

## Tour de France quotes, sound bites, and racing commentary

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Phil Liggett, Paul Sherwen, and Bob Roll are indisputably the most entertaining cycling announcers there are, appearing on the US television station Versus. Phil and Paul are known around the world as the “voices of cycling.” Phil and Paul are British; Bob Roll is American and is funny and irreverent, very different from the two proper Brits. They describe the race and riders using entertaining metaphors, analogies, and great visuals. Former racers themselves, these guys know cycling intimately, and understand the suffering and tremendous determination and courage that is *de rigueur* in these races.

I’ve also started watching other nations’ broadcasts online, most notably Universal Sports in the UK. Listening to the commentary from David Harmon and Sean Kelly is challenging, because I’m so used to the excitement and wit of the three mentioned above. Sean Kelly’s experience racing is legend, but heaven help me stay awake when he’s talking (not to mention the fact that I have a very hard time understanding his country Irish accent). To the Europeans reading this, I hope I don’t offend you—I do appreciate his knowledge! ;-) I’ve written down a few notable quotes from Mr. Kelly to add to this collection.

For those who have many years of listening to Phil and Paul, it’s a little sad these days because Phil’s eyes (or is it his mind?) are not quite what they used to be, and the commentary over the past few years has been rife with errors as well as missing important things he never missed in the past, or noticing them well after they’ve happened (attacks, flats, crashes, looks by riders, etc.). I fear his retirement is not that far away. In fact last year, there were numerous statements by Phil that went something like this: “There’s someone coming through the mist. It can’t be! It IS!! ...sorry, my mistake.”

Ah, but we love Phil and Paul and watching the Tour de France wouldn’t be the same without them!

The sound bites on these pages are acquired from many years of taking notes while watching the Tour de France and other races. I’ve also gotten some from various websites devoted to Phil and Paul, or even from Twitter during the stages. Seems that I’m not the only cyclist who takes pleasure in tweeting their funniest quotes! These guys come up with new ones, or different versions of the same ones every year, so make sure to keep a notepad handy when you watch the Tour. For a very “colorful” indoor cycling class, sprinkle these quotes here and there through your TDF profiles to describe your riders.

If you've ever wondered if Phil and Paul pre-plan their comments, the guys from the Podium Café blog interviewed Paul Sherwen in 2012 and asked about their famous phrases:

**Podium Cafe:** You and Phil are both famous for your turns of phrase. How do you come up with those? Is it something that happens in the moment, or do you plan them ahead of time?

**Sherwen:** Phil comes up with the turn of phrase more than I do. They're spontaneous. You can't practice for them. I know certain commentators write things down that they want to work into the commentary and they wait the whole day to get in one line. Whatever we do, just comes spontaneously.

None of the Liggettisms have ever been written before. They just come out. Some people would say it's verbal diarrhea.

On the following pages, you will find many great "Liggettisms," quotes, and turns of phrase primarily from these three commentators, with a few others thrown in. I don't always know who said them, but if I do know for sure, I mark the quote with their initials.

PL = Phil Liggett

PS = Paul Sherwen

BR = Bob Roll

SK = Sean Kelly

A few are about specific riders, but you can use them to describe your own fictitious riders in your own peloton.

At the end are a few quotes about the Tour de France or bicycle racing in general, and some specific quotes from famous riders that I thought could add some color to your program.

### **On climbing and mountains**

They are going to release their anger again on this climb to Hautacam! (PS)

If you're riding like this in front of the pack and someone throws a climb at you—it's like taking a hammer in the head. (PL)

These hills are enough to crack aching legs. (PL)

He was asphyxiated on that last climb.

This climb is a real leg breaker. (PS)

Alpe d'Huez is the cathedral of climbs, where the angels, the climbers, come out. But it's not the hardest. That would be Mont Ventoux. (BR)

I don't know where he purchased those legs on the way up that last climb, because no one seems as fresh as he does! (PL)

Look at him accelerate—he must have purchased some petrol at the base of this climb! (PL)

The mountains again have produced the truth, and produced two great men.

There goes Bernard Hinault, in a gear most men use only on the downhill! (1998)

He climbs like an angel! (in reference to Pantani, 2000)

He's praying for the summit to come as soon as possible.

The Tour chooses its champions where the mountains bear the snows of winter.

Would the top of Hautacam please come quickly!

We are now deep into the intestines of the Alps.

The roads of the Alps lay on the mountainside like discarded string...each with stories to tell.

It's only a mountain, one of many you can see on this French Country morning, but for 171 young men it would be a place where they would dare to ask themselves the questions of greatness.

The polka-dot jersey is going to find a new home today on the shoulders of one of these two riders (PS on 2 riders in a break on a hilly stage)

That was one mountain too far for the French rider. (PS on Roy)

Contador has been dropped in his own playground. (PS on Contador in the Pyrenees)

But the thing is Phil this climb, Mount St. Claire is going to hit him in the face like a newspaper...a rolled up newspaper that is. (PS)

When the riders turned the corner & saw this climb it would have been like a hammer in the face.

### **On sprinting and sprinters**

Sprinters don't race for second place. (PL)

The sprinters are going to have to work hard for the line—not just on it. (PL)

He “pranged up” his sprint badly yesterday—he’s gonna want some revenge. (BR)

You have to time a sprint like that to absolute perfection (PS)

You’ve got to hurt your body as long as possible. You’ve got a job to do—you have a sprinter behind you. You go and go until you can’t go anymore, then peel off and leave it up to the sprinter. (PS on the lead-out for a sprinter)

They’ll kick in the turbo, open the nitrogen, and then *boom!* (PS on sprinters accelerating past the lead-out man)

He’s stamping on those pedals!

He is cleaning the road on this sprint. (PL, 2000 TDF; referring to a sprint where the rider’s bike is all over the road)

The sprinters seem to have a serious allergy. An allergy to mountain roads. (PS)

Look at the speed of Greipel. But Mark Cavendish has speed #2 in store. (PL)

That was a demonstration of absolute power! (PL on sprinting)

The sprinters are drawing their swords for the final sprint. (PL)

That boy is absolutely “full of beans.” (PL on a sprinter)

They’re going all argy-bargy down to the sprint.

If you touch your brakes as a sprinter, it’s a sign of weakness.

Well, it depends on if he has any friends in that group with him...then again, sprinters don’t have many friends!

They call him ‘André the Giant’, or ‘André the Gorilla Greipel’ because of the huge carcass he drags over the line. (On André Greipel, the sprinter)

When the missile is launched that close to the line, it never misses. (On Cavendish exploding over the finish line)

Cavendish is a missile & when they fire him he usually hits the target.

The sprinters will most certainly be licking their lips here this afternoon.

That intermediate sprint may just have been a dress rehearsal for the finish Phil.

The sprinters have played the waiting game all day in the wheels of the peloton & now they sense the catch of the prey & are ready for the kill.

**On pain, suffering, and pushing yourself for the team**

He's got to dig deeply into his suitcase of courage. (PL, one of his signature phrases)

He's wearing the mask of pain. (PL)

That's what you get when you suffer—you get results. (PS)

He has to keep the pain in a bearable level both in his legs and in his mind. (PS)

Everyone will be riding into his own personal purgatory. (PS)

You feel as if your body and your wheels are stuck to the road. (PS describing a rider who is having difficulty)

He's cracked. He's hit the red zone. (PL)

He's riding into the abyss of a lactic acid crippling haze. (BR)

Everyone is riding into his own personal purgatory. (PL)

They're in a little bit of an O<sub>2</sub> debt because of that acceleration. (PS)

There's a lot of pain being dished out here. (PL)

He is breaking the spirit of every other rider in this peloton. (PL)

The "pendulum of pain" is swinging in their direction now. Every rider is in about the same amount of suffering. (PS)

In cycling, the pain bank must be full before you can start drawing interest. And in the mountains, you better be ready to make withdrawals. (BR)

The legs are unwilling, the mind is turned off. (PL)

He looks like he's in a spot of bother now (PL)

He doesn't look like a broken man at all. (PS)

(or the alternative...) He looks like a broken man, Phil!

When they get to this point you want to get on the bike and give him a hand! (PS on a rider in great difficulty)

His legs must be exploding after that effort. (PL)

His legs will be screaming at him to stop. (PS)

Those boys hurt themselves beyond belief to entertain us on television. (PL)

This is what is known as burying yourself for the team! (PS on Jens Voigt doing what he does best)

This is the Tour de France and the crowd demands pain.

His pain barrier will be pushed further forward, he will suppress it a little longer, he's looking for 7 ½ minutes on that body. (PS on Chavanel in his solo break)

Ready for an arduous ride into treacherous territory.

The Tour has dealt its first blow.

The peloton makes natural selections.

There's no reason to rush into hell. (commenting on a slow-moving peloton at the start of the stage)

And that is a big surprise—I really thought his legs had left him behind a few kilometers back. (on a rider re-emerging)

He's suffering like he's never suffered before.

The grimace is turning to a smile now.

His heart fights to catch up with the pace set by his legs...completely exhausted, LeMond's overall lead slips away. (on the climb to Superbagneres, 1989)

Look at them! They're like goldfish out there! (2001 TDF TTT, referring to the heavy-breathing riders)

Today he enjoys wearing the *maillot jaune*; tomorrow he'll wear little more than a pained expression. (on Chavanel losing the yellow jersey)

Armstrong is a broken man in the Tour de France this year. Lady Luck slapped him in the face, I think, one too many times when he went down.

He's done, he's cooked, he's fried!! It's been a long day in the sun...but I hate to be the bringer of doom. (PS on Luis Leon Sanchez)

The yellow jersey has just run into a BIG FRENCH BRICK WALL.

There'll be steam coming from these riders' ears...

He's riding like a man possessed.

This is what is known as burying yourself for the team!

His pain barrier will be pushed further forward; he will suppress it a little longer. (PS)

If you want results, you must bring a team to the Tour de France who is willing to work hard.

The final throw of the dice (SK on Vino putting one last attack effort on a climb, before dropping back)

He's got the pain face of competition. (SK)

(insert rider name here) is the man burying himself at the moment. (SK)

...and that rider is, I dare to say it, fried. (PL)

His legs have turned to rubber and his effort reduced to mere survival. (PL)

He has uncoupled from the train and is rolling down the hill backward. (PL)

That is a picture of complete and utter agony! (PL)

Completely and utterly on the rivets. (PL)

Tom Boonen has abandoned. The pain has clearly become too much, despite being a flat stage. Soul destroying. (SK after Boonen's Tour-ending crash)

It's Jens Voigt's turn to destroy the field. (PL)

Jens Voigt is dictating the pain. (PS)

He'll go till his legs can go no longer, and then he'll drop off. (PL on Jens Voigt)

**On strategy, the peloton, breakaways, and hunting down breaks**

Everyone is chasing a man who has sprouted wings and is flying away with the race. (PL)

He's been thrown a bone, and it's a meaty bone! (PL on a rider whose been given a special opportunity)

George (Hincapie) has had somewhat of an armchair ride today. (PL on George hanging out in the peloton)

He's sitting in the middle of the peloton keeping his nose out of the wind. (PS)

The peloton is riding like scalded cats! (PL; boy is that a description of a chaotic scene!)

These two are really resisting arrest. (PL on a two-man break that is being hunted down, but they won't give in easily)

It's like he's going backwards! (PL in reference to a rider who has ran out of gas and is being easily passed by other riders)

One by one they're going backwards. (PL)

The peloton is now hunting just one man. (PL on the peloton bearing down on a breakaway rider high up in the GC)

They won't even look at him as they go by—they've got much bigger fish to fry (PL on the peloton reeling in a breakaway rider, yet seeking out others ahead)

The front of the pack is driving in self-destruct mode. (PL on the peloton being paced by one team on the hunt)

Extra firepower needed at the front! (PL, when a team needs assistance in pace setting)

The cavalry is in full cry now! (PL on the peloton bearing down on a break, after taking it easy for a while)

The peloton has been split asunder!

Once again, they've stretched the elastic. (PL)

The elastic has snapped. (PL on the peloton closing in on the break)

And the peloton has been stretched across the road like a long sausage.

I'm afraid the dream is over! (after a rider on a long breakaway is caught near the finish line)

Nobody wants to be at the back of the peloton—dangerous, dangerous place to be.

He may well steal the day with that breakaway.

The peloton is being squeezed like a tube of toothpaste.

Voeckler feels the hot breath of the peloton (breakaway)

He's plowing a long and lonely furrow on this solo break...

Plans have been laid today...and they aren't going as planned.



This is a show of strength by this team.

They have lifted the pace. We'll soon see the peloton beginning to crack. (PL)

This is a serious move to shed the weak and the chaff. (PL)

He could be the dark horse that spoils the party. (PL on Chavanel)

This pace-making by Leopard Trek is getting rid of anyone who's got any weakness at all. They've waited all year for this moment. (PL)

Leopard Trek wants to destroy the peloton and destroy the hopes of some of their rivals. They are destroying their own team one by one! (PL)

We've had a serious decanting of the peloton. (PS)

Frank (Schleck) moves ahead of Evans. If that isn't throwing the gauntlet down, I don't know what is. (PS)

Isolating a rider from his teammates makes him vulnerable. (PS)

To put those riders into difficulty, you have to force them to accelerate over and over. That's what the one-two punch strategy does. (PS)

There's a lot of action at the business section of the peloton. (PL on a team working hard pace-setting at the front)

They've got themselves into determined mode. (PS on the chase group catching the break)

Cycling is a complicated sport. One man's tactic is another man's derision. (PS)

Contador has a handful of cards but hasn't been able to lay them down today.

When you look over your shoulder like that you know it's over Phil. (PS)

When you see the peloton strung out like that it's a good indication that the screws are getting tightened at the pointy end.

The bunch is like a fisherman playing with a fish on the end of the line.

Ha ha! The heads of state are slowly rising to the business end of the bike race.

Team Sky takes over pacemaking duties and at this rate it may just cause the peloton to implode.

**On riders' skills, power, strength, instincts, inspiration, and internal motivation**

If you want to do well in the Tour de France, you must ride with courage. You have got to ride with determination.

He is ticking his legs around at about 40mph. (PL commenting on the high cadence and speed)

Cancellara's got legs of steel; nothing gets in his way. (PL)

These guys just shut off their brains and ride on instinct. (PL)

He's got to turn himself inside out to stay in second place right now. (PS)

All cylinders are firing at full capacity right now.

This man is a beast of a bike rider. (PS)

This man has absolutely set this race on fire. (PS)

Bridge to engine room: more power please! (PS)

He's going to get himself into the skin of a winner. (PL)

He is riding a tidal wave of noise to the finish. (PS)

He's riding like a man possessed! (PS)

He's a beast of a man (PS in reference to Jens Voigt)

Chavanel may well steak the day! (PS)

That's what you call a cheeky move by Hincapie. (PL)

This man appears as if he taken off the cloak of invisibility like Harry Potter. (PL; he'll often mention the cloak of invisibility as something they need to pack into their suitcase of courage)

Look at the acceleration that's going on here; the hammer has really come down! (PL)

Everyone here has completely and utterly thrown caution to the wind. (PL)

He's got to start dreaming in yellow (PL on Frank Schleck trying for the yellow jersey)

Crouching over the bike here now, living a dream at the moment. (PL on Chavanel)

Behind all the chaos of the day, he's doing the ride of his life. (PL on a rider on a successful breakaway)

Superb performance by that man, he never gave up, he had the bit between his teeth the whole way! (PL on Chavanel)

...and now these surgeons of cycling are navigating this rugged French countryside.

Is he a superman or a fool?

He's reeling them in like a fisherman with a trout on the line. (PS)

Are they on the road to stardom, or are they lambs to the slaughter? (PL)

He seems to have found his second pair of legs. (PL)

And (insert rider name here) sets off at a seemingly suicidal speed (on a TT performance)

This plucky little rider is afraid of nobody! (PL)

He's ripping the legs off of him! (in regards to Lance pulling away from Escartin, 1999 Tour)

Sean Kelly has the bit in his teeth...try as he may, HE CANNOT find a bigger gear on the bicycle...there IS no bigger gear to be found!!! (early 1980s)

These riders at the front will have heard the twist of metal there—now they'll go even quicker to keep away from the group.

And Armstrong is coming down the finishing straight like a grand prix motorcar! (2005)

There's Armstrong. His face giving nothing away. He is in complete concentration but I imagine that his ears are twitched back just listening for the whistle of a tire on the pavement—the sound of an attack. (PS, 2004)

He would rip the bike in half if he had half the chance.

His legs are tap-tap-tapping out a rhythm... (PL)

His legs are ticking over. (PL)

He's soaked in talent.

Ullrich is pumping those two pistons he calls legs. (2005)

This rider has sprouted wings!

Huge effort by Eisel to make sure no one else can move to the front, but he's sold his engine and has had to turn it over. (PL, after Eisel had to succumb to the peloton)

Voeckler has got good legs today—he is dreaming in yellow!

This boy doesn't know the words "give up." (PL on Voeckler)

Who will take the stage? Voeckler is licking his lips.

That *maillot jaune* gives wings to the wearer! (SK)

This is a pedigree group of men, they are holding on by the skin of their shorts. (PL)

"He got a look into the eyes of Jan Ullrich and said, "Well, are you coming or not?" and the answer is...not!" (PL on the famous Lance-to-Jan "look")

This is absolute poetry in motion. (PL on Lance Armstrong's cadence)

He's completely gutted this race and left nothing but a corpse for them to chew on..." (PL, in 2002 on Lance Armstrong)

Just where does he get that strength?

And that was a demonstration of absolute power! (PL)

If you fight that hard to get yellow, you deserve to keep it. (PS)

Jens Voigt, the biggest legs, the biggest heart, the biggest engine. (PS)

The big old diesel V8 turbo is whistling along quite nicely.

I'm coming through, I'm Cadel Evans, you may not know me ...let me introduce myself.

Frank Schleck has been unhitched from the rear of the group...is his body injured or maybe its his mind.

He's riding like ten men today.

He's no longer pedaling like a human being...he's on top of the world today.

### **Miscellaneous fun comments**

All the shadowboxing is over now. (PL)

And so, the first pedal has been turned in anger. (PL)

The peloton does not attack those who stop for natural reasons.

Where does he fill it up with petrol? Because he just doesn't run out of energy!

The race doesn't think like commentators do! (PL on a strategy that was opposite of what they had predicted)

The TDF is not the best place to come for a health retreat. (PS)

Today they have been in the furnace. Like riding through Africa. When they're in the furnace these boys make their own wind. (PL)

It's all gone a little pear-shaped (PL; British expression describing when something isn't going well)

They've got to avoid the road furniture on those roundabouts (PL on the challenges of negotiating roundabouts and turns in towns and cities; the "road furniture" is the signs and poles along the road and in the medians that they sometimes hit)

And look at that, it's as though someone dropped a bomb in the field.

To wear the yellow jersey is to mingle with the gods of cycling.

And the Heads of State have come to the fore... (PL; Heads of State refer to the GC contenders, the team leaders)

Dancing to a tune few in this group have ever heard before, the lead grew quickly to 3 minutes in as many miles.

He's dancing on the pedals in an immodest way! (PL, on a victory by Dag Otto Lauritzen)

They said this Tour was too short, they said this Tour was too easy <<dramatic pause>> THEY...were wrong!! (PL)

Ooh, and it's Fondriest—with his legs on! (PL)

Oh, now that was a crazy fall, that was a crazy fall.

With a just a few turns of the pedal, Jalabert has done in seconds what most riders have tried to do all day! (1994 Worlds)

...it's rather like holding back the flood with a little finger.

The fox is in the henhouse now.

Riding or helping, the endless road evokes thoughts of hope.

The riders are starting to get a bit twitchy now!

...now this move is going to cause panic in the bunch.

He's thrown a cat amongst the pigeons. (PL)

...and that's a nasty box of tricks that (insert name of rider) has broken into.

Don't look back. You know what's going on back there because you just left!

Now the boys are enjoying a nice slice of tailwind.

Now (insert rider's name) is going to have a go at it!

He's running on all cylinders today!

There is now a chief among the Indians! (PL, about a rider high in the GC joining a breakaway)

He is really plowing a wide furrow through the field today.

And again they are crossing swords at the front.

This is DESTRUCTION TIME.

He looks back to see who's chasing. The answer is...no one.

And Riis must be feeling quite frisky today! (1995)

You can see the fire in Pantani's eyes... <<camera zooms in to reveal the Pirate and he has his Briko sunglasses on>> ...if it weren't for the sunglasses you could see the fire in his eyes. (PL, 2000)

He's done his job at the front and now he must concentrate on getting his enormous carcass up the rest of the way.

The history of the Tour de France was chiseled into these walls of rock by men willing to ask more of themselves knowing that this time, for some, the answers from their bodies would be...no more. (PL)

It really is like swatting mosquitos.

As the French would say, today he is riding with great *panache*.

When Lance first turned professional, it was like trying to put a hand brake on a raging bull. (PS)

The kilometers are passing like kidney stones. (BR)

Lance Armstrong is the eye of the hurricane, and he's headed straight for the Jan Ullrich trailer park. It'll be a virtual schmegelfest of subhumanoids. (BR)

Ka-pow! In the Tour de France sometimes you are the windshield and sometimes you are the bug (BR, in reference to the numerous crashes)

It was a dramatic day, with a dramatic group of riders, and a dramatic backdrop to a dramatic finish. (PL)

When the lights go out, there is no light and no sound. (PS)

It is the law of the jungle, I am afraid. (PL)

Sammy Sanchez has already flown the coop! (PL)

Contador is in a Schleck sandwich at the moment. (PL on Contador being caught between Andy and Frank Schleck, his main rivals in 2010)

This is the time when we'll see the chinks in some riders' armor. (PS)

Today's stage definitely separated the wheat from the chaff. (PS)

The peloton is passing a field of white cows. This region of France is known for its bovine...(goes off on tangent)...Of course, none of that matters to any of the riders, except that they might like a nice steak at the end of day. (PL, 2003)

Well, these boys have used all their ammunition today...they've thrown it at each other.

This is definitely not a rent-a-crowd at the top of these climbs today!

These are hazardous times in the Tour de France here today!

Those rims will be red-hot Paul! (PS)

Froome is proving to be an important lieutenant, in fact by the end of the day I'll promote him to colonel" (On Froome in 2012, when he was working for Wiggins. He became the leader in 2013 and 2014).

When lady luck isn't on your side, she can be a real beast!

### **General quotes on racing**

In 2011, **Bob Roll** had these wonderful words to say about the yellow jersey, the mountains, and the element of time: “The Tour is won or lost in the mountains. The yellow jersey is all about time. Time is a precious commodity. Time is the only mountain that can never be climbed. It is the only beast that man cannot conquer. The yellow jersey is our sports allegory for the struggle against time.”

“The Ventoux is a god of evil, to which sacrifices must be made. It never forgives weakness and extracts an unfair tribute of suffering.”

**Roland Barthes**, French philosopher and full-time bicycle racing fan, describing Mont Ventoux, a 13-mile climb above the tree line into a desolation of strewn rock, in the Tour de France

**Paul Sherwen**, when asked if he has a favorite Tour: “Nah, it’s impossible, because every Tour is a story, every one is a book, every day is a different chapter. I think Phil and I will always talk about the 1989 Tour de France when Greg LeMond won. Because that was changing the jersey on the final day in the last 200 meters. It was just incredible. We were scribbling, making notes, calculating as we went, and as Fignon crossed the line, Phil called that LeMond had won the Tour by 8 seconds. You know that was pretty exciting, getting it spot on, because it could have gone either way.”

“But to say that the race is the metaphor for the life is to miss the point. The race is everything. It obliterates whatever isn’t racing. Life is the metaphor for the race.”

**Donald Antrim**

“For all their fearlessness, sprinters are a delicate breed. At the peak of form they effuse an aura of invincibility, suggesting no bicycle rider ever pedaled as fast. To win, sprinters must have everything: physical condition, confidence, luck, aggression, and committed team support. An elusive combination, attainable but not sustainable.”

**David Walsh**, *Inside the Tour de France*

“To be a cyclist is to be a student of pain...at cycling’s core lies pain, hard and bitter as the pit inside a juicy peach. It doesn’t matter if you’re sprinting for an Olympic medal, a town sign, a trailhead, or the rest stop with the homemade brownies. If you never confront pain, you’re missing the essence of the sport. Without pain, there’s no adversity. Without adversity, no challenge. Without challenge, no improvement. No improvement, no sense of accomplishment, and no deep-down joy. Might as well be playing tiddlywinks.”

**Scott Martin**

“Cycling isn’t a game, it’s a sport. Tough, hard, and unpitying, and it requires great sacrifices. One plays football, or tennis, or hockey. One doesn’t play at cycling.”

**Jean de Gribaldy** (Sean Kelly’s manager)



“As a pro cyclist, fame and fortune are soon forgotten, but your suffering as a racer stays with you as long as you live.”

**Bob Roll**, in his book *Bobke II*

“I still feel that variable gears are only for people over forty-five. Isn’t it better to triumph by the strength of your muscles than by the artifice of a derailleur? We are getting soft... As for me, give me a fixed gear!”

**Henri Desgrange (bike racer, first organizer of the TDF, and obviously a hard, hard man)**

### Quotes by famous cyclists

“Without cancer, I never would have won a single Tour de France. Cancer taught me a plan for more purposeful living, and that in turn taught me how to train and to win more purposefully. It taught me that pain has a reason, and that sometimes the experience of losing things—whether health or a car or an old sense of self—has its own value in the scheme of life. Pain and loss are great enhancers.”

**Lance Armstrong**

“Nineteen hundred meters up there is completely different from 1,900 anyplace else. There’s no air, there’s no oxygen. There’s no vegetation, there’s no life. There’s no life. Rocks. Any other climb there’s vegetation, grass, and trees. Not there on the Ventoux. It’s more like the moon than a mountain.”

**Lance Armstrong**, wearing Tour de France yellow jersey on the Ventoux stage, 2000

“What makes a great endurance athlete is the ability to absorb potential embarrassment, and to suffer without complaint. I was discovering that if it was a matter of gritting my teeth, not caring how it looked, and outlasting everybody else, I won. It didn't seem to matter what sport it was—in a straight-ahead, long-distant race, I could beat anybody. If it was a suffer-fest, I was good at it.”

**Lance Armstrong**, *My Journey Back to Life*

“Pain is temporary. Quitting lasts forever.”

**Lance Armstrong**

“If you worried about falling off the bike, you’d never get on.”

**Lance Armstrong**

“This is not Disneyland, or Hollywood. I’ll give you an example: I’ve read that I flew up the hills and mountains of France. But you don’t fly up a hill. You struggle slowly and painfully up a hill, and maybe, if you work very hard, you get to the top ahead of everybody else.”

**Lance Armstrong**

“Cycling is so hard, the suffering is so intense, that it’s absolutely cleansing. The pain is so deep and strong that a curtain descends over your brain... Once, someone asked me what pleasure I took in riding for so long. ‘Pleasure?’ I said. ‘I don’t understand the

question.' I didn't do it for pleasure, I did it for pain."

**Lance Armstrong**

"Perhaps the single most important element in mastering the techniques and tactics of racing is experience. Once you have the fundamentals, acquiring the experience is a matter of time."

**Greg LeMond**

"It never gets easier, you just go faster."

**Greg LeMond**

"I have always struggled to achieve excellence. One thing that cycling has taught me is that if you can achieve something without a struggle it's not going to be satisfying."

**Greg LeMond**

"The key is being able to endure psychologically. When you're not riding well, you think, why suffer? Why push yourself for four or five hours? The mountains are the pinnacle of suffering."

**Greg Lemond**

"It was eleven more than necessary."

**Jacques Anquetil**, after winning a race by twelve seconds

"You have to sprint on feeling, not thinking. You must have faith in yourself but you cannot think about it too much."

**Jean Paul Van Poppel**

"Age and treachery will overcome youth and skill."

**Fausto Coppi**

"While it is a very hard and sometimes very cruel profession, my love for the bike remains as strong now as it was in the days when I first discovered it. I am convinced that long after I have stopped riding as a professional I will be riding my bicycle. I never want to abandon my bike. I see my grandfather, now in his seventies and riding around everywhere. To me that is beautiful. And the bike must always remain a part of my life."

**Stephen Roche** (Triple Crown winner: TDF, Giro, and World Championships in one season)

"I'm fascinated by the sprinters. They suffer so much during the race just to get to the finish, they hang on for dear life in the climbs, but then in the final kilometers they are transformed and do amazing things. It's not their force per se that impresses me, but rather the renaissance they experience. Seeing them suffer throughout the race only to be reborn in the final is something for fascination."

**Miguel Indurain**

"Cyclists live with pain. If you can't handle it you will win nothing."

**Eddy Merckx** (winner of basically everything, five times!)

“If you knew the pain I had in my legs...what suffering! I couldn’t wait to get to the hotel.”

**Thomas Voeckler**

## **Jens Voigt quotes and quips about him**

Jens Voigt is very popular with cycling fans, both for his riding style and his affable, forthright, and articulate style in dealing with the public and media. Voigt is known for his propensity to attack, and for his positive racing attitude. He is capable of repeated attacking, holding a high tempo, and breaking away from the peloton. He is currently riding on the Radio Shack team, and has always been well loved by not only the fans, but by basically every rider in the peloton. But Jens takes no prisoners when he is riding for his team. He is considered one of the world's greatest domestiques. Can you imagine a rider so loved around the world that there are contests to come up with "famous" sayings about him?

Here are some Jens Voigt quotes and stories:

- If it hurts me, it must hurt the other ones twice as much.
- Maybe they just think I am a pretty face.
- No, I do not accept defeat here. I do not accept this.
- Shut up, legs! Do what I tell you to do!
- Of course I am blessed with a little bit of talent.
- Oh, you poor thing, you've got no chance, you're already beaten.
- You're all beaten; I am just laughing at you.
- I get paid to hurt other people, how good is that?
- You have got to be as insane as the insanity around you.
- In the hierarchy of the family, I'm just above the dog. But I like it that way.
- Having things organized is for small-minded people. Genius controls chaos.
- Oh man, it's going to take days to kill all these people.
- While I'm not very talented at cooking, I am very talented at eating.
- I am confident that when I get really old, the human lifespan will be extended.
- Everybody has to suffer, suffer, suffer until they've all had enough.
- Every time I race, I will race so fiercely my legs cry.
- I get paid to inflict pain and terror, for other people!
- If you go (with a break), you can either win or not win. If you don't go for it, you definitely won't win.
- I'll burn, I'm ready to die for you on the bike.
- Cycling is not rocket science.
- When I explode that means I'm done...I'm exploding.
- I exploded sooooo big, I think you could hear the explosion.
- Oxygen! Oxygen! Oxygen! Oh it's all mine, it's all mine!
- You lay there, you get up. And...like...your brain starts working again.
- I did it many times. I saved the world, I think, maybe 20 or 30 times.
- This little taste of blood in your mouth.
- Just keep going, just keeeep gooooooeeeeng.

### **On the stage 16 crash in the 2010 Tour de France and finishing the stage:**

“[I thought] *‘No, I do not accept defeat here. I do not accept this. I’m going to change this.’* I’m a big believer of the theory that you make your destiny. You’ve got your fate in your hands and it’s up to you, it’s your responsibility. It is sometimes a heavy burden, but it’s you who changes, who moves, who shapes your reality for yourself, who shapes your life.”

### **On whether his legs really do “shut up”**

“I swear, sometimes they do. Not all the time, I cannot do this magic all the time. This mojo, it only works in certain occasions. But actually yes, they do.”

### **On his crash in the Pyrenees in 2010 and his refusal to quit the race (a crash had ended his 2009 race)**

“I came over the top only 20 seconds down on the front group, but about 2 kilometers into the descent my front tire blew and I thought, ‘Oh God,’ and I went down. Just one year after my horrible crash, and there I was tumbling on another mountain descent. And let me tell you, about the only place that feels good right now is my right ankle. The rest of me is all road rash. Plus I’ve got five stitches in my left elbow and then there are some ribs that are not in the right place! I may have to get X-rays, but I hate X-rays (the radiation), and plus, if I’ve got a fractured rib, what can anyone do about it? The worst thing of all was that I almost got forced out of the Tour for a second year in a row. The problem was that the first team car was behind Andy Schleck, and the second had decided to go up ahead to hand out water bottles at the foot of the next climb. As a result I had no bike, because mine was shattered.



“So then the broom wagon pulled up and was like, ‘Do you want to just get in?’ And I said, ‘Oh no, I don’t need YOU!’ But there I am with blood spurting out my left elbow and no bike. Finally, the race organizers got me a bike, but it was this little yellow junior bike (see photo). It was way too small for me and even had old-fashioned toe-clip pedals. But that is the only way I could get down the mountain, so I had to ride it for like 15–20 kilometers until I finally got to a team car with my bike. Then, I still had to get up to the *grupetto*. All I can say is that that desperate times need desperate measures, but I got up there. And once I did it was *grupetto* all day long.

“Needless to say, I had plenty of time to come up with a fitting book of the day. It’s from the Disk World series by Terry Pratchett. In it, the protagonist is Conan the Barbarian,

who is a 70-year-old who has just survived everything. At one point he and his other old warrior friends capture this village, but then they find that they are surrounded by an army of tens of thousands, and his only reaction is, ‘Oh man, it’s going to take days to kill all these people!’ And that’s the way I was today when I was lying on the ground. I just thought, ‘Oh no, I’m going to Paris this year, I’m going to Paris. There’s just no way you are going to get me out of this race for the second year in a row!’”

### Fun quips about Jens Voigt:

- I heard that Jens attacked so hard on a climb the other day he dropped Andy Schleck’s chain!
- Jens Voigt counted to infinity...twice.
- Scientists used to believe that diamond was the world’s hardest substance. But then they met Jens Voigt.
- Jens Voigt doesn’t read books. He simply attacks until the books relent and tell him everything he wants to know.
- Waldo can’t be found because Jens dropped him on a hill training ride...on K2.
- Jens Voigt climbs so well for a big guy because he doesn’t actually climb hills; the hills sink into the earth in fear as they see him approach.
- Jens’ testicles are bald because hair does not grow on a mixture of titanium, brass, steel, and cold, hard granite.
- Eddy Merckx was actually a neo-pro at the same time as Jens, but Jens dropped him so hard that he shot backwards in time to the 1960s, where he became a great champion.
- Jens once had a heart attack on the Tourmalet. Jens counterattacked repeatedly until he kicked its \*\*\*.
- If Jens Voigt was a country, his principle exports would be Pain, Suffering, and Agony.
- If Jens Voigt was a planet, he’d be the World of Hurt.
- Jens Voigt doesn’t know where you live, but he knows exactly where you will die.
- Jens Voigt doesn’t have a shadow because he dropped it repeatedly until it retired, climbing into the CSC team car and claiming a stomach ailment.
- Jens Voigt once challenged Lance Armstrong to a “who has more testicles” contest. Jens won...by five.
- When you open a can of whoop-\*\*\*, Jens Voigt jumps out and attacks.
- You are what you eat. Jens Voigt eats spring steel for breakfast, fire for lunch, and a mixture of titanium and carbon fiber for dinner. For between-meal snacks he eats men’s souls, and downs it with a tall cool glass of The Milk of Human Suffering.
- Jens Voigt believes it’s not butter.
- The first time man split the atom was when the atom tried to hold Jens Voigt’s wheel, but cracked.
- Jens Voigt doesn’t complain about what suffering does to him...but suffering constantly complains about getting picked on by Jens Voigt.
- Jens Voigt can start a fire by rubbing two mud puddles together.

- Guns kill a couple dozen people every day. Jens Voigt kills 150.
- Jens Voigt rides so fast during attacks, that he could circle the globe, hold his own wheel, and ride in his own draft. At least as long as he didn't try to drop himself.
- Jens Voigt nullified the periodic table because he doesn't believe in any element, other than the element of surprise.
- The grass is always greener on the other side. Unless Jens Voigt has been riding on the other side, in which case it's white with the salty, dried tears of all the riders whose souls he has crushed.
- Because when Superman was a kid, he wanted Jens Voigt undies.
- When Jens Voigt rides off the front of a peloton, he's not actually riding faster, he's pulling the earth closer towards him.
- Jens Voigt doesn't get road rash, the road gets Jens Rash.
- Jens is the permanent holder of the keys to the Pain Locker.
- $E=MC^2$ , pain=Jens Voigt