



Rule the Tour de France!

Top seven tips for teaching authentic and exciting Tour de France stages in your indoor cycling classes!

Check out the Tour de France website at www.letour.com to discover the profiles for each stage of the Tour de France. (You can change the language at the top right). Click on *Route* to get a dropdown of the various stages.

1. Understanding the route of the Tour de France

Did you know the Tour de France route changes every single year? One year it travels in a more clockwise direction with the Alps preceding the Pyrénées, and the next year counterclockwise, with the Pyrénées before the Alps. One thing is for certain; it finishes in Paris every year! The Tour organizers will often try to create a route that presents particular challenges to the yellow jersey winner of the previous year. This is one way they try to keep it very interesting from year to year.

Some things of note about this year's route are:

- There are more mountaintop finishes than usual (5 out of 6 big mountain stages).
- This year there is only one time trial on the penultimate day, which is very different from past tours.
- There is no Team Time Trial this year. They seem to change their minds every year about this. Apparently the TTT gives advantage to certain teams. For cycling fans it's a bummer because they are more exciting to watch. (Note: in the ICA TDF package bundles, we teach you how to teach Team Time Trials because they are so much fun to do, and they are quite intense! Check out both 2013 and 2011 packages.)
- There is less focus on the Alpes the year, with several very challenging climbs in the Vosges Mountains near the German border.
- With the start of the Tour in undulating UK (for 3 stages), there are fewer flat windy stages at the beginning. This can change things up considerably for the sprinters.
- Stage 5 uses long segments of the very difficult one-day race, the Paris Roubaix. There are 15 km of dangerous cobblestone segments (called *pavé* in French), which throws a huge wrench in the plans of many riders.
- This year is the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I. The Tour organizers honored this somber memory by starting several stages in towns that were instrumental in the war.

2. How to Teach Flat Stages and the Finale Into Paris

As mentioned above, there are fewer flat stages this year than in years past, and none that are pancake flat. You can still choose to do endurance rides on the “somewhat” flat days. Adding these slightly easier classes to your roster is especially important if you are planning multiple days of teaching TDF stages, and crucial if you are doing the entire Tour.

But don’t think that “flat” always means easy! These are also great profiles for attacks and breakaways, and certainly you can have a bunch sprint at the finish, and go for the intermediary sprint in the middle. Long flat stages are where teams will work together in pacelines, much like a team time trial.

The final stage into Paris is always a somewhat flat stage, usually peppered with a few rolling hills. You may not realize it, but whoever is in the yellow jersey on the final day will finish in the yellow jersey; there is an unwritten rule in cycling that a cyclist won’t attack the yellow jersey. What this means is that those riders who are close to the leader in the general classification (the GC, the list of where the riders fall on the “leaderboard” so to speak) will not try to overtake the rider in the #1 spot. This includes any riders in the top 10-20 spots. Therefore, all those riders you see trying to breakaway or win the sprint on the Champs Elysée are nowhere near the #1 rider in the yellow jersey. For them it’s a glorious day to try to show what they are made of; they are out there for both glory and the Green Jersey points! It’s especially honorable for a French man to win on the Champs. The yellow jersey only has to keep the rubber down and cross the finish line. This is why he’s usually protected by most of his team to minimize the risk of anything happening. (The only time this wasn’t the case was the 1989 Tour, when there was a time trial on the final day, won by American Greg Lemond who gained 58 seconds in that final stage to take the yellow jersey from his opponent Laurent Fignon).

Of course, there is usually that iconic picture of the yellow jersey rider sipping champagne as the peloton rolls into Paris. This is something fun to do at the end of your Tour de France program. Maybe not during your ride, ;-) but have a little party after your final stage and serve up some French cheese, sliced baguettes, and some champagne and sparkling cider. How about making some Tour de France cookies like they did at Cykl Studio in Toronto?



3. How to Teach Rolling Hills Stages

Rolling hills are perhaps the most popular. Essentially they are interval classes: you work hard on the uphill, recover on the downhill. Announce attack after attack on the short uphill. Although you can do it on any stage, rolling hills stages are very fun to describe a breakaway and a chase group (see tip #6). If you are very organized and can multi-task, you can divide the class and have one group climbing hard while the other group recovers on a descent.

4. Big Mountain Stages

There are numerous ways to interpret a mountain stage at the Tour de France in your indoor cycling classes. One way is to simulate the entire stage from beginning to end, compressing each climb into anywhere from 2 to 8 minutes. Another way is to pick up the race from about the halfway point, beginning with a little commentary as to what has transpired up to that

point. This way you can focus on the biggest and most challenging climbs in the second half of the stage.

I often like to pick one or two signature climbs in a stage that has a mountaintop finish and then guide your riders through a climb for the entire class. (Do not do this if your students haven't experienced a climb for extended periods however!) This year doesn't have any of the iconic and world-renowned summit finishes such as the Galibier, Alpe d'Huez, Mont Ventoux or the Tourmalet, so I would choose the option of simulating the final 2 or 3 climbs of the hardest mountain stages.

5. Time Trials

A time trial stage would be a Race Day Energy Zone in Spinning® parlance. It is known as the “race of truth” and it is said that a cyclist cannot win the Tour de France without great time trial skills. Time trials are where riders will often pick up significant time advantages over their opponents who lack time trialing ability. The longer time trials are held at an intensity that hovers right at lactate threshold, and shorter time trials (like the prologues) are even higher than that. In your cycling classes, you can make your TT stage anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes long, or even 40 minutes if your group of riders are especially fit. Students must be fit and ready, especially if they plan to ride hard during your entire “tour.” Make sure to encourage sufficient recovery the following day.

In 2014 there is only one individual time trial on the penultimate day and there is no team time trial this year. In the 2013 Tour de France package from last year, you'll find a very fun profile of the team time trial—pacelines baby!

6. How to Get Everyone Involved—The Breakaway and The Chase

One interesting way to coach a Tour de France stage is to act like you are the TV announcer. (Note: one of the bonuses with the ICA package is a long list of descriptive and sometimes humorous quips and quotes from some of the most well-known and colorful race announcers in the world. Use these in your classes to add interest and excitement.)

As the announcer, you can describe how one rider breaks away close to the beginning of the stage (after your warm-up), taking a couple of riders with him. Then have another chase group follow about 5-10 minutes later. You can divide the class and assign them to either the breakaway group and the chase group. Go back and forth between what is happening in these two groups every few minutes. Then go back to the peloton and announce that the teams with riders high in the GC (that is, they have good chances at being on the podium if they finish close to the front of every stage) have decided to set a blistering pace to catch up with the two chase groups ahead. Does the peloton “reel in” the two breakaway groups? That is up to you to decide!

Riders who need to recover can be at the back of the peloton taking it easier. This way you always give your riders a way to opt out of the high intensity.

You can also assign your members to different teams or have them pick their own. An ICA member in Virginia, Elizabeth, puts a cutout of the jersey from various teams on the bikes before the riders arrive (photo right). She calls out team names who are in breakaways, encouraging that team to get out of their saddles and attack.



Several of the ICA profiles are designed with a breakaway group and one or more chase groups. We give you the detailed and exciting cueing to pitch one group against the other—a great way for creating some fun competition in your classes!

8. How to Suffer Like a Domestique—Not Everyone Needs to Win!

Who wins your stage simulation? Do you have everyone throw their hands in the air as if they won? While that is always an exciting finish, and we do recommend it, there are many other ways to teach a stage. Sometimes the domestiques work even harder than their team leaders yet they might cross the finish line in 158th place. Even though they may not win the stage, or one of the coveted jerseys, and they suffer doing their job, sometimes even dropping out from fatigue or barely making the time cut-off, they are the often unsung heroes of the teams. Make sure to bring in the emotion of suffering by these domestiques into some of your stages.

All the ICA contributors for the TDF packages have described in various profiles stories of domestiques turning themselves inside out for their teammates, only to have to drop back from the exertion, their work done for the day. Jennifer's popular Alpe d'Huez ride *One Man's Journey From Suffering to Triumph* (2011 package) is a very emotional story of a rider in last place trying to overcome the doubt and fear filling his head.

Voilà!

We hope you are able to implement these tips in your Tour de France profiles this year. Teaching Tour de France stages is truly one of the most fun you can have in an indoor cycling class, and gives you great opportunities to wow your students with your knowledge and skill. While it's always fun to teach stages of the Tour in July while the race is going on, there is no reason why you can't put on an exciting Tour de France program in winter when your class numbers might be even higher.

If you want to save hours of time putting your profiles together, researching the history and culture of the Tour and the strategy of stage races, as well as the time it takes to find the right music, consider purchasing one of the packages from the Indoor Cycling Association. You will gain access to some of the most authentic, challenging and fun Tour de France profiles available anywhere in the world.

We have four different contributors with different styles, so you are guaranteed to have great variety. Every year we try to offer something just a little bit different!

The following pages describe in detail what you will receive with the ICA Tour de France package. Go to www.indoorcyclingassociation.com/tour-de-france-package for more information or to purchase.

The ICA Tour de France package will turn you into the expert so you can awe your students with your authentic and exciting coaching of these stages. The following is what you will receive in the package:

- a 90-minute video PowerPoint presentation with everything you need to know about creating a Tour de France program at your studio.
- a 48-page eBook with much even more detailed information, including tips on how to simulate each type of stage and how to coach various attacks and rider strategies (updated from 2013).
- 7 detailed stage profiles in the 2014 package. All of our TdF profiles provide a specific objective and explanation of strategies and terrain, an exciting playlist, and tips on coaching the class. Some profiles also provided as an audio. Four different contributors offer a variety of styles so every profile is different.
- 7 extra special bonuses that combine to save you dozens if not more hours of doing research, while also providing you resources to make sure your classes rock your students' worlds with excitement!
 - Bonus #1 In this handout are dozens of resources where you can download profiles of the stages and learn more about the riders, the teams, the history of the Tour, the towns, and the racing strategy.
 - Bonus #2 The Tour is Won in the Mountains! Here is all the information you'll need regarding the big mountains of the Tour de France.
 - Bonus #3 Soundbites for Your TdF Commentary. These guys are indisputably the most entertaining cycling announcers there are. Phil and Paul are known around the world as the "Voice of Cycling." Their colorful metaphors and analogies spread throughout your own commentary will increase the excitement of your indoor stages.
 - Bonus #4 Attacks, Counterattacks and Blocking! With these racing tips, you will better understand how to implement these kinds of strategies and cues into a profile of a stage so you sound more authentic.
 - Bonus #5 A playlist of over 250 fun French songs perfect to sprinkle into your profiles.
 - Bonus #6 Royalty-free Tour de France photos for your use (taken by Jennifer Sage or her bicycle tour guests at the Tour de France). Use in promotions or project on a screen if you have access to video.
 - Bonus #7 The best news? From now on, once you've purchased the ICA Tour de France program, any yearly updates are only \$20. Ever!



Profiles from the 2014 Tour de France Package

- **The Anatomy of a Sprint, by Bryon Black.**
You can teach this as its own profile and/or use the sprinting technique you learn here to apply to any stage with a sprint finish. This profile is like a conference session in its own right!
- **Stage 3: Cambridge to London, by Robert Baldi.**
London Calling: endurance class coaching over rollers. Sprint optional, but always there!
- **Stage 5: Ypres to Arenberg Porte du Hainaut, by Jennifer Sage.**
Wipers. A brutal ride over the cobblestones infamous in the Paris-Roubaix one-day race. On this 100 year anniversary of WWI, the stage starts in a Belgian village called Ypres, virtually destroyed in the war. The British who protected the town and neighboring area called it "Wipers".
- **Stage 10: Mulhouse to La Planche des Belles Filles, by Jennifer Sage.**
Prost! Mountaintop finish in the Vosges mountains near the German border.
- **Stage 13: Saint-Étienne to Chamrousse, by Tom Scotto.**
Accelerations on a mountaintop finish at a ski resort in the Alpes.
- **Stage 17: Saint-Gaudens to Saint-Lary Pla d'Adet, by Robert Baldi.**
The Saints Can't Help Me Now! Battling it out in the Pyrenees.
- **Stage 20: Bergerac to Périgueux, by Tom Scotto.**
The Time Trial on the penultimate stage. Tom highlights the struggles and doubts that go through a rider's head as he tries to refocus on the task at hand. A very hard stage with mind-body coaching and music to match the emotions of the rider.

Profiles from the 2013 Tour de France Package (when you purchase a multi-year package)

- **Stage 3: Ajaccio to Calvi, by Jennifer Sage.**
The Suitcase of Courage. Brutal attacks on the stunning Corsican coastline. Make sure you've brought your suitcase of courage! This profile describes going back and forth between the breakaway and chase group, and a peloton that is on the hunt to reel them both in.
- **Stage 4: Nice to Nice, by Byron Black.**
The Team Time Trial. Threshold pain packaged in a very fun profile for indoor cycling classes.
- **Stage 7: Montpellier to Albi by Tom Scotto.**
Rolling roads, wind and sprints.
- **Stage 8: Castres to Ax 3 Domaines, by Robert Baldi.**
Ax the Peloton. A long flat ride leading to the high Pyrénées—the best of both worlds.
- **Stage 15: Givors to Mont Ventoux, by Jennifer Sage.**
Riding on the Moon. After you guide the winners to the summit, you go back to see how the grupetto is doing and bring them to the finish line before the time cut-off. (Mont Ventoux is sometimes described as like riding on the moon.)
- **Stage 18: Gap to Alpe d'Huez, by Tom Scotto.**
Two the Pain—Alpe d'Huez x 2. Alpe d'Huez twice in one stage? Tom picks up the race at 76 miles, because why waste time on niceties when there's suffering to be had?
- **Stage 19: Bourg d'Oisans to Le Grand Bournand, by Robert Baldi.**
Should I stay or should I go? Breakaway in the Alpes—do you go or not?

Profiles from the 2012 Tour de France Package (when you purchase a multi-year package)

- **Stage 3: Orchies to Boulogne-Sur-Mer, by Jennifer Sage.**
In-class competition. Flat start to the rolling hills and sidewinds near the north coast. Divide the room into two; one is the breakaway and the other the peloton. Who will win?
- **Stage 9: Arc-et-Senans to Besançon, by Bryon Black.**
The Individual Time Trial, known as the Race of Truth, in which the warm-up hurts almost as much as the race.
- **Stage 10: Macon to Bellegarde-sur-Valserine, by Tom Scotto.**
The brutal Col du Grand Colombier, the steepest climb ever used in the Tour de France.
- **Stage 11: Albertville to La Toussuire, by Robert Baldi.**
A Shakedown on the Alps.
- **Stage 17: Bagnères de Luchon to Peyragudes, by Jennifer Sage.**
Three monstrous climbs one after the other.
- **Stage 20: Rambouillet to Paris, by Robert Baldi.**
Champagne on the Champs, l'arrivée into Paris. Cheers!

Profiles from the 2011 Tour de France Package (when you purchase a multi-year package)

- **Stage 2: Team Time Trial, by Jennifer Sage.**
Guidelines for dividing your class into groups and teaching pacelines.
- **Stage 6: Dinan to Liseux, by Tom Scotto.**
Very rolling hills.
- **Stage 12: Cugnaux to Luz-Ardiden by Jennifer Sage.**
Three brutal climbs in the Pyrénées, sprinkled with colorful race announcing.
- **Stage 16: Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux to Gap, by Jennifer Sage.**
Long gradual climbs, several breakaways.
- **Stage 19: Alpe d'Huez, by Jennifer Sage.**
This is Jennifer's signature Master Class up Alpe d'Huez, *One Rider's Journey from Suffering to Triumph.* It describes a rider completely exhausted as he struggles to not be last or be disqualified. You become the rider and experience his waves of emotion. Your students will remember this class for the rest of their lives!
- **Stage 21: Créteil to Paris, by Tom Scotto.**
The finale on the Champs Elysée as only Tom Scotto can teach it!