

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS

A RIDE THROUGH THE GREATEST CYCLING STORIES

Written by Giles Belbin and illustrated by Daniel Seex



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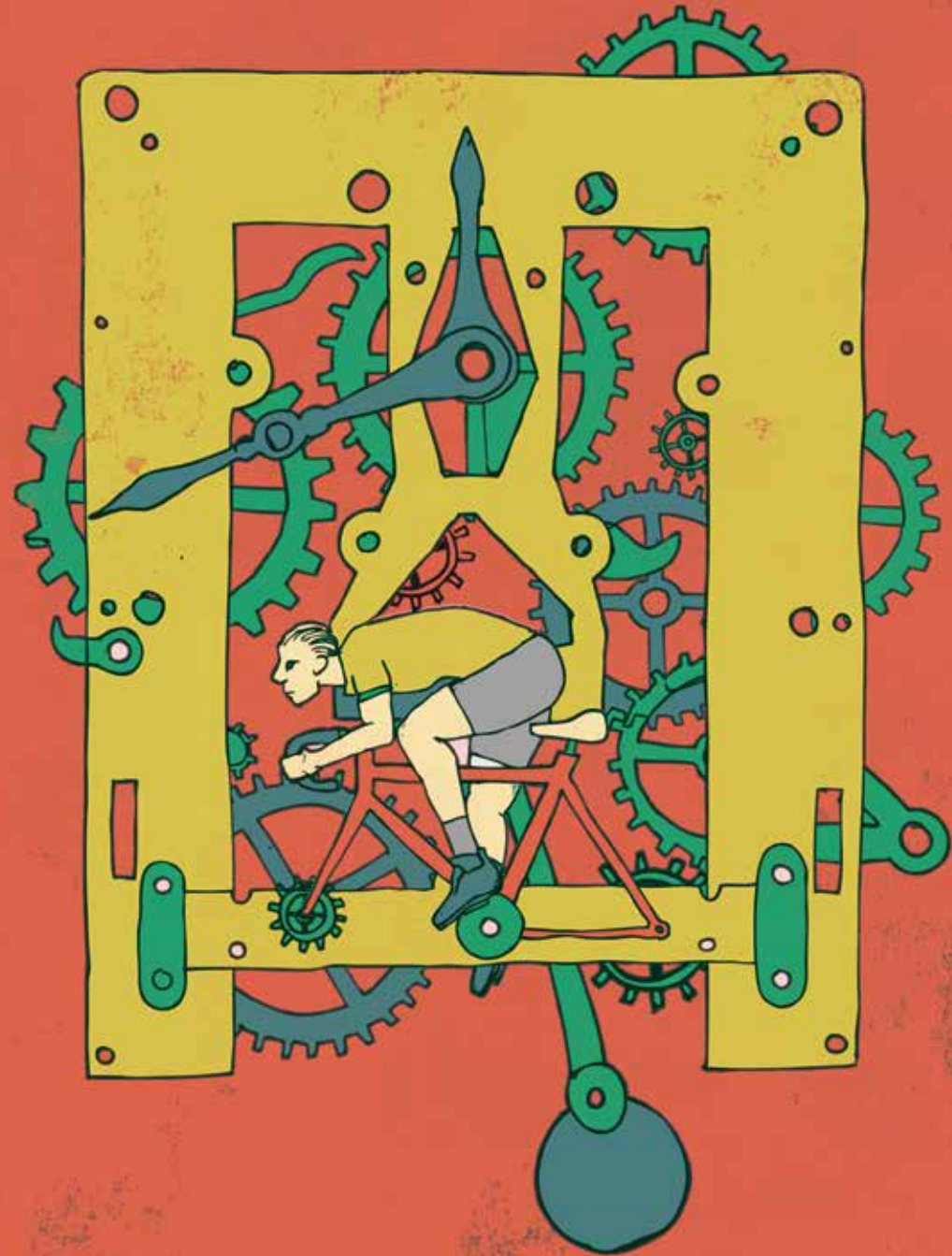
Jacques Anquetil is born (8 January 1934)

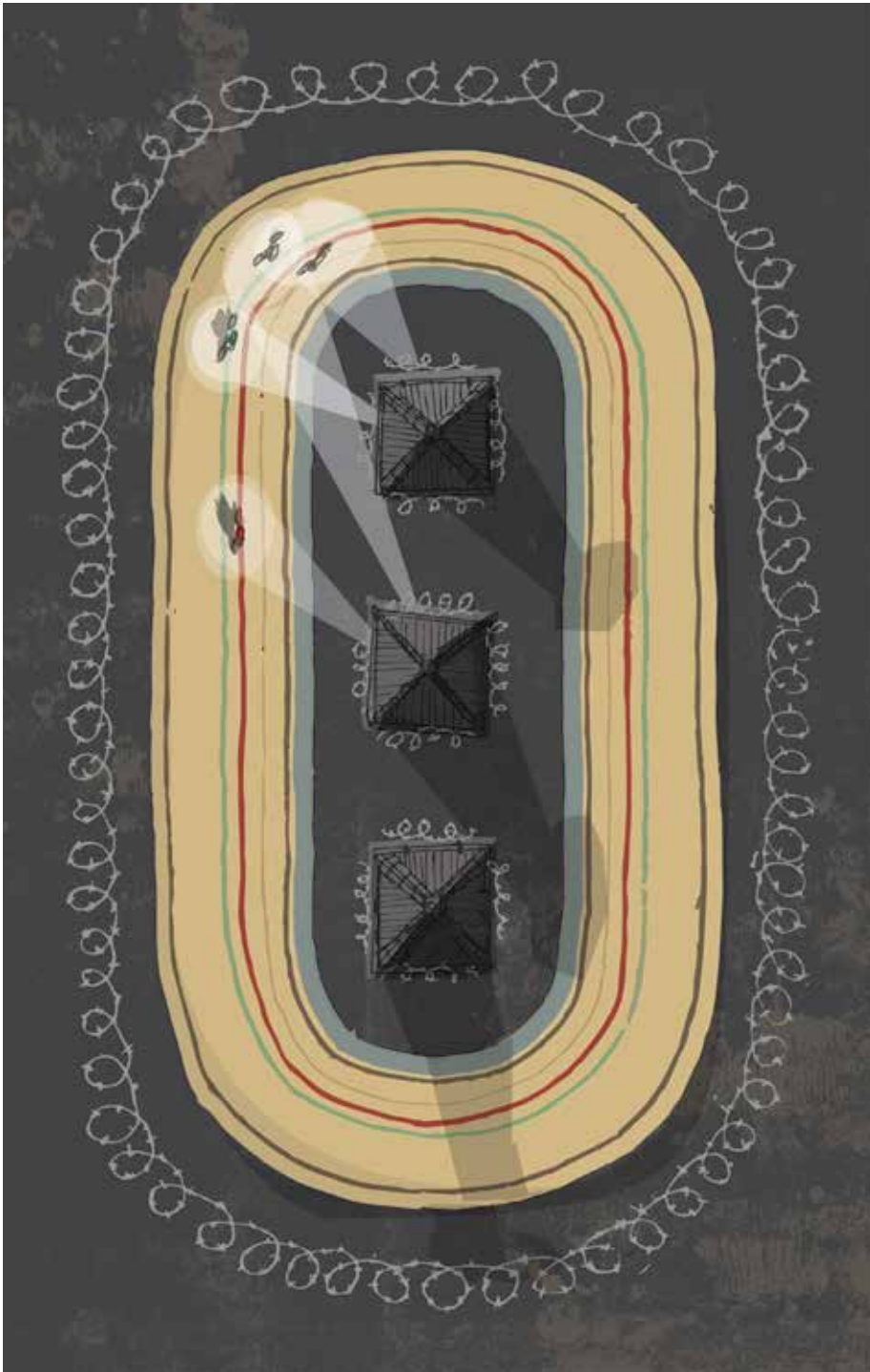
Maître Jacques dominated cycling for over 10 years. From the late 1950s through to the mid-sixties he was the patron of the peloton. During that period he became the first man to win five Tours (1957, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964), and the first to win all three Grand Tours, having also won the Giro (1960, 1964) and the Vuelta (1963).

Anquetil was born in Mont-Saint-Aignan, near Rouen in northern France, where his parents owned strawberry fields. He entered his first race at the age of 18 and won – the start of a pattern that soon would be often repeated. He came to national prominence at the 1953 GP des Nations when he won the first of nine titles. One month earlier he had won as a virtual unknown at Paris–Normandie, beating the field by over nine minutes. The press were stunned, writing ‘who can resist the young Anquetil?’ Anquetil’s first tour win came in 1957, a tough year and one that saw more established riders either fail to start or abandon. It was Anquetil’s first entry in the race and he took the yellow jersey on stage five. He lost it two days later but reclaimed it on stage 10, holding it to Paris.

His most dominant Tour performance came in 1961. Anquetil claimed the first afternoon’s time trial to steal the race lead from André Darrigade and end day one in yellow. And that was exactly how he finished the final stage, 21 days and 2,630-miles (4,232km) later in Paris, with no one having been able to wrest it from him for even a single day.

Anquetil won races but never the affections of his public. He was victorious not because of daring escapades but because of careful plotting. It was hugely effective. But it was also cold, calculated and methodical, slap-bang in the middle of arguably cycling’s most romantic era.





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The Vélodrome d'Hiver hosts its first six-day race (13 January 1913)

Affectionately known as the Vél d'Hiv, Paris's Vélodrome d'Hiver (Winter Velodrome) hosted its first six-day race in 1913. The velodrome's origins lie in the Galerie des Machines, a building that had been constructed for the 1889 World Fair near the Eiffel Tower. In 1902, on the orders of Henri Desgrange, a 364-yard (333m) track was first installed and used for racing. Seven years later, when the building was listed for demolition, Desgrange built a new velodrome with a distinctive glass roof. The track was moved, shortened to 273-yards (250m) and renamed the Vélodrome d'Hiver.

By 1913 six-day races, initially founded in Britain but then popularised in America, had begun to gain Europe's interest. The races, in which riders ride in pairs and try to cover as great a distance as possible in six days, attracted huge crowds. On 13 January 1913, the Vél d'Hiv hosted Paris's first six-day event.

That first race was won by Alf Goulet and Joseph Fogler, an Australian and an American respectively, who covered 4,467.58km, beating the French pair Victor Dupré and Octave Lapize into second place.

The event grew into one of the most sought-after tickets in town, the combination of athletic endeavour, alcohol and music inspiring writers, photographers and artists to document their work. In his book *A Moveable Feast*, Ernest Hemingway writes of the 'smoky light of the afternoon and the high-banked wooden track and the whirring sound on the wood as the riders passed... each one a part of his machine.' The Vél d'Hiv continued to host six-day racing until 1958, when French stars Jacques Anquetil and André Darrigade won the final event.

In 1959 fire broke out in the Vél d'Hiv, after which the building was demolished.

6

Tom Boonen's Qatar dominance begins

(30 January 2006)

From the mid-2000s, Belgium's Tom Boonen has been one of the world's best one-day classic riders. While he has also claimed a world championship title (2005) and the green jersey at the Tour de France (2007), Tornado Tom earned his nickname for his performances at the Tour of Flanders and Paris-Roubaix – races for which at the time of writing Boonen shares the record for most wins (four at Paris-Roubaix shared with Roger De Vlaeminck; three at Flanders shared with five others). But Boonen has enjoyed early-season success away from one-day Northern European classics as well.

To say the Tour of Qatar has been a happy hunting ground for Boonen is to understate his dominance of an event that first appeared on the calendar in 2002. Boonen moved to the Quick Step team in 2003 and has been with the various incarnations of that set-up ever since. In 2004 he took his first significant wins, claiming E3 Prijs Harelbeke, Ghent-Wevelgem and a couple of Tour stages. Then, in 2005, took his first Flanders/Roubaix double, a feat he repeated in 2012.

Boonen's first stage win in Qatar came in 2004. That was followed with two more in 2005, but it was in 2006 that he really took a stranglehold on the race. Over the course of the five-stage 510-mile (820km) long race, Boonen won four stages and the overall.

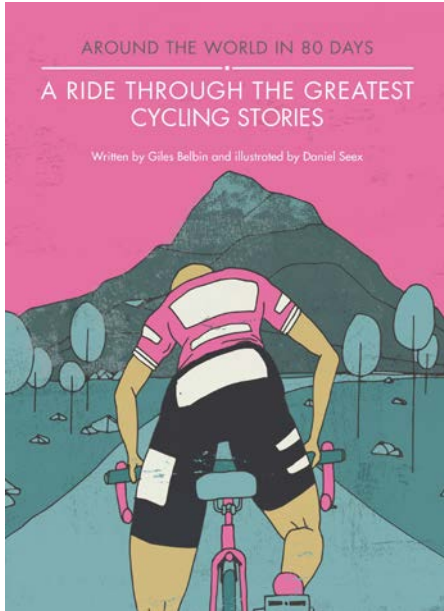
The Belgian went one better in 2007, winning five stages, including stage one's team time trial. His team-mate Wilfried Cretskens won the overall, but Boonen returned to the top of the podium in 2008, 2009 and again in 2012. His haul of four wins is currently a record.

As of 2016 he also holds the record for most stage victories, with 24 to his name (two being team time trials). To put that in perspective, the next best is Mark Cavendish with nine.





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A RIDE THROUGH THE GREATEST CYCLING STORIES

By Giles Belbin, Illustrated by Daniel Seex

A Year in the Saddle captures the wide and varied history of this great sport and presents it in a way that is easy to digest yet contemporary, stylish and, most of all, unique.

Key Points:

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- Features stories of the key names and events in cycling, such as Bradley Wiggins, the Tour de France and Eddy Merckx
- Interest in cycling has increased dramatically since the 2012 London Olympics, with more people cycling than ever before

Author Information

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