pacing motorcycles that were a feature of the race. He responded to an attack by Tom Simpson, followed by his own team-mate Jean Stablinski. Anquetil and Stablinski attacked Simpson alternately, forcing himself to exhaust himself, and Anquetil won at the Parc des Princes. Stablinski finished 57 seconds later just ahead of Simpson.

The historian Dick Yates said:

It had been one of the hardest and closest deryn-paced races in history but much more than that this double of Anquetil was one of the greatest exploits ever seen in cycling. At the Parc des Princes, Anquetil received the biggest ovation of his career, certainly much bigger than after any of his wins in the Tour. The race record was broken, Jacques was mobbed by reporters and photographers but he was tired and really had to get some rest. Few people realised it at the time but he had to make the long journey to Maubeuge in north-eastern France where the following day he was riding a criterium!

There are strong and undenied rumours that the jet laid on to get Anquetil to Bordeaux was provided through state funds on the orders of President Charles de Gaulle. Géminiani mentions the belief in his biography, without denying it, saying the truth will come out when French state records are opened to scrutiny.

Trofeo Barrachi

Anquetil's most humiliating race was the Trofeo Barrachi in Italy in 1962, when he had to be pushed by his partner, Rudi Altig, and was so exhausted that he hit a pillar before reaching the track on which the race finished.

The Trofeo Barrachi was a 111 kilometres race for two-man teams. Anquetil, the world's best time-triallist, and Altig, a powerful rider with a strong sprint, were favourites. But things soon went wrong. The writer René de Latour wrote:

I got my stopwatch going again to check the length of each man's turn at the front. Generally in a race of the Barrachi type, the changes are very rapid, with stints of no more than 300 yards. Altig was at the front when I started the check - and he was still there a minute later. Something must be wrong. Altig wasn't even swinging aside to invite Anquetil through... Suddenly, on a flat road, Anquetil lost contact and a gap of three lengths appeared between

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the two partners. There followed one of the most sensational things I have ever seen in any form of cycle racing during my 35 years' association with the sport - something which I consider as great a physical performance as a world hour record or a classic road race win. Altig was riding at 30mph at the front - and had been doing so for 15 minutes. When Anquetil lost contact, he had to ease the pace, wait for his partner to go by, push him powerfully in the back, sprint to the front again after losing 10 yards in the process, and again settle down to a 30mph stint at the front. Altig did not this just once but dozens of times.

The pair reached the track on which the race finished. The timekeeper was at the entrance to the stadium, so Anquetil finished. But instead of turning on to the velodrome, he rode straight on and hit a pole. He was helped away with staring eyes and with blood streaming from a cut to his head. The couple nevertheless won by nine seconds.

Other races

Anquetil was not as successful in the classic single-day races but towards the end of his career he won:

- Gent-Wevelgem (1964)
- Liège-Bastogne-Liège (1966)

Anquetil finished in the top 10 in the world championship on six occasions, but second place in 1966 was the nearest he came to the rainbow jersey.

Riding style

Anquetil was a smooth rider, a beautiful pedalling machine according to one writer. The American journalist Owen Mulholland wrote:

The sight of Jacques Anquetil on a bicycle gives credence to an idea we Americans find unpalatable, that of a natural aristocracy. From the first day he seriously straddled a top tube, "Anq" had a sense or perfection most riders spend a lifetime searching for. Between 1950, when he rode his first race, and nineteen years later, when he retired, Anquetil had countless frames underneath him, yet that indefinable poise was always there.

The look was that of a greyhound. His arms and legs were extended more than was customary in his era of pounded post World War II roads. And the toes pointed down. Just a few years before, riders had prided their ankling motion, but Jacques was the first of the big gear school. His smooth power dictated his entire approach to the sport. Hands resting serenely on his thin Mafac brake levers, the sensation from Quincampoix, Normandy, appeared to cruise while others wriggled in desperate attempts to keep up.



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Raphaël Gémiani

Raphaël Gémiani had been Anquetil's rival as a rider; he became his strongest asset as his manager. The historian Dick Yates wrote:

Raphaël embarked on a policy of trying to convince Jacques of the need to win more races as he certainly had the ability to do so... Anquetil had a very strong personality so he was not easily dominated but Gémiani had an even stronger one. He never gave up the task of trying to convince Jacques of the need for more panache, how a man of his talent should have an even bigger list of important wins.

As a partnership they won four Tours de France, two Giro d'Italia, the Dauphiné-Libéré and then next day, Bordeaux-Paris. Gémiani said of him:

Today, everybody pays him homage. I nearly blow my top. I can still hear the way he was whistled when he rode. I think of the organisers of the Tour, who shortened the time trial to make him lose. His home town of Rouen organises commemorations but, me, I haven't forgotten that it was in Antwerp that he made his farewell appearance. More than once, I saw him crying in his hotel room after suffering the spitting and insults of spectators. People said he was cold, a calculator, a dilettante. The truth is that Jacques was a monster of courage. In

the mountains, he suffered as though he was damned. He wasn't a climber. But with bluffing, with guts, he tore them to shreds (il les a tous couillonnés).

Honours

Anquetil was named France's champion of champions by L'Équipe in 1963. He was also appointed Chevalier de l'Ordre national du Mérite in 1965 (cross of merit) and Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur on 5 October 1966.

Personal life

Anquetil was fascinated by astronomy and was delighted to meet the cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin.

The rational side of his character contrasted with his superstition. In the 1964 Tour de France, a fortune-teller called Belline predicted in the newspaper France-Soir that Anquetil would die on or around the 13th day of the race. His wife Janine, knowing Anquetil's superstition, hid the paper from him but Anquetil found out, not least because he was sent cuttings with unsigned letters. Jean-Paul Brouchon, leading cycling commentator at the news radio station France-Info, said of the day the forecast was supposed to come true:

During those dark hours, Anquetil refused to leave his room [the race was having a rest day]. Finally he agreed to go for a short car ride with Raphaël Géminiani [his team manager] and Janine, to join a party organised by Radio Andorra.



Gagarin: Anquetil was fascinated by him

A mixture of Anquetil's fear for the future and his enjoyment of living in the present led to many newspaper pictures of the large meal and the wine that he drank that day. Next morning, still worried about the prediction and laden down by the partying, he was dropped on the first hairpins of the col du Port d'Envalira.

He was famous for preparing for races by staying up all night before drinking and playing cards, although the story seems to have increased with the telling. Nevertheless, his team-mate, the British rider Vin Denson, has written in the UK publication Cycling of exuberant parties during races. Denson has written, too, of Anquetil's scrupulous business arrangements with riders and others:

I always considered Jacques to be the very best professional", he said. "I admired him for the gentlemanly manner and charm with riders, the public and media. A more honest and sincere businessman and friend you would not find in any walk of life. His word was his all and was of great importance to him. He was a truly great man and champion who will be greatly missed and impossible to replace.

The British journalist Alan Gayfer, former editor of Cycling said:

Jacques was a real Norman with the nuances of speech that make the Normans famous, they almost say Yes to mean No, and vice versa. I asked him when he was in London if Poulidor, who was often second to Jacques, could ever win the Tour de France: "Yes", he said, "but only if I am riding, and I would always finish ahead of him. But perhaps my finest memory of this lordly Frenchman came in 1966 at the Nürburgring, where a German official had been particularly rude to myself and other English journalists about going through one gate (the exit) to the press room instead of another 100 yards away (the entrance). We sat in delight, Sid Saltmarsh, Bill Long and me, not 20 yards from that 'Exit' gate, and watched as Jacques pulled up in his Ford Mustang, and proceeded to unload his bike from the back of the car. Yes, he did, not leaving it to mechanics. German official railed and cried, but all in vain. The seigniorial aspect came out oh so clearly, and Jacques did not merely ignore him, it was palpably as if the German did not exist at all. He left the car there, walked over to the riders' quarters pushing the gate open and the German with it. It has probably the finest comeuppance I shall ever see, and for that I shall remember Jacques for a long time.

Dick Yates said:

"He had a deep love of the land and was at his happiest when driving a tractor. They [his wife and he] both acquired a taste for bridge parties which often continued late into the night. That Anquetil was a highly intelligent man there can be no doubt and he was the nearest thing to a true intellectual that cycling has ever produced."



Anquetil married Janine Boeda on 22 December 1958. She had been married to Anquetil's doctor. The doctor, seeing a rival, sent his wife to live with friends. Anquetil went to see her, disguised as a plumber, and took her off to Paris to buy clothes in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré.

Their marriage produced no children. Janine had two children, Alain and Annie, from her previous marriage. In 2004, Sophie Anquetil published the book *Pour l'amour de Jacques* in which she confirmed what had been rumoured but what Anquetil had always tried to hide: that she was Anquetil's daughter.

Janine had two failed pregnancies and Anquetil grew upset in 1970 that he wasn't a father. The couple considered a surrogate mother before Janine thought of her daughter, Annie. Janine said: "We didn't use the parental authority that we could have had over her. It was a request that I addressed to her. Gently. Annie always had the choice of refusing." Annie confirmed her mother's recollection. She said:

"When my mother asked that [I should become impregnated by my step-father, Anquetil]... I was totally breathtaken by the proposition... But, mind, I accepted willingly. I have to admit that at the time, despite being 18 years old, I was in love with Jacques. And I knew that I pleased him. What do you expect? That's life. And that's how I found myself in his bed in the sacred mission of procreation."

Anquetil, his wife and his wife's daughter began a ménage à trois Annie said:

"Nobody thought it strange that Jacques Anquetil joined me in my bed each evening before returning to the marital bed beside my mother. Everybody was comfortable with it [Tout le monde était à l'aise]."

Annie said she should have left the house after her daughter, Sophie, was born. Instead, she grew jealous of her own mother and demanded that she leave instead. When Janine refused, Annie left instead. To fill the gap in the house, Janine invited her son, Alain, and his wife, Dominique, to return to live there. Anquetil began an affair with Dominique, to make Annie jealous. Dominique had Anquetil's child but Annie still refused to return.

Dominique still lives in the house, Les Elfes, where she organises conferences. Janine and Anquetil divorced. Sophie moved in with Janine, although she lives now in Calenzana, near Calvi.

Both Janine and Dominique wrote their life story: neither mentioned the link between Sophie and Anquetil.

Doping

Anquetil will be remembered not simply for the five Tour wins and his unique success in the Grand Prix des Nations. He will be remembered for his stand on the drugs issue. Anquetil never hid that he took drugs - a common practice at the time - and in a debate with a government minister on French television said that only a fool would imagine it was possible to ride Bordeaux-Paris on just water.

He and other cyclists had to ride through "the cold, through heatwaves, in the rain and in the mountains", and they had the right to treat themselves as they wished, he said in a television interview, before adding:

"Leave me in peace; everybody takes dope."

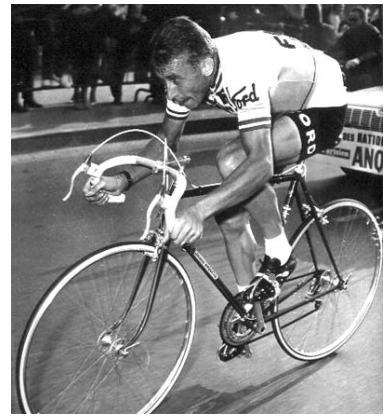
There was implied acceptance of doping right to the top of the state: the president, Charles de Gaulle, said of Anquetil:

"Doping? What doping? Did he or did he not make them play the Marseillaise [the national anthem] abroad?"

He won Liège-Bastogne-Liège in 1966. An official named Collard told him once he had got changed that there would be a drugs test. "Too late", Anquetil said. "If you can collect it from the soapy water there, go ahead. I'm a human being, not a fountain." Collard said he would return half an hour later; Anquetil said he would already have left for a dinner appointment 140 kilometres away. Two days later the Belgian cycling federation disqualified Anquetil and fined him. Anquetil responded by calling urine tests "a threat to individual liberty" and engaged a lawyer. The case was never heard, the Belgians backed down and Anquetil became the winner. Pierre Chany said:

"Jacques had the strength - for which he was always criticised - to say out loud what others would only whisper. So, when I asked him 'What have you taken?' he didn't drop his eyes before replying. He had the strength of conviction."

Anquetil argued that professional riders were workers and had the same right to treat their pains as, say, a geography teacher. But the argument found less support as more riders were reported to have died or suffered health problems through drug-related incidents, including the death of the English rider, Tom Simpson, in the Tour de France of 1967.



There was great support in the cyclist community, however, for the way Anquetil argued that, if there were to be rules and tests, the tests should be carried out consistently and with dignity. It was professional dignity, the right of a champion not to be ridiculed in front of his public, that he said led to his refusal to take a test in the centre of the Vigorelli track after breaking the world hour record.

The unrecognised time that Anquetil set that day was in any case quickly broken by the Belgian rider, Ferdi Bracke. Anquetil was hurt that the French government had never sent him a telegram of congratulations but sent one to Bracke, who wasn't French. It was a measure of the unacceptability of Anquetil's arguments, as was the way he was quietly dropped from future French teams.

Anquetil and Britain

Anquetil holds a particular place in the estimation of British fans, who voted him the BBC's international personality of the year in 1964. He appeared with Tom Simpson from a studio in Paris. The Franco-American journalist René de Latour wrote:

In the studio we watched the proceedings in London, and while I cannot say Anquetil was keenly interested in the cricketing part, he was impressed with the general presentation which, however (like the stages of the 1964 Tour) he found a bit long. He was interested, though, to see Beryl Burton, and his old acquaintance Reg Harris pulling at his pipe in the invited audience.

A few days later, Anquetil was named French sportsman of the year.

Anquetil was fascinated by Britain because of the country's enthusiasm for time-trialling and because in 1961 he presented prizes at the Road Time Trials Council evening at the Royal Albert Hall to honour Beryl Burton and Brian Kirby. The pair had won the women's and men's British Best All-Rounder competitions (BBAR) for, respectively, the highest average speed in a season over 25, 50 and 100 miles (women) and 50 and 100 miles (160 kilometres) and 12 hours (men). Alan Gayfer, the editor of *Cycling* at the time of Anquetil's death, wrote in appreciation:

It is strange to look back and see how this frail-looking young man burst on the scene in 1953. We had sent Ken Joy, the former BBAR, to challenge for the Grand Prix des Nations, then 140 kilometres long, and dragging through the hills of the Chevreuse valley. All over

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Paris they talked about this burly Englishman who had ridden 160 kilometres in 4 hours and 6 minutes: and when it came to it, he was hammered by a 19-year-old, but a teenager with a will of iron that was to prove inflexible for the next 19 years.

Anquetil was fascinated by the British love of time-trialling and in 1964 discussed riding a British 25 mile (40 kilometres) race. Gayfer and the British professional Tom Simpson explained that the course would be on flat roads and asked Anquetil how long the distance would take him. Anquetil, who had the talent to predict his time-trial times accurately, said 46 minutes. That was eight minutes faster than the distance had ever been ridden, the record standing to Bas Breedon at 54:23. It took until 1993 for the record to fall below Anquetil's estimation.

Anquetil asked £1,000 to compete and a London timber merchant called Vic Jenner said he would put up the money. Jenner was an enthusiast who had often put money into the sport. He died shortly afterwards, however, and the ride never happened.

Anquetil rode on the Isle of Man in 1959, and in 1965, when he won the Manx Premier by beating Eddy Merckx into second place.

Retirement and death

Anquetil rode his last race not in France, of which he still despaired for its preferring Poulidor, but on 27 December 1969 on the track at Antwerp, in Belgium. It happened, wrote L'Équipe "to the great indifference of the media." He retired to become a farmer at La Domaine des Elfes, La Neuville-Chant-d'Oisel, 17 kilometres from Rouen. The château, formerly owned by Guy de Maupassant, was surrounded by 170 hectares.

Anquetil was a correspondent for L'Équipe, consultant for Europe 1 and then on Antenne 2, a race director for Paris-Nice and the Tour Méditerranéen and in Canada, directeur sportif of French teams at world championships, and a member of the managing committee of the Fédération Française de Cyclisme. His radio analyses were considered especially sharp and he gained a notoriety in Belgium for telling Luis Ocaña, the Spanish rider living in France, how to beat the Belgian star Eddy Merckx during the Tour de France.

He rode his bike only three times in retirement, saying he had already ridden plenty enough ("trop dégusté sur cet engin"). He rode the Grand Prix des Gentlemen in Nice, a race in which old riders were paired with current competitors; he went out for an afternoon with friends in Normandy; and he joined his daughter for a bike ride on her birthday. Other than that, he didn't ride his bike from 1969 to 1987.

In 1987, after stomach cancer, Jacques Anquetil died in his sleep at 6am on 18 November at the St-Hilaire Clinic in Rouen. He had been there since 10 October. A statement from the clinic said: "His state of health had visibly deteriorated over the last hours and he died in his sleep after showing great courage throughout his illness." Anquetil is buried beside the church in the village of Quincampoix, north of Rouen, where a large black monument by the traffic lights lists all his achievements. There is a further monument at the Piste Municipale track in Paris, where the centre is named after him.

The Jacques Anquetil sports stadium at Quincampoix was dedicated in 1983. There are moves to open a museum in his memory. The historian Richard Yates wrote:

He finally came to be respected as one of the most intelligent cyclists ever, but when he died in 1987 he was still to a large extent one of cycling's greatest enigmas. Raphaël Gémiani knew him better than anyone and he was such a perceptive man that his comments are particularly interesting. He said that Jacques was one of the most gifted riders of all time but this was hardly reflected by his record. He had won eight major Tours without once crossing the top of a mountain in the lead. His lack of offensive spirit made Gémiani mad with rage on countless occasions but he was always so incredibly stylish, absolute perfection.



A memorial to Anquetil in Quincampoix

His inherent shyness can never fully explain his apparent cold indifference. His roots in the Normandy countryside may explain his love of the land but could not excuse his inability to even make a generous gesture. The hard life that his father had experienced could never pardon the economy of effort with which Jacques was obsessed. In the second half of his career he never made an effort which did not pay off 100 per cent. He reduced a race to a few simple calculations, a few danger men and a few places where it was necessary to make an effort. He spent most of the time at the back of the bunch and did not even know the name of most of the riders.

The Tour visited Rouen on the 10th anniversary of Anquetil's death. There to remember his first victory in the race were his team-mates, Gilbert Bauvin, Louis Bergard, Albert Bouvet, André Darrigade, Jean Forestier, André Mahé, René Privat and Jean Stablinski. There, too, was the team car from Anquetil's first Tour, driven by the man behind the wheel that year, William Odin.

Quotes

- When I was small, he was for me the champion cyclist. But above all he was a gentleman for his personal qualities as much as his sporting achievements. I have always been irritated by the game of comparing champions from different times but to be compared to him was an honour. — Bernard Hinault
- Jacques simply tries harder than anyone I have met. In a time trial you can hear him catching you, you don't have to look round, there is this hoarse sound of breath being drawn in gulps, and then he's past you. Then it's like being in a thunderstorm, with the sweat simply pouring off him as he goes by. — Tom Simpson
- On a bicycle Anquetil was the finest athlete. He also had an extraordinary strength of character as the end of his life confirmed. He was even more dignified in front of life's difficulties. — Jacques Goddet, director of the Tour de France
- Like all French people, I admired the sports abilities of Jacques Anquetil. I admired his spirit, his friendship and his warmth.— François Mitterrand, President of France
- Jacques was 'bizarrely calm'. Quite often, I had to say to him, 'If you don't get going, you'll lose the Tour. André Darrigade team-mate.

Ferdi Kübler, “The Cowboy”

Ferdinand "Ferdi" Kübler (born 24 July 1919 in Marthalen) is a retired Swiss cyclist with over 400 professional victories, including the 1950 Tour de France. He began racing professionally in 1940 but his early career was limited to Switzerland by the Nazi occupation elsewhere. He was multiple Swiss national champion and a three time winner of the Tour de Suisse.

Kubler's most successful years in international racing were 1950-1952, when the classics had resumed after the Second World War. He won the La Flèche Wallonne and Liège-Bastogne-Liège, both in 1951 and 1952. He was also World Road Race Champion in 1951, having placed second in 1949 and third in 1950.

He rode the Giro d'Italia from 1950-1952, placing fourth once, and third twice. Kubler abandoned the 1947 and 1949 Tours de France, despite an early stage win in each. In the 1950 Tour, he benefited from the absence of Fausto Coppi, sidelined after a crash in the Giro. Overcoming Gino Bartali, Kubler became champion by over nine minutes, also winning three stages. In the 1954 Tour, Kubler won the points jersey and came second behind Louison Bobet.

Kubler was a high-spirited and impulsive rider sometimes given to strategically-unwise attacks, out of exuberance and competitive drive. He was known as “the cowboy” because of his penchant for Stetson hats. He retired from racing in 1957 at 38. He is the oldest living Tour de France winner.

