

Your Shortcut to... The Tour de France

"They've been racing it for more than 120 years...It was started by a French newspaper to sell more copies...And competitors pedal more than 3,000 kilometres across mountains, fields and cobblestones.

This is your Squiz Kids Shortcut to the Tour de France. The podcast where we cycle through the who, what, when, where, why and how of the big news stories. I'm Christie Kijurina."

And I'm Bryce Corbett. (huffing and puffing)

Bryce! What are you doing riding around the podcast studio in lycra?

Just training for next year's Tour de France, Christie! Gotta work on my hill climbs, time trials... and waving to fans dressed as bananas.

Uh-huh. You do know the race is over 3,000 kilometres long, right?

Piece of cake. As long as there are plenty of snack stops. Today, we're racing through WHAT makes this event so famous, HOW it all works, and WHEN the Tour de France, and the Tour de France Femmes (that's the women's race), have made headlines over the years. So strap on your helmet and grab your water bottle... let's roll!

Listen carefully. There's a S'Quiz at the end.

WHAT

Imagine a race so tough it crosses mountains, covers thousands of kilometres, and takes three whole weeks to finish. That's the Tour de France, the most famous bike race in the world.

It's so big they use helicopters and drones to film it, and crowds line the roads screaming encouragement. Some dress in costumes. Some camp out for days just to watch the riders fly by.

It first started in 1903, and not because people loved riding bikes up giant hills, but because a French newspaper called L'Auto wanted to sell more copies. It worked, and the race grew bigger and bigger.

These days, it's watched by millions of people, and winning it is like winning the Olympics and the World Cup at the same time.

So, why is it such a big deal? It's because it's really, really, really hard. It pushes riders to their limits... physically and mentally. The mountains are brutal... a few are more than two and a half thousand metres high!., the weather can be wild, and crashes?

Unfortunately, they're part of the ride.

That all sounds crazy, Christie! Three weeks of riding.... do they get any rest breaks?
How does it all work?

HOW

OK, so it's not just one big race from start to finish. It's broken into 21 stages over three weeks. Each stage is like a separate race, with different terrains... flat sprint days, huge mountain climbs, and even individual time trials.

And the riders are in teams, right?

"Correct. Each team has 8 cyclists, and they all have different jobs:

The leader is trying to win the whole race.

The domestiques (that's French for "servants") help the leader by blocking wind, fetching water bottles, and protecting them.

There are also sprinters who zoom at the end of flat stages and climbers who power up the mountains."

Sounds like a game of chess on wheels! Heaps of strategy! And what about those famous jerseys... are they jyst handed out at the end of the race?

Nope! They're awarded after every single stage. After each day's ride, organisers check the results and work out who's in the lead in each category, then those riders get to wear the special jerseys in the next stage.

Let me see if I've got this right.... there's a Yellow jersey for the overall race leader. A Green jersey for the best sprinter. A Polkadot jersey for the king or queen of the mountain climbs. And, a White jersey for the best young rider under 26 years old.

That's right, well done, Bryce! The jerseys change hands during the race as different riders take the lead. It makes things really exciting to watch, because each stage could change everything!

And don't forget the *Lanterne Rouge*, Christie. That's the nickname for the rider who comes last in the overall race. It means "red lantern", like the light at the back of a train.

But you know what? Even finishing last in the Tour de France, and taking part in the final sprint down Paris' Champs-Élysées, is a massive achievement.

It sure is! OK, so the jerseys are cool and the teamwork is epic... but with such a long history, Christie, when has the Tour de France made headlines over the years?

WHEN

So, Bryce, The Tour has had its fair share of drama...especially with cheating.

Let me guess... someone snuck a rocket booster onto their bike? - JK

You're actually not far off, Bryce.... In 2016, a rider's bike was scanned by officials, and they found a hidden motor inside. Since then, the Tour uses X-ray machines and thermal cameras to check bikes before and after stages. But cheating isn't a recent thing.

No, in the second-ever race in 1904, some riders were caught taking trains during the race. Others had fans block the roads to stop competitors.

Sneaky! In more recent years, some riders used performance-enhancing drugs, including Lance Armstrong, who won 7 titles but had them all taken away.

But the Tour has changed a lot too, especially with the launch of the Tour de France Femmes --- femme is the French word for woman.

That's right. After years of campaigning, women finally got an official Tour in 2022. It's shorter, it'll go for 9 days this year, but just as tough, exciting, and spectacular.

And the 2025 Tour de Femmes is on right now! It's growing in popularity every year, which is great news for sport.

There have been some really proud and inspiring moments, especially for us Aussies, like when Cadel Evans became the first Australian to win the Tour de France back in 2011.

Oh yeah! He worked incredibly hard over many years and finally took out the yellow jersey.... Heart of a lion and legs of steel.... That reminds me. Can't stand around here all day chatting... back to training. Off - I - Go...

[crashes and bangs heard]

And I'll grab the first aid kit.

THE S'QUIZ

"This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening...

1. How many stages (or days of racing) make up the Tour de France? (21)"

2 Who is the Polkadot Jersey awarded (meaning what does this person have to be best at)? The best mountain climber

3 What is awarded to the rider that comes in last? The Lanterne Rouge or Red Lantern

That's all we have time for today. Thanks for joining us as we explored the who, what, how, where, when, and why of the Tour de France!

Now get out there, and have a most excellent day!

Over and out.