



Domestique: The True Life Ups and Downs of a Tour Pro

Charly Wegelius

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A remarkable true-life story from behind the scenes of professional cycling

For 11 years I was a professional cyclist, competing in the hardest and greatest races on Earth. I was in demand from the world's best teams, a well-paid elite athlete. But I never won a race. I was the hired help. When my mum dropped me off in a small French town aged 17, I was full of determination to be a professional cyclist, but I was completely green. I went from mowing the team manager's lawn to winning every amateur race I entered. Then I turned pro and realized I hated the responsibility and pressure of chasing victory. And that's when I became a domestique. I learned to take that hurt and give it everything I had to give, all for someone else's win. When the order came in to ride I pushed out with the hardest rhythm I could, dragging the group faster and faster, until my whole body screamed with pain. There were times I rode myself to a standstill, clutching the barrier meters from the line, as the lead group shot past. But that's what made me a so good at my job. As my career took off, I started looking at the fans lining the route, cheering us like heroes. The passion for cycling oozed off them, but they couldn't know what it was really like. They didn't see the terrible hotels, the crazy egos, or all the shit that goes with great expectations. Well, this is how it is.

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