

Continental 
The Future in Motion

Tour de France

Myth, passion, challenge.





Dear cycle racing fans,

The Tour de France is on! Yes, the planet's biggest annual sporting event is going to happen, the finest pro cycle racers will be allowed to hare across the Grande Nation again! From the seemingly endless rural routes of sweltering Provence to the high passes of the Alps and Pyrenees, and the magnificence of the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris, the eyes of the cycle racing world will be on France once more. Fans everywhere will cheer on the 176 riders from 22 teams as they give each other no quarter over 21 stages and 3,480 kilometers - and the difference between them often boils down to seconds and centimeters.

First held in 1903, the Tour de France has become a French national treasure, alongside the likes of the Eiffel Tower, crêpes, and Asterix & Obelix. This year we will celebrate the 107th edition of this legendary event. It will, however, be a different sort of Tour. The race has been put back to the end of August as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. It was an unavoidable decision, given the need for large-scale sporting events to apply the requisite safety, health and hygiene measures. Continental is proud to be a Main Partner of the race and contributes to the occasion with high-performance tires which enhance safety on the road.

And so, what is sure to be a very unusual Tour de France gets underway under extraordinary circumstances and with a protective "bubble" around the peloton. In such challenging times, it gives us even greater pleasure to treat fans around the world to this rousing festival of sport.

Sincerely,

Philipp von Hirschheydt
Head of Business Unit Replacement Tires EMEA



The destination of all drivers - Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris. Picture: Pauline Ballet

The magic of the Tour de France

Fighting for every second, descending mystical mountain passes - like the Tourmalet - at speed. Chasing heroically, crashing spectacularly. The Tour de France is the biggest annual sporting event of them all and has some fascinating tales to tell. Have you heard the one about the rider on a donkey?

July 28, 2019. The Parisian sky glows in the refreshing hue of a sparkling French rosé as the Champs-Élysées envelops Egan Bernal in its balmy early-evening warmth. Here, on this grandest of boulevards at the heart of the French capital, the young man is taking in the gravity of a sporting sensation just

delivered. Bernal presents an almost shy figure, his smiles to the press and public on receiving the winner's trophy, medal and bouquet a picture of understatement. But he's also visibly moved as he absorbs the acclaim of the fans.

It's an historic moment too for Team Ineos. After 3,366 kilometers of hard racing, Bernal has crossed the finish line 1:11 min. ahead of his team-mate Geraint Thomas and with just 1:31 min. to spare over third-placed Steven Kruijswijk. In the 105 previous editions of the Tour de France, never have the top three been so close at the finish. Continental also has reason to celebrate, Bernal's victory on the company's tires "Competition Pro LTD" extending its run in the world's biggest annual sporting event to four consecutive wins. Continental is one of the Main Partners of the Tour and makes all of its bike racing tires by hand in Korbach, Germany.



The Tour de France was founded in 1903 and has been writing stories, myths, legends and anecdotes ever since. Picture: archivist@Adobe Stock

For Bernal and his travelling army of fans, these were emotional scenes. The young Colombian was the first South American rider to taste overall success in the crown jewel of bike racing. Which means the yellow of the winner's jersey was matched by the sea of Colombian flags cloaking the Champs-Élysées. At just 22, Bernal had become the youngest ever wearer of the maillot jaune in Paris.

From sleeping pills to yellow jersey

More than anything, it is the enthusiasm of the people, the boundless passion of the riders and fans, that gives the Tour de France its unique charm. Its power extends far beyond victories, records and sponsoring deals. Indeed, it is the stories behind the stage and overall placings, the times and the names that etch themselves into the collective sporting consciousness of not just France, but the world. On the course or at the roadside, out in front or off the back of the peloton, cresting

a mountain or pounding the flat - this race dating back to 1903 is above all a tale of curiosities, of legends and anecdotes.

And so it is that Bernal, the 2019 winner and youngest rider ever to wear the yellow jersey across the finish line, is not actually the youngest ever Tour victor. How so? Well, the yellow jersey was only introduced in 1919, a full 16 years after the first edition of the Tour - much to the chagrin of those who had to wear it at the time (the overall leader would be easier for supporters of his rivals to spot, and those fans would think nothing of defending their

favorites' interests by targeting the rider in yellow). Rivalries within the peloton were fierce, as the highly talented Henri Cornet - still the youngest Tour winner of all time after his triumph in 1904 - could testify. The 19-year-old sped to victory despite envious opponents at one time spiking his food with sleeping pills. Sure enough, Cornet nodded off in the saddle during the following stage and crashed heavily, apparently binging his Tour to an end. The leading trio were ultimately tripped up by their own stupidity and laziness, though. Keen to take a breather, they hitched a lift on a train, were caught in the act by a fan and disqualified. In stepped Cornet, who had battled his way back into fourth place post-chute and now suddenly found himself in the lead.

The wrong direction and the wrong drink

It wasn't just impromptu train rides which the organizers took a dim view of, but outside help of any kind. Eugène Christophe discovered what exactly that meant on the 1913 Tour. The Frenchman suffered a broken fork on his way down the Col du Tourmalet in the Pyrenees. With an 18-minute advantage over his pursuers to play with, he heaved his 18-kilo steel bike up over his shoulder, hauled it 14 kilometers to the next village, found a blacksmiths and welded it back together

The 14th stage of the 2019 Tour de France led the peloton to the Col du Tourmalet, with 2,115 meters over sea level the highest asphalt road pass at the French Pyrenees.

Picture: Alex Broadway

himself. In those days, the support vehicles today's competitors take for granted were nowhere to be seen. Christophe eventually arrived at the finish four hours off the pace. Or rather four hours and 3 seconds, an extra 3 seconds having been added to his time as a penalty for accepting assistance from a third party; a young lad in the blacksmiths had used bellows to start the fire.

A rider is, of course, allowed to help his team leader, even if he'd rather not have to. René Vietto was leading the 1934 race in the Pyrenees when he heard his "captain" Antonin Magne's bike was damaged. Annoyingly, Vietto had just completed the descent from the Col de Port, while Magne was still up at the top of the pass. Displaying incredible loyalty, Vietto turned around, battled back up the mountain and handed his bike over to the senior man. He was unable to make up the time he had lost and Magne went on to win that year's Tour.

Vietto's was one of the more easily explained about-turns in an event that has seen many down the years. In 1920 the French rider Napoleon Paoli collided with a donkey, coming to rest on its back. The surprised animal bolted - sadly in the opposite direction. Its unfamiliarity with the race route was academic, however, as Paoli would likely have been disqualified anyway for accepting outside help.

And then there was Abdel-Kader Zaaf, who set off the wrong way all on his own in 1950 to seal his place in Tour folklore. In sweltering heat (and while still travelling in the correct direction), the Algerian took a bottle being held out by a fan, but noticed too late than it contained wine rather than water.



Reeling from the alcoholic hit, he promptly alighted, found himself a comfy spot in the shade of a tree and set about sleeping it off. Spectators duly woke him from his slumber, only for a fuzzy-headed Zaaf to head off in the wrong direction.

On the following stage, he took in refreshment of a different kind in the company of his fellow riders. Belgian team leader Albéric “Briek” Schotte organized a full-peloton mid-stage break on the coast road from Nimes to Toulon, the riders pulling over and enjoying a quick dip in the Mediterranean.

Success on six wheels?

That sort of thing would be unthinkable today, of course, although “refreshment” of other kinds has made headlines in the modern era. Indeed, scandal fills its own chapter in the Tour de France history books. Take the record-breaking cheating of record-breaking Tour “winner” Lance Armstrong. The American topped the general classification seven times in a row from 1999 to 2005 but was later convicted of doping.

Time and again, the Tour has been undermined by riders and occasionally whole teams who turned their backs on fair play. However, its ability to dust itself down after darker moments and go again is all part of the Tour’s enduring magnetism. Bike racing continues to enchant like no other sport, and the majority of its competitors drive themselves to the limits of performance while sticking to the rules.

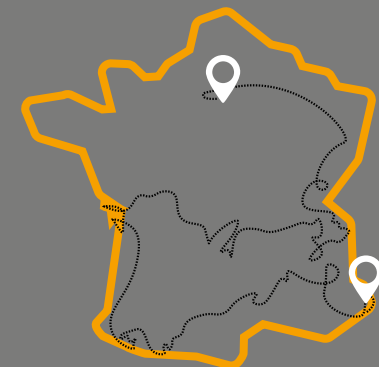
Even in its first ever running in 1903, there was the odd bump in the road. Fresh from winning the legendary Bordeaux-Paris race, Hippolyte Aucouturier was the favorite for the Tour. But the race didn’t get off to a good start for the French rider, who crossed the finish line 26th, covered in grazes and smeared in blood. Aucouturier bounced back to win stages 2 and 3. But then he was disqualified, having been rumbled taking a tow from a car. Sometimes two wheels really are better than six.



Col du Galibier in the French Alps - origin of many legends.
Picture: Franz Aberham

The Tour de France 2020 explained

The 107th edition of the Tour de France will take place from August 29 to September 20, 2020, having been shunted back from its original spot in the calendar by the coronavirus crisis (the race was originally scheduled to start on June 27). The course though, remains unchanged. Last year’s opening stage started and finished in the Belgian capital Brussels, and Copenhagen will play host in 2022. But in 2020, the Tour de France really does do what it says on the tin: the Grand Départ of the 3,470-kilometer race will be in Nice, leading on to a couple of stages on the French Riviera. In all the riders will complete 21 stages – nine flat, three hilly and eight mountain tests, including three mountain-top finishes. Plus, an individual time trial on the penultimate day will take the survivors up a 36-kilometer ascent to the Plateau La Planche des Belles Filles. The peloton will be asked to conquer the Alps, the Massif Central, the Pyrenees, the Jura mountains and the Vosges. They will contend with a total of 29 categorized climbs, and the 122-kilometer final stage culminates as usual on the Champs-Élysées in Paris. The television pictures of the Tour de France 2020 will be broadcast in 190 countries.



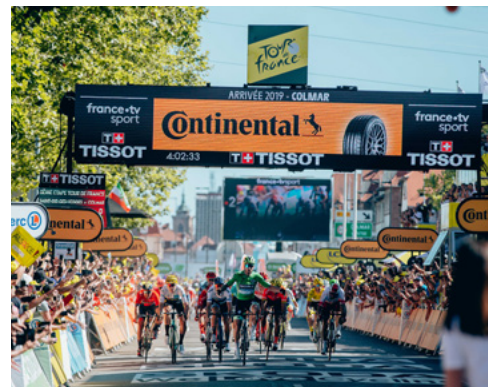


Grand Départ in Belgium's capital Brussels in 2019. Picture: Thomas Maheux



With the Continental Brigade, the tire manufacturer supports the stars of tomorrow. Picture: Thomas Maheux

Continental is Main Partner of the
Tour de France until 2022.
Picture: Thomas Maheux



The world's biggest party... ...and Main Partner Continental is at the heart of it!

The Tour de France is the biggest and longest-lasting open-air party on the planet. For three or so weeks each summer, as the world's finest cycle racers pedal their way 3,500 kilometers around France, the eyes of the world are on the Grande Nation. More than 100 TV stations broadcast the spectacle to audiences in some 190 countries, millions line the roads to cheer on their heroes in person - and in the thick of the action is Continental. As one of the Main Partners of the Tour, the technology company and tire manufacturer is committed to supporting the organizers until at least 2022. Wherever you go during this festival on two wheels, Continental will not be far away. There will be perimeter advertising at the stage finishes, of course, plus countless spectacular activities focusing on every aspect of the race, bike racing in general and road safety. For example, Continental arranges for eight amateur racers from local clubs to ride the first and last 30 kilometers of a Tour stage - at a safe distance from the pro racers, needless to say. Added to which, the "Continental Brigade" will be out and about, offering fans at the roadside free tire inspections. And in some places there will be fan parks with obstacle courses and car driving simulators. Continental lays on driver safety training for all drivers of support vehicles before the Tour begins, all official vehicles are fitted with Continental PremiumContact 6 tires, the podium ceremonies are presented by Continental, and so it goes on. However, the program for this year's Tour is very much dependent on the state of play with the coronavirus crisis. Decisions on which activities can be carried out and which may have to be put back to next year will be taken in line with the local coronavirus guidelines.

Egan Bernal on the last stage in Paris.
Picture: Pauline Ballet





The Master of the Extreme

Safe and reliable equipment is a must for a successful Tour de France. And that applies not only for the riders but also their support crews – the soigneurs, medics and team directors who rely on car tires from Continental. Andreas Schlenke developed the PremiumContact 6, which literally keeps the wheels turning on the annual dash around France.



Andreas Schlenke is proud to see "his" tire in action during the Tour.
Picture: Continental AG



Always ahead and safe on the road: The Continental Caravan. Picture: Thomas Maheux

Mr. Schlenke, all the official vehicles in the Tour de France use the PremiumContact 6 tire from Continental. As the person who developed the tire, that must be a special feeling.

Andreas Schlenke: Yes, that makes me feel very proud. It's a special accolade for our tires to be given a major role in such an important sporting event. Of course, the main spotlight is on the riders, but it's also essential the support crews can rely one hundred percent on their vehicles – and therefore on the tires they're fitted with.

Your product will be pounding the roads of France for three weeks in front of a worldwide audience. As the tire developer, aren't you concerned there'll be a puncture live on TV?

Schlenke: No, that's not something I worry about. After all, I know how solid and reliable our product is. That's one of the reasons the race organizers have decided to go with the PremiumContact 6.

The Tour de France is a very special challenge. In 2019 the riders – and all their support crews – had to contend with gale-force winds, desert heat, hail storms, icy roads and even mud-

slides. How can a single tire master such extreme conditions?

Schlenke: We use highly sophisticated testing procedures to check our technologies are up to the job. The rubber compound and tire construction must be able to withstand high and low temperatures and deal with the most varied road conditions. We act out every type of conditions a tire might possibly encounter..

Did you take into account the conditions at the Tour de France in the development of the tire? After all, the PremiumContact 6 is actually a tire for everyday use, which countless drivers around the world have fitted on their cars.

Schlenke: No, the tire was developed not for the Tour specifically, but – as you say – for everyday applications. However, this is exactly what allows the PremiumContact 6 to take all the challenges thrown up by the Tour de France in its stride. It is a master of the extreme. During the development phase it showed it could even handle significantly more taxing situations. In dry handling tests at the Nürburgring or our own test facility, the Contidrom, a tire encounters conditions – e.g. lateral forces – that are many times more extreme than they face



All official vehicles of the Tour de France are equipped with the PremiumContact 6 tire.

Picture: Pauline Ballet

in everyday use.

So there isn't a "Tour de France" edition of the tire with a special compound for Pyrenean passes?

Schlenke: No [he laughs]. The only difference from the standard tire is the fetching yellow Continental lettering on the sidewall. The Tour tire is otherwise identical to the model anyone can buy from a retailer.

Offering gradients of 20%, extreme hairpin corners and surprise outbreaks of winter weather, the Col du Grand Colombier pass in the Jura mountains is one of the highlights of the Tour. Can a standard summer tire survive here?

Schlenke: Of course. The PremiumContact 6 is a tire that works across Europe. That means it can handle everything from the Pyrenees and Alps, including France's Jura mountains, to the northern reaches of Scandinavia and the summer heat of Spain.

A modern tire is a high-tech product with integral sensors, e.g. for tire pressure monitoring systems. How important are functions like these for safety on the Tour?

Schlenke: The tire knows things a driver does not and is the vehicle's sole contact point with the road. Road conditions and the status of the tire itself – e.g. the air pressure and temperatures inside it – can be detected using these sensors. Such functions play a very important role at the Tour de France in

helping all of the support vehicles to get to the finish safely and without problems.

Are you a Tour fan yourself?

Schlenke: Yes absolutely. Bike racing has always fascinated me. I've been to the Tour de France several times – as a spectator, needless to say – and the atmosphere among the fans really is unique. So I was particularly pleased when Continental came on board as a partner of the Tour.

Do you also take part in cycle races, e.g. events open to the general public?

Schlenke: My passion for cycling hasn't stretched that far [he laughs]. I get out on the bike a lot in my spare time, though; on a very banal level, I cycle to work every morning, which is refreshing and gives me a daily hit of exercise.

The PremiumContact 6 explained

The PremiumContact 6 is a summer tire from Continental. Standout qualities include the extremely short braking distances it enables, especially in the rain; it achieves the top "A" rating on the EU Tire Label for wet grip – across all sizes. This is made possible by a newly developed crystalline silica compound. The tire also delivers an improvement in mileage performance of around 15 percent compared to its predecessor, thanks to the combination of a wear-optimized polymer blend and an extremely grippy, smooth tread pattern. The PremiumContact 6 shares properties with the high-tech SportContact 6 sports tire, giving it optimal grip, among other things – even through extremely tight, fast corners.

Continental has been a Main Partner of the Tour de France since 2019, and all of the official Tour vehicles are fitted with PremiumContact 6 tires. In 2020 the ADAC (German automobile association) crowned the tire its test winner in the category dedicated to tires for compact and mid-range cars.



“It’s all about Experience – and having the best Equipment”

Yvon Madiot will line up for team Groupama-FDJ in the Tour de France – not as a rider but at the wheel of a support car. In the following interview, he tells us more about the key elements of this highly demanding role.



Team Groupama-FDJ relies on tires from Continental
Picture: Equipe cycliste Groupama-FDJ



Yvon Madiot, Head of Sports at Groupama-FDJ
Picture: Equipe cycliste Groupama-FDJ

Mr. Madiot, you often find yourself in the thick of the action, just inches from the riders and spectators. So you need to be able to rely on your car – and the tires fitted on it.

Yvon Madiot: I have to be 100 per cent confident that the car will do what I ask of it. I need to be able to dart around obstacles, brake and accelerate quickly in all kinds of weather conditions. So yes, my equipment has to be reliable. Getting the distances right between the car and everything else on the road comes down to experience. But having the best available equipment at your disposal gives you an extra layer of reassurance.

The weather can fluctuate wildly in the Tour de France. In 2019, for example, the riders had to contend with everything from hailstorms to searing heat. That must be a challenge for you as a support car driver as well.

Madiot: Yes, absolutely. Heavy rain restricts your visibility and can make the surface you’re driving on slippery – or even muddy in some locations. The riders keep pushing hard regardless, so I can’t take my foot off the gas either. If I slowed down too much I’d become an obstacle for the riders, and that mustn’t happen. Over time you develop a sense for the weather conditions and learn how to deal with

them. I’ve never yet had a situation where I genuinely feared losing control over the car. Plus, the communications hotspots we have in every car actually help us increase safety on the road. And that means information on what’s happening on the course can be sent out quickly to the whole field..

You have to keep a close watch on everything – the riders, the course, spectator numbers, weather conditions, etc. You could really do with three pairs of eyes rather than one!

Madiot: We do ok with just the one pair [he laughs]. As I said, it’s all about experience. You train your eyes and other senses over a period of years. You have to try to think like the other guys on the road. What kind of move is a rider gearing up to execute? What crazy stunt is the fan with the French flag at the roadside about to pull? I have to be prepared for these possible scenarios – and able to react to them. Added to which, I also have a few neat features inside the car. For example, the rear-view mirror is split into two sections. One part works like a normal mirror, but the other contains a small monitor which uses images from cameras to show me exactly what’s going on directly behind my car.



The podium on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées. Picture: Thomas Maheux

Black Rubber, Yellow Jersey.

Over recent years, Continental has become synonymous with success in the Tour de France. The winners of the last three editions of the race have crossed the finish line on tires hand-made at the Continental plant in Korbach.

Jan-Niklas Jünger,
product manager for racing tires
Picture: Continental AG



What do Chris Froome, Geraint Thomas and Egan Bernal have in common? They are all pro cycle racers, they have all won the Tour de France and they have all worn the yellow jersey across the finish line in Paris on bikes fitted with Continental tires. Bernal in 2019, Thomas in 2018 and Froome in 2017 - three times in a row the German company has kitted out the Tour victor. And eight out of ten Tours in the last decade have been won on Continental tires. So Continental is not only one of the Main Partners of the Tour de France, but currently also one of the most successful equipment supplier. As well as the racers themselves, of course, credit here goes to the experts at Continental's plant in Korbach, Germany. This is where the international manufacturer's bike tires are developed and produced - by hand.

The development of a high-tech race tire presents myriad challenges. After all, it has to be up to the rigors of race action in the mountains and on the flat, and deliver optimum performance on grit, cobblestones and smooth asphalt. It will be pushed to the limits during time trials and high-speed descents alike. So just how do you develop a pro tire capable of carrying an elite rider to the podium in Paris?

Jan-Niklas Jünger is product manager for Continental's racing tires. "Talking to the riders is always part of creating a new racing tire," explains the Continental expert. "A variety of other factors also play a role in how we define the precise use profile. How fast should the tire be? How wide? How light? What requirements does it have to fulfil?" Only when those

questions have been answered can the team set about developing a prototype, which will then be put through its paces - largely by pro riders - over thousands of kilometers. Before a tire can go into series production, it also has to complete a further testing phase: the pilot run. "The pro riders are often using prototypes which are still in the advance development phase," explains Jünger. Series production for the end customers only begins once the tire has proven itself in extreme use. Amateur cyclists will not be familiar with the tires used by the pros; tubular racing tires are glued to the rim rather than hooked on.

Six pro teams are using Continental tires this year. And it seems they're doing so to good effect once again, given the "altogether very positive" reaction from the riders that Jünger reports:

"The tires the professional racers use are hand-made in Germany and contain BlackChili, a highly complex rubber compound which stands out clearly from its competitors in terms of wet grip and rolling resistance," he adds. "The pro teams also tell us that the puncture protection offered by our tires is better than that of rival products, and it seems the teams we supply suffer fewer tire problems than others during the Tour de France".

Continental also has another ace up its sleeve: the knowledge transfer between the bike and car tire departments in the development process. "As a bike tire department, this means we have expertise and materials at our disposal that a normal bike tire manufacturer wouldn't have access to," highlights Jünger.

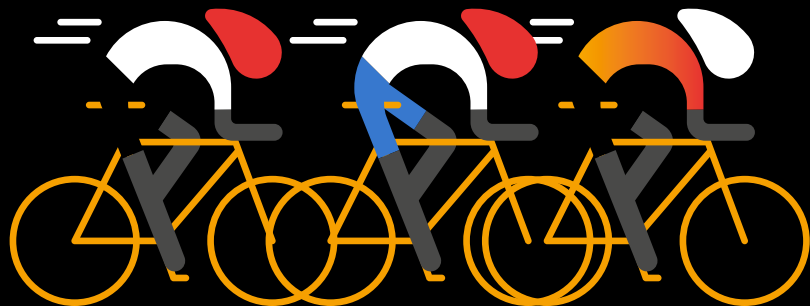
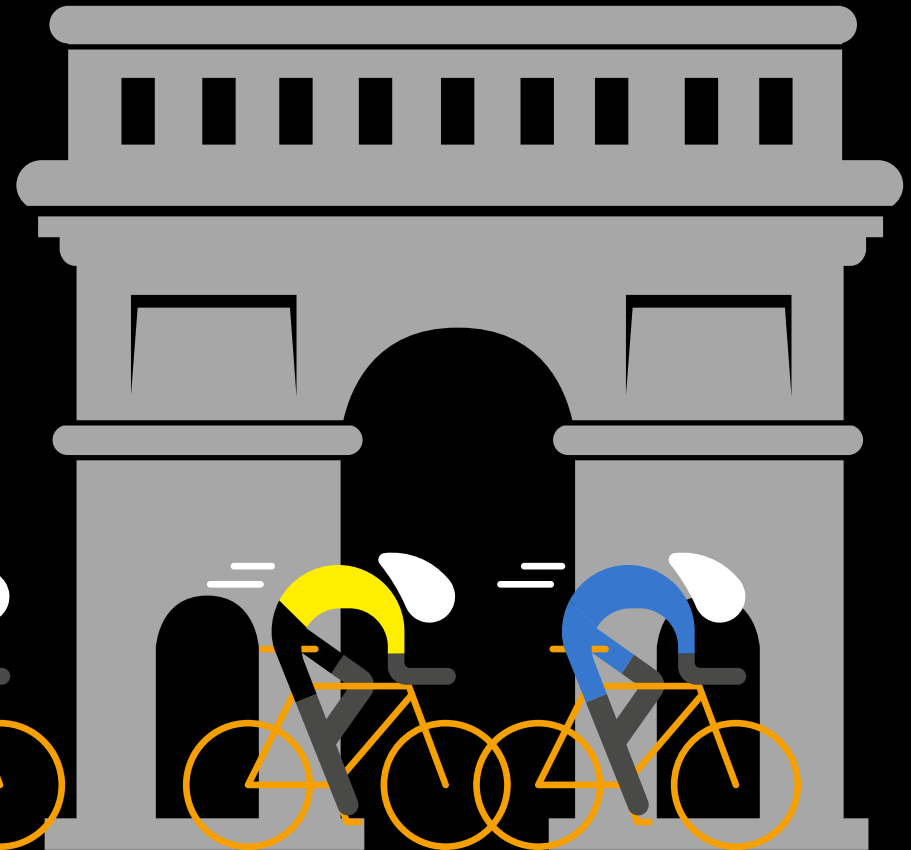


Professional teams count on it:
Tires from Continental
Picture: Equipe cycliste Groupama-FDJ

A good example here is the use of dandelion. "With dandelion, Continental has found a locally cultivatable plant which offers an alternative to sourcing latex from rubber trees," says Jün-ger. Around two years ago, a new research laboratory was set up in Germany where teams working with experts from the Fraunhofer Institute explore the industrialization of latex from dandelion roots. "As a result, we in bike tire development are also in the fortunate position of being able to use this material for our series-produced tires," he adds. The Urban Taraxagum tire using sustainable dandelion rubber was recently presented with two prizes: the Red Dot Design Award for the design of the tread and the E Bike Design & Innovation Award from Focus E-Bike magazine in the Sustainability & Green category.



Continental is supplying six teams in the Tour de France 2020: Sunweb, Groupama-FDJ, Bahrain McLaren, Arkéa-Samsic, the INEOS team of last year's winner Egan Bernal and Movistar, which won the teams' classification in 2019.





Dandelion the key to Tour de France victory?

The Tour de France is big on environmental protection. And that fits in neatly with the sustainability strategy of Continental. Claus Petschick, Head of the Sustainability department at Continental's Tires business area, tells us more - and explains why cycle racers might soon be lining up on tires produced using dandelion.

Mr. Petschick, sustainability is an important factor for the Tour de France organizers. For example, they promote eco zones along the course and encourage trash separation during the race. What can Continental, as a partner of the Tour, do to help make this a sustainable event?

Claus Petschick: Continental is a champion of sustainability, most prominently in its role as a partner of the Tour de France. The Tires business area has been engaged in sustainability-related initiatives for many years. We recently brought together all of our activities and projects into the newly created Sustain-

ability department as part of our strategy program "Vision 2030". This move allows us to target our worldwide sustainability-related activities and research projects even more effectively. A key contributor here is our partnership with the GPSNR (Global Platform for Sustainable Natural Rubber) and the company GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), through which we are seeking to establish a verifiably sustainable pathway for sourcing natural rubber. Here, our aim is to put in place a traceable and sustainable supply chain and lead by example by establishing best practices in natural rubber production. To this end, we are conducting

basic research in many areas with the goal of developing alternative raw material sources for tire production.

Can you give us an example?

Petschick: About two years ago, Continental opened a new research lab in the German region of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The teams at the Taraxagum Lab work with experts from the Fraunhofer Institute on extracting natural rubber from dandelion plants. Locating rubber plantations next to the tire factory would then bring both ecological and economic benefits; short transportation distances would significantly reduce CO2 emissions. This would also allow us to address the environmental problem of increasing deforestation and the associated conversion of forest areas to other forms of land use.

Does this mean cycle racers might be using dandelion-based tires in the future?

Petschick: Some cyclists already are! With the Urban Taraxagum, we have brought the world's first bike tire with a tread made from dandelion rubber onto the market. And where did we present it? At last year's Tour de France, of course. The pro racers aren't using them quite yet, but there is strong demand among urban cyclists for these extremely effective and, yes, sustainable tires. Extending their usage span beyond the city limits remains an option for the future.



Claus Petschick, Head of the Sustainability department at Continental's Tires business area.

Picture: Continental AG

Will cars soon be fitted with these tires as well?

Petschick: Small-series production of the bicycle tires takes place at our plant in Korbach, Germany. We haven't quite reached the same stage yet when it comes to large-scale use on cars. But we are working hard on driving forward the industrialization of dandelion-based tires. We expect to have the first series-produced tires for passenger cars ready in the next five to ten years. We have already tested some very promising experimental tires at our Contidrom facility near Hanover and at Arvidsjaur in Sweden. However, a lot of time-intensive development work is required to create a versatile-usage, high-performance product of excellent quality for customers.

Dandelion is for sure not the only magic ingredient in the tires...

Petschick: No, but it is a particularly exciting one. It goes without saying that we are working in a number of different areas to cons-

tantly increase the sustainability of our production processes and products – in line with the strategy I mentioned earlier. To this end, all the materials in a tire are tested repeatedly and, as far as possible, replaced with more environment-friendly alternatives.

For example, we have developed a special tire for hybrid vehicles whose rolling resistance is around 30 percent lower than that of a standard tire.

The vehicle therefore has to use its combustion engine for propulsion far less frequently and it covers greater distances on electric power.

So rolling resistance is key to more sustainable mobility?

Petschick: That's right. In addition to safety, minimizing rolling resistance is one of our principal aims in the research and development process; it means fuel and electric power consumption can be cut substantially. So if the support cars in future editions of the Tour de France are all hybrids or electric, we will have the right tire ready for them.



The new Urban Taraxagum
Picture: Continental AG



A Sporting Tale

The Tour de France, the World Cup, the Champions League, marathon world records - Continental has been a committed and valued partner in the world's biggest sporting headline-makers for many years.

Vittorio Brumotti bounces his way towards a sheer drop. The low sun sends out a dazzling glare, but Brumotti keeps his eyes on the prize. Which is advisable when you're hopping from boulder to boulder in the Grand Canyon. On a bike. The Italian extreme sportsman is exploring America's legendary natural wonder in a way literally nobody else would dare. Inches to his left and right, rock faces descend vertically for almost two kilometers. One slip and it's curtains for Vittorio.

Just to reiterate: Brumotti isn't skipping between the rocks on foot, he's cycling - or more accurately "cycle-hopping". Up on the pedals more often than not, he displays incredible precision. It all looks rather perilous, but the road bike freestyler has it covered: Vittorio Brumotti is one of the few stars of the scene capable of mastering even the most challenging conditions with such a cool head and deftness of touch. Plus, a strong partner has his back: Continental supports the road bike freestyling master, whose videos - including this breathtaking foray into the Grand Canyon - have been viewed millions of times on YouTube.

This hook-up ensures Brumotti can rely on the best possible grip for his spectacular rides in the country, and underscores Continental's status as a leading partner in cycling. Indeed, the company is also a sponsor of the world's premier bike races – the Tour de Suisse, Giro d'Italia, Vuelta a España and, of course, the biggest one of all: the Tour de France. As well as its role as a Main Partner of the Grand Boucle, Continental also supports five teams in the World Tour. Egan Bernal rode on Continental tires to victory in last year's Tour de France, the third triumph in a row for the company, whose high-tech cycle racing tires are made by hand in Korbach, Germany.

However, Continental isn't only a valued partner and prominent name in cycle racing; the company can look back on many decades of involvement in other elite sports as well. It has been working with equipment manufacturer adidas for more than ten years, and develops high-grip soles for the brand's running shoes. The rubber compound created in Continental's labs improves the shoes' grip by as much as 30 percent, and the technology company has played its part in a number of marathon wins and world records. In 2014, for example, Kenya's Dennis Kimetto broke the marathon world record in Berlin, crossing the finish line in a sensational time of 2:02.57.

Continental can also reflect on many years of involvement in the football World Cup. As a main sponsor of the FIFA World Cup, the UEFA European Championship and many national teams, the company has helped make history – and experienced it first-hand. In 2006 Continental was a sponsor of the "Sommermärchen" World Cup in its home country (the company is headquartered in Hanover, Germany). And its World Cup story reached a pinnacle when Germany won the 2014 tournament in Brazil. Continental has a long tradition of supporting football. The technology company had already been a partner of Germany's domestic club cup competition and the UEFA Champions League, as well as a sponsor of FC Bayern Munich – winner of a record number of Bundesliga titles.



Dennis Kimetto on the finish line in Berlin 2014. Picture: Picture Images



Triathlete Sarah Crowley on her way to 3rd place in the Ironman-World Cup in Hawaii. Of course on tires from Continental.

Picture: www.instagram.com/sarah_stan_crowley

Since 2010 Continental has also been an official sponsor of Major League Soccer, the US pro football league which has showcased the talents of global stars such as David Beckham and Zlatan Ibrahimović during this period. As official sponsor of the US Men's, Women's and Youth National Teams, Continental keeps close tabs on the development of football state-side. And Continental is active in the booming football market in China, too, as an official sponsor of the Chinese Football Association. The international supplier company also supports the Africa Cup of Nations as a tire sponsor. Promoting and supporting women's football is a particular area of focus for Continental, which has championed women's football for many years as shirt sponsor of the North Carolina Football Club women's team in the US and official partner of the England Senior Women's Team.

Away from football, the sponsoring decision-makers at Continental have always had a soft spot for mavericks - extreme athletes like Patrick Seabase. The Swiss cyclist is one of the best fixed-gear riders around. These guys do their stuff on single-speed bikes with a rigid hub, and Seabase has ridden over five Pyrenean passes that also feature in the Tour de France on one...in a single day. Given that the pedals on "fixies" keep turning as long as the rear wheel is moving, this was energy-sapping stuff and a compelling watch for millions online.



Christiano Ronaldo against Laurent Koscielny at the UEFA Euro final 2016. Picture: Continental AG



Patrick Seabase - one of the best fixed-gear riders.
Picture: www.instagram.com/patrickseabase

“A big chunk of Europe”

Whether it's actor Ben Stiller, cycle racing legend Eddy Merckx or menhir delivery man Obelix, when it comes to the Tour de France everyone has an opinion. Read on for a selection of pithy bon mots uttered at one time or another about the world's biggest annual sporting event.

From the first kilometer to the last, the Tour puts smiles on people's faces all along the course. The social heritage of the Tour outweighs even its sporting legacy. Watching the Tour gives the spectators at roadside such joy, regardless of their nationality or age.

Christian Prudhomme, Director of the Tour de France

The Tour is a mosaic of a thousand pieces. An hour before the riders start each stage, the promotions guys head out onto the course. There's music blaring, caps and promotional freebies are thrown out to the spectators. Of course, the battles between the riders in the mountains are captivating. But perhaps the most important element of the event is the sights and sounds. The Tour gives the French the chance to get to know their country.

Jean-Paul Ollivier, French TV journalist

How about we organize a tour around France? With various stages and rest days?

Géo Lefèvre, editor of sports newspaper L'Auto-Vélo, to his boss Henri Desgrange on November 20, 1902

The Tour de France is as dramatic as a Nascar race, just without explosions.

Robin Williams, US actor and Oscar winner (for Good Will Hunting), died in 2014

If you win on the Tour, you've shown that you can do it against the best.

Jörg Werner, cycle racing manager who discovered riders including Tony Martin and John Degenkolb

The Tour de France has finished and I fear that this second edition of the event has also been the last.

Henri Desgrange, founding father of the Tour de France in the early 20th century. (The second running of the race in 1904 had been beset by scandals.)

It never gets easier, you just go faster.

Greg LeMond, former US pro cycle racer and three-times winner of the Tour de France



»» The Tour de France is more than sport. It is culture, history, a piece of Franco-German and also European heritage. It is a large chunk of Europe.

Florian Naß, cycle racing expert at German TV station ARD

»» If you want to know how important a victory is, look who came second.

Federico Bahamontes, former cycle racer and first Spaniard to win the Tour de France (1959)

»» I'm a Tour de France fan. Men riding bikes for five hours at a time, for three weeks, every day – I watch every darn minute on the TV. If you miss just one stage, you might as well not have seen any of it.

Ben Stiller, US actor (starred in films including Night at the Museum)

»» The spectators, this amazing scenery, the immense Tour entourage and media. For something like this to have taken place on this scale for over 100 years is like a wonder of the world.

Tino Pohlmann, photographer at the Tour de France

»» I watch every Tour de France down in my basement. I watch these guys ride and ride and ride, they keep that cadence going, at speeds from 25-60 mph, for five or six hours. It's outstanding. Those guys are real athletes.

Bo Jackson, baseball legend who also found fame in the NFL

»» Hey, Asterix, the Romans aren't attacking us any more...Do you think we've annoyed them?

Obelix, menhir delivery man, in Asterix and the Banquet

»» Once you've been to the Tour, you'll want to go back again and again. It's simply fantastic.

Karsten Migels, commentator for broadcaster Eurosport

»» We've been a sponsor of the Tour de France for 38 years and of the yellow jersey for 32 years. The Tour is an extraordinary media event – and deeply engrained in society.”

Michel Mathieu, CEO of LCL (Le Crédit Lyonnais)

»» Over all these years, my favorite race has always been the Tour de France – the biggest bike event in the world. My first Tour, in 1969, will always be the most important race of my life. When I won the Tour, it was the fulfillment of a childhood dream. When I was ten years old, I used to get on my bike and act out bits of the Tour de France.

Eddy Merckx, "The Cannibal", cycle racing legend and five-times Tour winner





Continental employee Thai Do among its treasures
Picture: Ben Wiesenfarth

Love Actually

Thai Do is a bicycle enthusiast. The Continental employee has a large collection of two-wheelers – and even named his son after a bicycle manufacturer.

For many fans around the world, the Tour de France is the highlight of the sporting calendar. However, there are very few for whom the Tour has ever been as important as for cycling fan Thai Do. In 2017, while he was representing his employer Continental tires at the German start of the Tour held in Düsseldorf, his son was born. However, the Do family had yet to come up with a name for their baby. When Thai Do then had the shirt number of German rider Christian Knees signed for his newborn son by a total of four members of Team Sky, who were teammates of eventual Tour winner Chris Froome, his efforts to find a name stepped up a gear. Thai Do spontaneously decided to name his son after a bicycle manufacturer. To be precise, he named him after the Italian racing bike manufacturer Ernesto Colnago. His youngest son is therefore now called Anton Ernesto – Anton, incidentally, because former Swiss cycling pro Tony Rominger is Do Junior's godfather. "We don't have any Italian roots in the family," says the 47-year-old father. "But the name just sounds beautiful."

The Do family may not have any Italian roots, but they do have a passion that makes any emotional Italian seem more like a reserved Scandinavian. A passion for bicycles. "I currently own exactly 208 bikes," says Do. And each one is special to him. Racing bikes, as well as time trial bikes and mountain bikes. Each one is lovingly cared for by him. They are stored at several locations, but he would love to exhibit them in a single place. Thai dreams of a bicycle museum of his own. He just needs to find the right location.

Thai Do has been working for Continental for 20 years. He started as an event promoter and is now the southern regional sales manager for bicycle tires. Through his work at Continental he has managed to acquire some real treasures over the years. "My collection includes bikes from Lance Armstrong, Tony Martin and Jan Ullrich," says Do. He is not interested in the questionable past of some of the athletes, or in the financial value of the bikes. What matters to him are the stories he associates with the bicycles.

In fact, the most highly prized items in Do's collection are not the bikes owned by Ullrich or Armstrong, but the two-wheelers that he purchased for his two children, Anton Ernesto and his four-year older sister Anna, when they were born. At birth, Anton received what else but a Colnago bike as a gift, which is now one of the centerpieces of his collection.

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