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British Rider of the Year

25 men & women who took the 2017 season by storm

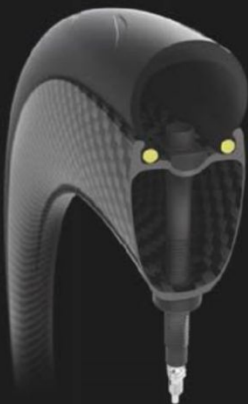


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THIS ISSUE 28/12

Rider of the year

I'd love to be able to tell you that compiling our British Rider of the Year list is done scientifically with a cast iron scoring system that measures the achievements of each and every rider fairly and objectively against their peers.

But it's not. And there's a good reason for that. The riders, the races they compete in and the opponents they come up against vary so wildly that such a system will never exist. The only way to decide the winner is through constant debate until one rider rises to the top.

The rider who did that this year was winning from early January until the week before Christmas and did so across all disciplines. They had a stand-out year that blew most others out of the water.

Even then a curveball was thrown our way late in the day. It won't escape your notice that Chris Froome is not in the list. Undeniably he was a major factor in our conversations until the unwelcome news broke of his adverse finding for salbutamol at the Vuelta. While this is a reputational disaster for Froome and Sky, nothing is yet decided. But while the question mark remains we decided to remove him from the list. Email me at cycling@timeinc.com and let me know your top three.



Simon Richardson
Editor

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Tom Pidcock, Britain's latest cycling star, p28

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IN FOCUS

RICHARDS ROARS TO VICTORY

Evie Richards capitalised on a successful summer of U23 mountain bike results to storm to victory in the elite women's World Cup cyclo-cross, in Namur, Belgium earlier this month. On a parcours that required good handling skills, Richards, starting at the back of the grid, looked comfortable as she worked her way through a high class field to finish 15 seconds ahead of fellow Brit, and early leader, Nikki Brammeier. Belgium is getting used to the sound of the Great Britain and Northern Ireland national anthem, with Tom Pidcock, returning from a training block, winning the U23 race. Brammeier dedicated second place to her friend Sharon Laws, who sadly died of cancer the day before.

Photo: © Balint Hamvas/cyclephotos



2017 British Rider of the Year

It's been a stellar year for British cycling fans, with UK riders winning across the globe. But which one has clinched the biggest prize of all?

The process of compiling our annual British Rider of the Year starts as soon as the season does. Making a mental note of any early outstanding performances is essential when the buzz and excitement of summer and the Tour de France can drown out those distant performances back in early spring.

The *Cycling Weekly* award has always been about more than just results. It's about excitement, improvement and a rider achieving things they've never done before.

With this in mind right from the summer there were two contenders out front: Tom Pidcock and Chris Froome. On the one hand Froome was the consummate professional, polite — if a little unexciting — but he was

winning the biggest bike races it's possible to win. On the other, Pidcock is a vat of charisma distilled into the body of an 18-year-old and he has been a winner in multiple disciplines.

With his Vuelta victory the pendulum seemed to have decisively swung in favour of Froome. But Pidcock's victory in the Junior World Championship time trial was enough to swing the pendulum back into a realm of uncertainty and had he claimed victory in the road race as well it might have been enough to put him decisively back to the top.

Then earlier this month, it emerged that Froome had returned an adverse analytical finding for double the amount of asthma drug salbutamol that an athlete is allowed to have in their urine during the final week of the Vuelta.

Whether that finding will result in him being stripped of that title wasn't known at the time of going to press. There is a persuasive argument that any level of salbutamol may not enhance performance, but the rules are what they are and the integrity of the sport we love depends on them being respected.

The presence of the high amounts of the drug in Froome's urine raises questions about the result that was unarguably his biggest of 2017. It's impossible to assess his achievements and therefore place him in our list.

Pidcock's results and star quality make him one of the most exciting young riders of any nationality and we can't help but feel that being *CW's* rider of the year is just one of many bigger achievements still to come.

25

Dan Evans

It wasn't easy for Dan Evans to reclaim his British hill-climb champion crown from 2014. Two years in a row he's looked good only to falter at the crucial moment. But that wasn't to be the case in 2017 as Evans won 11 of the 13 climbs he entered, culminating in National Championship victory on a 1,572m course in Northumberland.



24 Jacob Vaughan

Seven wins on foreign soil made Vaughan a standout rider in the international junior field through 2017. In UK races the next VC Londres wunderkind showed off the junior national stripes by taking the scalps of many UK pros in National B races. His efforts were rewarded as the Belgian Lotto-Soudal development team made him an offer as soon as he crossed the line at the Worlds in Norway.



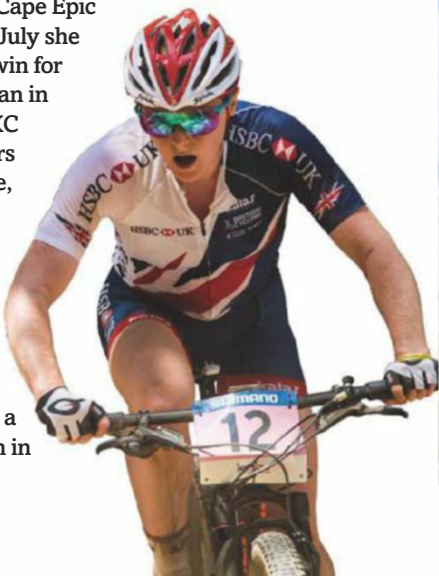
23 James Knox

Anonymous on the UK scene, 22-year-old Knox focused his efforts internationally in 2017. The Team Wiggins rider notched up a number of second place finishes, most notably at Liège-Bastogne-Liège (U23) and stages in the Tour de l'Avenir and Tour Alsace. His reward was a contract with Belgium superteam Quick Step, only the second Brit to be signed by Patrick Lefevere. The first was Mark Cavendish.



22 Annie Last

Back with a bang after a tough couple of years, Last showed early-season promise with second overall at the Cape Epic stage race. In July she took the first win for a British woman in a World Cup XC race in 20 years at Lenzerheide, Switzerland. She topped off her comeback in August with a Worlds XC silver — the first medal for a British woman in the event.



21 Scott Davies

Delivered once again on his ability against the clock by winning the National U23 Time Trial Championships for the fourth time in four years. Davies followed up this impressive result with top-five GC finishes at the Tour Alsace and Giro Ciclistico d'Italia. 2018 will be a season of adaptation for the Welshman as he moves up to the WorldTour with Dimension Data.



Photos: SW Pix, Andy Jones

20 Jacob Hennessy

Cambridge-born Hennessy really took a step forward in 2017. His stand-out result was his win at the U23 Ghent-Wevelgem. Following this year on the British Cycling senior academy, the sprinter will ply his trade at Mitchelton-Scott in 2018 — the Continental level little brother of Orica-Scott, which confusingly will also be known as Mitchelton-Scott in 2018 — a just reward for a season that included other international wins in Trophée Paris-Arras and the GP Dewailly. Moving to a Continental level team next year will give the 21-year-old even greater opportunities and you wouldn't bet against him moving up another level.



19 Ben Swift

Swift had a solid year with UAE after his seven years with Sky. Although it lacked in victories, there were some fine performances at the Dauphiné and the road Worlds. A promising start netted a fourth place at the Tour Down Under, but summer saw Swift really hit his stride, with top 10s in the Dauphiné, Tour de France, and the National road race, where he came fifth. His Dauphiné performance also featured a cracking ride on Alpe d'Huez, where he was second behind Sky's Peter Kennaugh. This he followed up in September with fifth in the bunch sprint at the Worlds in Bergen.



18 Ian Bibby

Bibby's debut season with JLT-Condor started with a bang, being the first British rider to bag a win in 2017. His overall victory at the Mitchelton Bay criteriums in Australia was the prelude to a number of impressive results across the globe through the year. Strong performances at the Herald Sun Tour, An Post Rás and Tour of Korea were mixed in with impressive rides against WorldTour opposition. These stood him in good stead for a number of victories on home soil. He won Velothon Wales, the Lincoln and Chorley GPs, and was third at the National Road Race Championships.



17

Lizzie Deignan

As a former world champion, Classics winner and — most importantly — two-time CW Rider of the Year, it would be easy to be underwhelmed by Deignan's results this year. There's no doubt that her three pro wins in 2017 are below the blockbuster performances of 2015 and 2016 that we've come to expect, but her season was hampered by injury at a key juncture. April was Deignan's 2017 peak as she finished second in Amstel Gold, Flèche Wallonne and Liège.

16 Alice Barnes

Consistency throughout a season is a rare and precious commodity, but Alice Barnes had it in spades through 2017. She started delivering at the Tour Down Under in January and continued through to a third place finish at the European U23 road race in August. The highlight of her 2017 season came with her first UCI victory at the BeNe Tour on stage one to take the leader's jersey. The 22-year-old finished second overall as only the great Marianne Vos managed to get the better of her. The younger



of the Barnes sisters will be linking up with her sister Hannah next season, making it a family affair at Canyon-SRAM.



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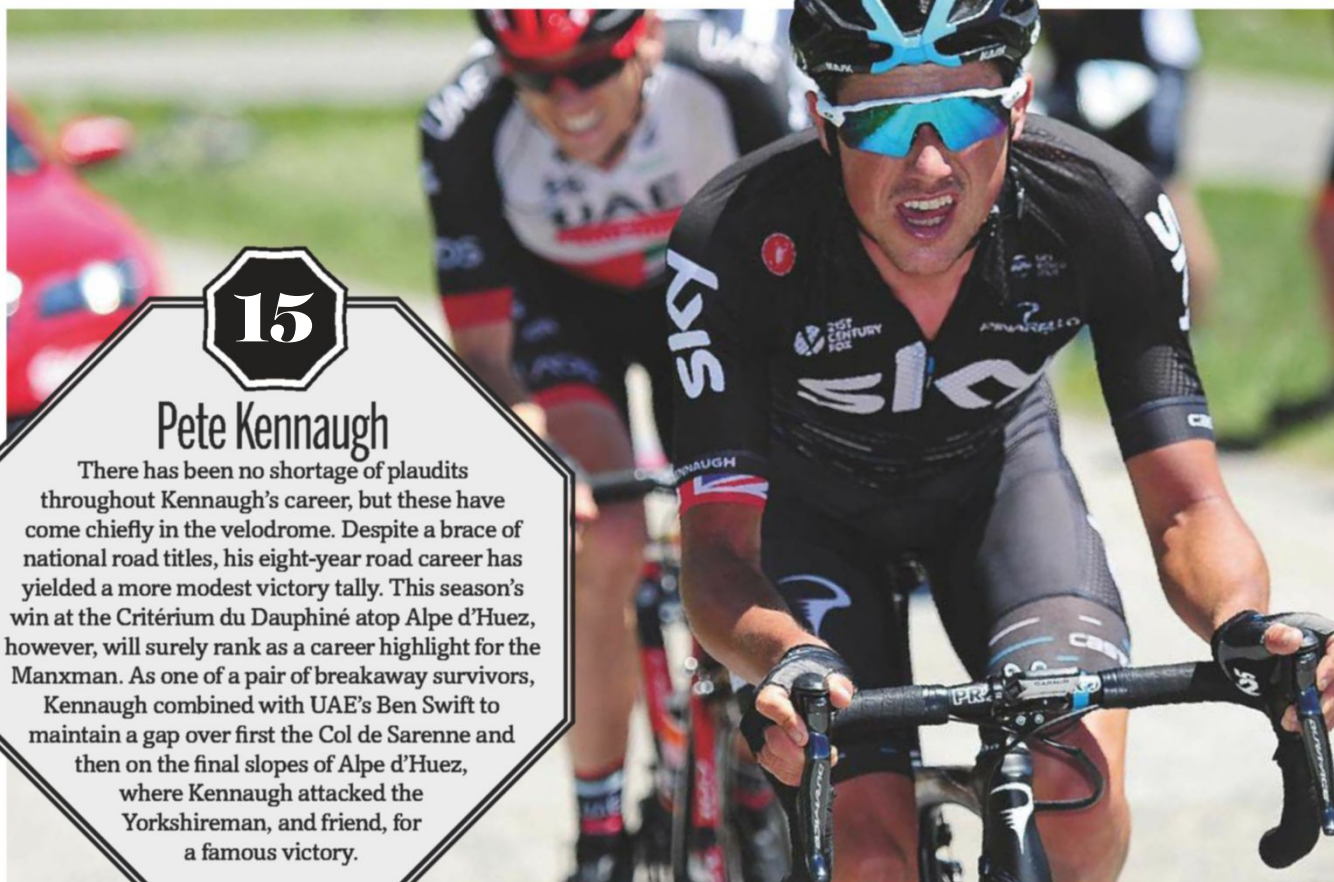


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15

Pete Kennaugh

There has been no shortage of plaudits throughout Kennaugh's career, but these have come chiefly in the velodrome. Despite a brace of national road titles, his eight-year road career has yielded a more modest victory tally. This season's win at the Critérium du Dauphiné atop Alpe d'Huez, however, will surely rank as a career highlight for the Manxman. As one of a pair of breakaway survivors,

Kennaugh combined with UAE's Ben Swift to maintain a gap over first the Col de Sarenne and then on the final slopes of Alpe d'Huez, where Kennaugh attacked the Yorkshireman, and friend, for a famous victory.

14

James Gullen

Winning the Irish Rás often marks riders out for further greatness. This year's winner James Gullen will hope so, especially as the course didn't really cater to one of his biggest skills — time trialling, in which he maintained a perfect record in CTT events in 2017, repeatedly breaking course records. He was also third at the British National Time Trial Championship.

A stage win at the Tour of Taiwan in March kicked things off before a season dotted with impressive results including a second place at the Beaumont Trophy, fourth in the prologue of the Tour of Portugal and top 30 in the time trial at the Tour of Britain against a world-class field. The 28-year-old will be looking to build on that success in 2018 with further stage-race wins and time trial victories.



13

Chris Lawless

If a rider signs for Team Sky for the following season you can be sure they impressed them greatly the previous year. When you analyse Lawless's performances and achievements over the 2017 season, it is clear why one of the biggest teams in world cycling were keen to acquire his services.

Firstly Lawless gained success on home turf with top 10 stage finishes at the Tour de Yorkshire and Tour of Britain, alongside an impressive showing at the National Championships in June, which included a second-place finish in the senior road race and fourth in the under-23 time trial. The Axeon-Hagens Berman rider went on to showcase his talents abroad with victories at the ZLM Tour, Tour de Beauce and Tour de l'Avenir. Combine all of these together and it is clear to see why Team Sky believe Lawless has the ability to take the next step in 2018.



12

John Dibben

A fully signed up WorldTour pro for the first time, and riding for Team Sky no less, 2017 has been a big year for Dibben. Often riding alongside Owain Doull and Tao Geoghegan Hart as part of Sky's triptych of youthful Brits, the season was a long series of firsts for Dibben — occasionally in terms of placings, such as his time trial win at the Tour of California, but more often as far as experience goes. Among others he rode his debut men's Tour of Flanders, Paris-Roubaix and World Championship road race, garnering praise for his ride in Bergen where he supported team-mate Ben Swift to fifth place. He was also part of the young Sky team that rode to victory in June's quirky Hammer Series.



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11

Adam Yates

If anyone thought Adam Yates's white jersey win at the Tour de France in 2016 might be a fluke, that notion was swiftly dismissed in 2017. He didn't manage to reach those heights in 2017 but a narrow second place in the young rider competition at the Giro d'Italia, the same at the Tour of Catalonia, and his first race win since 2015 at the GP Industria & Artigianato over Rigoberto Urán cemented his reputation. The Bury-born rider had a relatively easy summer before taking to the startline of the Vuelta. He faded at the Spanish race, the first time he has ridden two Grand Tours in a season, but will be hoping the punishment pays off in 2018 when he may well return to the Tour.



10

Hannah Barnes

Looking at the bare facts, you could say one race win in 2017 shouldn't bring much cause for celebration for Hannah Barnes. But when that sole stage win was at the Giro Rosa, combined with her impressive consistency, it puts her in the conversation about Britain's best.

The best example of that consistency came at the Women's Tour, where she finished in the top six on four of the five stages. These results culminated in a third place on the general classification as well as winning the best British rider jersey. The taste for the podium was to continue at the road National Championships a few weeks later in June, where Barnes finished second in the time trial and third in the road race. Her next appearance on the podium was on the top step as she beat some of the world's best sprinters on the flat finish into San Vendemiano on stage three of the Giro Rosa. However, the Kent rider had one more key role to play on the world stage in 2017.

Just days after finishing ninth in the Worlds time trial Barnes animated the road race and mixed it with the world's best in Bergen. Ultimately it would finish in a somewhat underwhelming 14th place, but it certainly showed her potential at the highest level and what could be possible in the coming years.



What they say...



Alice Barnes, Drops Cycling rider and Hannah's sister

"I think she's become a bit more confident in herself this year, which showed at the Worlds where she rode a really attacking race. It didn't quite pay off in the end but it was really impressive and she is still learning a lot and is quite young so I think it is exciting looking forward.

"Everyone assumes that we are rivals, but we are not at all — we want the best for each other. She is always making sure I am OK and that I am able to train properly, especially because I'm quite new to using power, so she is trying to help me learn about that."



8

Hayley Simmonds

This was the year that the Worcestershire woman showed that her talents extended well beyond time trialling. Last season all her top 10s in the international pro peloton were in time trials but this year she achieved five such results in road races. Wins in the National 10 and National 25 events, plus four international time trial top 10s, showed she hadn't lost her touch in the 'race of truth' either.

Simmonds warmed up with a quiet spring campaign, peaking in the Basque Country where she was sixth on stage four's cat-one finish and ninth on GC.

7

Steve Cummings

The first half of the veteran Merseysider's campaign was an almost unbroken tale of woe that was practically the antithesis of his stellar 2016, when he won all season long, including of course, coming first in this very listing.

But with most of the season — and at 36 years old, most of his career — behind him, Cummings showed spirit and tenacity to stage a comeback that saw him wearing champion's stripes at the Tour de France.

First illness, then a Basque Country crash that left him with multiple shoulder injuries which were then — insult to injury — exacerbated considerably by a simple domestic fall hampered the first part of his year. A fourth place in the Tirreno-Adriatico time trial ahead of specialists Maciej Bodnar, Alex Dowsett

9

Alice Lethbridge

The Surrey-based teacher may well look back on her beating of Beryl Burton's 50-year-old 12-hour comp record as the zenith of her cycling

year, but in truth she is spoiled for choice when it comes to picking her own season's high point.

During the course of this summer Lethbridge, on top of that '12' result, won the women's BBAR, the National 100, set a new 100-mile comp record, was part of the Drag2Zero team that set new comp records at 25 and 50 miles, and achieved silver in the National 10 behind Hayley Simmonds.

A superb array of achievements. But considering the legend from which she took it, the 12-hour record — recorded at the Eastern Counties '12' in August — must surely be the most notable. What's more, it was Lethbridge's first ever '12'. Her 285.65 miles was an 8.4-mile beating of Burton's 1967 record which, at the time it was set, was faster even than the men's record.

In June Lethbridge had highlighted her '100' form by trimming the comp record to 3:42.37 at another Eastern Counties event, before underlining it three weeks later by taking the '100' title. The silver medal was won by Drag2Zero team-mate Kate Allan, who also proved a worthy BBAR adversary for Lethbridge. Ultimately, Lethbridge triumphed again, recording 28.22mph across 25, 50 and 100 miles, against Allan's 28.095.

Considering she is still relatively new to the sport, there is likely to be more to come from Lethbridge, who now ranks among the most exciting prospects on the domestic time trial scene.

What they say...



Simon Smart, Drag2Zero boss

"We started working with Alice this time last year.

The first thing that shocked me about her was just how dedicated she is. She works really hard in her day job and she does her turbo sessions at five in the morning. So she really is very organised and professional.

"We're really proud that she's on the team and that she's done so well this year, but I think the exciting thing is there is so much more to come.

"I think we'll see an improvement in the shorter distances but her physiology is more suited to the longer distances — she just wants to be great at everything!"

Her season reached its zenith mid-summer as, 10 days after winning the CTT Circuit Championship, Simmonds was fourth and eighth respectively in the National Championship time trial and road race. Having won the time trial for the last two years in a row she was unhappy to miss out on a medal, but declared herself happy with her ride.

Any disappointment was short-lived: a month later she rode to third on GC in the six-day Thüringen Ladies Tour, taking a road stage win along the way. "What an incredible week," she tweeted afterwards. "Proudest moment of my career to stand on a podium with inspiring riders I have looked up to since starting cycling!"

But Simmonds didn't lose sight of her roots, and underlined her 10 and 25 titles with third place at the Chrono des Nations in October.

It's hard not to feel that Simmonds has found her feet this year, and there must be plenty more to come.



What they say...



Graeme Herd, Team WNT directeur sportif

"Hayley was a really good signing for us.

She's made a significant jump in level and it really helped our profile as a new UCI team.

"She's really determined and focused. Previously she was very time trial focused and I think this year she's switched it a little bit to take into account stage racing more. She's still maintained a really good level in time trialling, yet she's made steps elsewhere.

"Even though she didn't actually get a medal in the British Championships, it was really, really close. I think what you've got now is almost an international level standard in time trialling in the UK, so it's not really a step down."

and Tom Dumoulin seemed to be the only break in the clouds.

Things were looking bleak for the Dimension Data man, but on June 22 at the National Championship time trial on the Isle of Man, he returned to racing and brought with him the familiar panache we've come to expect. He won first the time trial and then, three days later, the National road race.

After a solid ride in the Tour de France which, he revealed afterwards, he finished with two fractured vertebrae incurred in a stage-18 crash, Cummings added another win in September, taking a lumpy Giro della Toscana stage from a small group.



What they say...



Roger Hammond, Dimension Data directeur sportif

"It was about as bad a season you could imagine for Steve really, in terms of bad luck. To have that awful crash, then a fall and then a horrendous surgery to correct it... to even have come back at the Tour was

testament to Steve's professionalism.

"From the team's point of view we all took our hats off to him really. I don't think there are too many riders in the world that could have done it, to be honest. And then to break two vertebrae in the Tour... most people would have just said right, enough's enough this year, I'm done — but he came back to a very, very high level."



6

Geraint Thomas

Looking broadly at Geraint Thomas's season, you would perhaps think it was a tale of two Grand Tours ended abruptly by crashes. In a sense, when competing at the highest level of the sport, performing when it matters and reaching the goals that are set out is what makes a rider elite. However, delve a little deeper and in spite of these disappointments, Thomas excelled throughout 2017.

When you consider wearing the yellow jersey at any point can make a career, Thomas's stunning time trial

ride in a soaking wet Düsseldorf on stage one of the Tour de France is hardly an achievement to be sniffed at. The Welshman held on to the maillot jaune until stage five, where he still maintained a second place on GC before crashing out of the race on stage nine.

However, it was the Giro d'Italia that was perhaps the most definitive 'what might have been' in the Welshman's career so far. Heading into the 100th edition of the Giro in scintillating form after a top five finish at Tirreno-Adriatico and winning the Tour of the Alps, the Team Sky man looked to be timing his form to perfection. However, despite looking strong on the first summit finish to Mount Etna and even better on the time trial stage, it was a collision with a police motorbike on stage nine that scuppered his chances and ultimately led to an early flight home ahead of stage 13.

It is likely, though, that the 2018 season will allow Thomas another crack at Grand Tour leadership.

What they say...



Luke Rowe,
Team Sky rider

"G's work ethic is second to none — he is always hungry, he's a hard

trainer and one of the most dedicated people I know. From the outside he can seem a bit rushed and just goes with the flow but he is a super planner and super organiser.

"To crash out of the Giro d'Italia and Tour de France was gutting and we still haven't seen his full three-week Grand Tour result, so there are still a few question marks there, but not in my eyes.

"I think he can go to a Grand Tour and battle for a podium. Whether he can win it, time will tell. But I think the characteristics and capabilities are definitely there, he just needs a nice clean run and a set of stabilisers."

5

Elinor Barker

Rio team pursuit gold medallist Barker impressed in this typically challenging post-Olympic year, scoring her first pro road win and winning a rainbow jersey on the track.

Riding for a combination of Team GB and the Matrix Fitness road team, Barker made a relatively low-key start to the year with a National Championships silver and bronze in the omnium and scratch race respectively. But come April, and the Track World Championships in Hong Kong, Barker had stepped up a gear or three. Having already won silver medals in the scratch and Madison races,

Barker put in a fine performance in the points race to go one better and bring home the rainbow jersey. She teamed up with points race expert Sarah Hammer (USA) mid-race to take a lap on the field, but when Hammer went solo to take a further lap later on, Barker was left needing to do the same herself in order to win. This she managed, before going on to beat Hammer in the sprint to take her first individual world title.

In July, Barker went on to take her first professional road race win in the BeNe Ladies Tour in Belgium and the Netherlands. She won the stage 2a bunch sprint in Sint Laureins ahead of Marianne Vos (WM3 Pro Cycling) and Alicia González Blanco (Lointek). A few months later she underlined her versatility with a fine supporting ride in the World Championships road race in Bergen which saw her riding in the leading break in the latter part of the race. Barker also achieved a top-20 placing in the Worlds time trial and top fives in both the National road race and time trial.

What they say...



Paul Manning, women's endurance coach at British Cycling

"Elinor has relished the opportunity to turn her focus away from the team pursuit this year and has targeted different events at major competitions with success, most notably being crowned the world champion in the points race and the European champion in the Madison.

"Elinor has also committed herself to her road race aspirations this year, winning a stage of the prestigious BeNe Tour and taking the overall win at Rás na mBan.

"As one of the most experienced members of the squad, Elinor has presented herself as a role model to the newer members of the team, which has helped their development as they step up and succeed on the world stage. It has been great to see."



Photo: simon@sympix.com



Katie Archibald

Laura who? That's the question British track racing fans are left asking as in 2017 Katie Archibald has not so much grasped the mantle of Britain's premier track rider as seized it, stitched her name on it and promptly dyed it to match her hair.

She claims she took time off after last year's Olympics, but it was barely noticeable as she started winning races again last October and carried that momentum into 2017. She won three national track titles in January, the national omnium title in February and

the world omnium title in April. She went on to retain her European omnium title in October before topping the rankings at Six Day London.

Freed of the intensity of an Olympic year, Archibald has also shone on the road, finishing second at the National Championship road race behind Lizzie Deignan and ahead of top level pro riders Hannah Barnes and Dani Rowe and winning two rounds of the Tour Series (one in a TTT) and the Women's Cicle Classic. So relentless has she been in bludgeoning pelotons into submission that her longest stint without a win in 2017 was a mere 69 days. And she has still found time to be an excellent weekly columnist in these pages.

Archibald's wins in the omnium, Madison and the team pursuit mean that when Laura Kenny does return to competition from maternity leave she will have a serious fight on her hands to win a spot back. Given Archibald is such a ferocious competitor we can't imagine that she'd want it any other way.

What they say...



**Rochelle Gilmore,
Wiggle-High5 team boss**

"Katie is an athlete I have been watching closely for the past few years and trying to sign on behalf of the Wiggle-High5 team — for many years! Finally she will join us in 2018.

"Katie is not the smoothest or most elegant cyclist on the bike. However, she is an absolute powerhouse and what makes her the incredible athlete she is her attitude and personality.

"The most impressive thing I saw from Katie was an intermediate sprint during the women's RideLondon event this season. She bridged a sizeable gap to three Sunweb riders before leaving them all for dead. It was strong proof of what she is capable of on the road when she develops her road endurance. Watch out world when she's capable of doing that at the 'end' of a road race!"

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Dan Bigham

It is common to see heavy bias towards recent victories when ranking achievements over a calendar year — with successes secured earlier in the season easily forgotten. For Dan Bigham it was possible that his stunning performances at the National Track Championships in January — where he claimed national champion stripes in three different disciplines — could have been lost in the mists of time. But a constant stream of results on the road and the track throughout the season meant he was rarely out of the headlines.

National 50, 25 and 10-mile titles were racked up in an almost inevitable fashion from one week to the next — not to mention the National Circuit Championships — which not only kept his name in the limelight but highlighted his domination over a variety of courses against specialists in each distance.

Indeed, Bigham was undefeated in the seven CTT events that he rode in 2017. The only real criticism is that maybe he should have entered the National Time Trial on the Isle of Man, where he could have tested himself against top pros.

The most impressive achievement the man from Hull accomplished was being at the forefront of the formation of Team KGF, teaming up alongside Charlie Tanfield, Jacob Tipper and Jonathan Wale — the same line-up that secured the national team pursuit title.

In an almost unprecedented move for a trade track team, the amateur quartet lined up and beat a gaggle of international track teams at the Track World Cup event in Manchester. When you also consider that Bigham and his team-mates all work full-time or

are studying, it is hardly surprising their results have brought them to the attention of national team organisers.

Whether the next step in Bigham's journey will see him grabbing international attention more frequently will come down to whether he continues his success with Team KGF to earn a call up to the British Olympic Podium programme. If this does come to fruition, then the Olympic Games in Tokyo 2020 will be firmly on Bigham's horizon.

What they say...



Jacob Tipper, Team KGF team-mate and flat-mate

"It's been a horrific year for the rest of us having to put up with it, to be honest.


His ego was big enough when he wasn't eight-time national champion so now that he is, life is a pain in the arse.

"But no, it's obviously good to see.

We'll always be rooting for him because we don't want anyone else to win. He's always so proud of himself, wearing his ugly CTT caps around service stations, thinking he's Flavor Flav.

"There's a lot of banter in the shared house we live in. I tell him, 'You can win all the National Championships you want, but it's still your turn to do the washing up.' That's the way our dynamic works [Team KGF riders Tipper, Bigham, Charlie Tanfield and Jonny Wale]. He doesn't get any additional respect from us, we are there to make sure he keeps his feet on the ground.

"We also bring up the fact that he was a national quad bike champion when he was 12, so he is in fact a nine-time national champion."



The man from Hull has racked up the results this year — most notably with his KGF team-mates



2017 in numbers

3 national track titles: team pursuit, individual pursuit and kilometre TT

17:24 10-mile PB

32.847mph for National 25-mile victory on R25/3H course

4th place in team pursuit for KGF in Manchester World Cup

7 time trial victories in 2017



Simon Yates

Entering this year's Tour de France, Simon Yates arguably had a harder job than his brother did in 2016. Adam's success had paved the way but with it came a level of expectation and while Orica-Scott makes a point to try and not pressure its young stars, the fact that Simon was marked for glory by his own rivals potentially made it harder for him than his brother's break-out performance.

Simon Yates hadn't helped himself in that regard. A stage win at the Vuelta in 2016 and then a win at Paris-Nice in March, GP Miguel Indurain and the Tour of Romandy (where he narrowly missed out on challenging for the overall win) in April, all served to mark him out as one to watch.

The style of those wins hadn't helped to subdue that pressure. Both his Romandy and Paris-Nice wins displayed the type of wily race craft that you might usually associate with a more seasoned professional. In both he attacked from distance to eventually take the win and even though he was caught by Richie Porte in Romandy he coolly sat on his wheel and trounced him in a sprint at the top of the final climb.

In typical laid-back style Yates took any expectation these performances garnered in his stride.

His white jersey win was a similarly cool, calculating affair in a race where the gaps were tighter than a French braid and he put in a mature ride to measure his losses to rival Louis Meintjes in the mountains and protect the lead he'd built up principally in the race's opening time trial.

The second half of his year wasn't as

glorious and he wilted in the Spanish heat of the Vuelta. However, by then he'd done enough to fulfil the promise he showed in 2015 and that his four-month doping ban in 2016 prevented him from capitalising on at the Tour.

While 2017 was Yates's best yet it seems unlikely that will remain the case for the rest of his career but this was an important step up and confirms him, alongside his brother, as Britain's next most promising stage race talent.

What they say...



Matt White,
Orica-Scott
directeur sportif

With Simon, 2017 was definitely his best year to date. I think a lot of people brush over what he did this year but if you have a good look at what he achieved, it was a really successful season.

With big wins in Paris-Nice and Tour of Romandy and some smaller wins like at GP Miguel Indurain, he had a great spring. Then going to the Tour de France, at 24 years of age, leading a team with the ambition of winning the white jersey, and pulling it off is no mean feat.

Because of what the Yates brothers have achieved at such a young age, people may just expect these types of performances from them, but it's one thing to have a plan and another to actually fulfil those objectives.

He worked very hard this year and he got his just rewards with the results he has had throughout the season, and if he can build on the year he had this year, 2018 is certainly going to be a very exciting year for him and the team.



Yates: unflappable in his white jersey quest at the Tour



2017 in numbers

7th place, Tour de France general classification

78 days of racing in 2017

1st, best young rider at Tour de France

2nd Tour of Romandy GC

3 race or stage victories: Paris-Nice, Tour of Romandy and GP Miguel Indurain



Tom Pidcock

Is there a type of bike race this young man from Leeds can't win? If so, Tom Pidcock didn't find it in 2017. The 17-year-old won cyclo-cross, time trial, crit, road, track and stage race events. His triumphant season started in January and continued — now in the under-23 ranks — right up to this week.

He came flying out of the blocks at the beginning of year, and by the start of February he was junior national, European and world champion on a cross bike. He then switched to the longer distances and higher speeds on the road with ease, promptly winning Paris-Roubaix Juniors in devastating style. Riding for GB he rode across to the leading group late in the race and then attacked them on the infamous Carrefour de l'Arbre pavé to ride solo to the finish.

But it wasn't just junior pelotons that bowed to the talents of precocious Pidcock in 2017. In May he rode as part of a guest team, PH-MAS Oldfield-Paul Milnes Cycles ERT, at the Durham round of the Tour Series. The team rivalries that dictate tactics in these races played into his hands as he rode solo for half the race (on junior gears) to win on his own. No doubt confident in his Sagan-esque bike handling skills, he then pulled a massive skid, turning his bike through 180 degrees before nonchalantly stepping off of his bike and hugging his team helper.

If he had any nerves about getting that horribly wrong in front of the big crowds and TV audience he wasn't showing it.

Two months later he was at it again at the National Circuit Championships in Sheffield as he led out and won the sprint through a twisting, technical finale. That a junior rider could take the all-important

pole position into the final bends ahead of a hardened field of senior crit riders says more about him and his confidence than does the win.

In August he briefly turned his attention to the velodrome to become junior national champion in the scratch race. At the end of the month he lined up for the most prestigious stage race in the junior ranks, the Junior Tour of Wales. Winning the opening T'T up the Tumble sent an ominous message to the rest of the field, and there was little surprise when he ran out winner at the end of the bank holiday weekend.

And so to Bergen, Norway, for the World Championships. Starting as red-hot favourite can get the better of any rider when put under pressure, but against the clock, Pidcock delivered in style. Double world champion.

The road race eluded him but by then he was riding with an enormous target on his back.

This autumn he stepped up to U23 level riding for the Belgian Telenet-Fidea team and, unsurprisingly, promptly started stacking up wins.

Combine this level of success with his single-minded determination and bike handling skills — check out his Instagram feed for a variety of tricks — and you have the most exciting young talent to hit the sport in years. No wonder he was dubbed a mini Peter Sagan early in his career.

However, a word of caution. Many a talented young rider has failed to make the difficult transition to the senior pro ranks for one reason or another. But we can't help feel that you would be ill-advised to bet against Pidcock going from strength to strength.



Pidcock's prodigious talent knows no boundaries



2017 in numbers

45.161kph average speed for Junior World Championships TT

2 junior world titles, cyclo-cross and time trial

18 years old

3rd Brit to win Paris-Roubaix Juniors (others are Geraint Thomas and Andrew Fenn)

26 race victories in 2017

What they say...



Kris Wouters, director, Telenet-Fidea Lions

"Tom's best quality is that he knows what he wants. He sets goals and is working really hard to achieve them. He's also got his feet on the ground. I think that's his best quality — he's realistic and he's not afraid to work hard.

"The only thing I have to do is slow him down a bit. The top riders always want to do more and more. If I tell him to train three hours, he'd like to do four, but the three is more than enough to be the best in the race. I want him to be able to grow in the next few years. He's really young and talented, a good bike handler, and just needs to take things step by step.

"Tom's extremely down-to-earth. He's not exactly quiet, but if he's interested in the conversation you're having with him you have his attention completely.

"When you don't know him he can come across as a rather closed person, but if you're able to enter his comfort zone and he's feeling relaxed around you, he'll always be very friendly and engaged. He doesn't act like a star. You'll never hear him say, 'Yeah I'm the best.' He's just not that kind of person."

Pidcock the peerless

After an annus mirabilis that saw the young Yorkshireman take road, cross and track wins, double world champ Tom Pidcock looks like British cycling's next star



Richard Abraham

Tom Pidcock's father, Giles, had a dream the night before the Cyclo-Cross World Championships in January. He and his wife were nervous, as they often were before their son's races — "sometimes it feels like you're sending your kids off to war and you're just waiting for them to come back safe" — and he tossed and turned, thinking about the frigid course in Luxembourg with its treacherous black ice that had led even the Belgian team to call for a postponement.

"I woke up in the middle of the night and I'd had this dream that Tom had just won, and he'd won by 38 seconds," Pidcock senior recalls. "I was only half awake and so I thought to myself, 'Oh that's alright then,' and then went back to sleep. And then in the race he won by 38 seconds. Weird."

Perhaps there's a genetic trait for cycling premonition being passed down the Pidcock line via the Y chromosome, because every now and again, Tom Pidcock himself gets a certain feeling about his upcoming races.

"When you win races, you think it feels easy but it's just a day when you're absolutely on the top of your game. Nothing goes wrong. It's sort of... you just stop worrying about what other people are going to do," he says.

"You know what you have to do to win a race, and you just have to figure out... it just sort of happens."

That day in Belvaux was one of those races. Watching Pidcock race was like watching footage played at one and a half times fast forward. His rivals were slipping and sliding out of control like shopping trolleys in an icy supermarket car park but Pidcock seemed to float over the course. On his final lap he had his foot out and let his back wheel slip out for fun. Pidcock clearly knew what was going to happen. The only unplanned dismount was on the finishing straight, when he high-fived the crowds and then got off and carried his bike across the line. It was an overwhelming day that saw a British junior 1-2-3 made up of Pidcock, Dan Tulett and Ben Turner just a week after the sudden death of 15-year-old cross racer Charlie Craig. Tulett pointed to

the sky, Turner to his black armband, and on the podium all three were fighting back the tears.

Pidcock's first world title was when the young Yorkshireman truly announced himself on the world stage. And his masterclass set the tone for the rest of the season: by the end of the year he would find himself with a Junior Paris-Roubaix cobbler, an elite national title, and another rainbow jersey on his shoulders in what has been the most remarkable breakthrough of a young British rider in a generation.

Winning with panache

WorldTour teams like Trek and Dimension Data seldom have to dispel rumours that they are trying to sign up a 17-year-old in his final junior season. But that's exactly what happened with Pidcock this February after his cross Worlds win capped a season in which he won 13 of 15 cross races he entered with his Oldfield/Paul Milnes Cycles team, from the Yorkshire Points League in the autumn through to the World Champs in January. He was second and third in the two that got away.

Those pro teams already knew that Pidcock was one of the hottest young riders. Not only has he won, but the quality and quantity of those wins means that he's as close to a dead cert future pro as you can get. The Junior World Championship time trial, where he sat with his feet up in the hotseat, grinning, as he watched rider after rider fail to beat his time, augurs for a bright future. Past winners include Fabian Cancellara, Michał Kwiatkowski, Taylor Phinney, Marcel Kittel, Luke Durbridge and Bob Jungels. Forget his future for a second: Pidcock has already joined illustrious company.

The guy has got star quality too — not a commodity to be underestimated in the professional sports world. A pocket rocket often half the size of his senior opponents, Pidcock is pure entertainment to watch.

One such instance was the Durham round of the Tour Series, a race Pidcock had targeted due to its technical circuit and cobbled climb. He took off on his junior gears with a few laps remaining and stayed away in what has become a signature Pidcock move (his Roubaix ▶

Pidcock's progress

2017

December

■ World Cup cyclo-cross Namur, U23 men

November

■ World Cup cyclo-cross Bogense, U23 men

■ Superprestige Gavere, U23 men

■ Koppenbergcross, U23 men

October

■ National Trophy cyclo-cross Abergavenny, senior men

■ World Cup cyclo-cross Koksijde, U23 men

■ Superprestige Niels Albert, U23 men

September

■ Road World Championships, junior men's time trial

■ GP Ruebliland, overall and one stage

August

■ Junior Tour of Wales, overall and two stages

■ Junior National Track Champs, scratch race

July

■ Barnsley Town Centre Races

■ National Circuit Championships, elite men

June

■ Acht van Bladel, one stage

May

■ Tour Series, round nine, Durham

■ Lincoln Criterium

April

■ Isle of Man Youth & Junior Tour, one stage

■ Danum Trophy Road Race

■ Paris-Roubaix Juniors

■ Cadence Junior Road Race

February

■ Junior Vestingcross, Hulst

January

■ Cross World Championship, junior men

■ World Cup cross Hoogerheide, junior men

■ Cross National Championship, junior men

2016

December

■ World Cup cyclo-cross Namur, junior men

November

■ Flandriencross, junior men

■ Soudal Classics Hasselt, junior men

■ National Trophy cyclo-cross round three, junior men

October

■ Cross European Championship, junior men

■ Superprestige Zonhoven, junior men

■ Polderscross, junior men

■ National Trophy cyclo-cross round one, junior men

win came from a solo attack on the Carrefour de l'Arbre sector of cobbles with 15km to go). As the seniors — and remember these are men who have built entire careers in the British crit scene — came into view in the background, Pidcock was skidding to a halt on greasy roads and dismounting with the sort of trick that would take most riders weeks to master.

“It wasn’t even my wheel or tyre because I’d punctured mid-way through, so I got a b****cking from my mate,” he says. “But that was like a natural celebration, I guess.”

Unlike the ‘unnatural’ celebrations, that was an unplanned expression of joy. Showy, but not gimmicky. Honest, but not arrogant. Fun, but not flippant. Tom Pidcock stole the show.

Single-minded attitude

With magazine interviews, YouTube videos and front page-grabbing celebrations, 2017 was the year we got to know Tom Pidcock. We’ve very quickly learned not to be surprised by exactly what this young man can do. He doesn’t train on his cross bike. Of course not.

He doesn’t practise those outrageous celebrations. Why would he? He knew he was going to be a professional cyclist when he was eight years old. What else would he do?

“I just told myself that was what I was gonna do. I didn’t ever think that I wasn’t gonna make it,” he says. “It wasn’t like saying, ‘Yeah I’m gonna be a pro,’ but I couldn’t see myself doing anything different.

“Maybe it was just that I didn’t think about what I was gonna do, I was just living in the moment.”

As a boy Pidcock would ride his bike to and from school come rain or shine, and growing up in north Leeds there was plenty of the former. He would cut through local woods close to Roundhay Park — incidentally where Roger Hammond was crowned Britain’s previous junior cyclo-cross world champion in 1992 — and in his free time he would pump his BMX around the dirt jumps and muck about in the local skate park.

He and his younger brother Joe then got started in the local road scene via the centrepiece club ride out to the

Cavendish Pavilion cafe (locally known as the ‘Cav Pav’). Their mother, Sonia, would drive them most of the way and they would get out and complete the final five miles before riding home with their father, himself a former racer who represented Great Britain at the 1980 Olympics. Five miles soon became 10 and before long the Pidcock brothers were riding further and further on the grippy Dales lanes. Thanks to the thriving local Yorkshire youth and junior leagues, racing became second nature.

Pidcock, a late developer, would come to rely on those skills as he made his way through the ranks, learning to use his brain rather than his brawn. His father recalls his son once beating a field full of bigger teenagers in Bradford by nipping down the inside of a technical corner on a circuit where he regularly coached.

“When we first started, Tom told me off for teaching all the other kids how to go around that corner, saying, ‘Why are you telling them all that Dad, that’s how I win.’” And I said, “Well, the better they are, the better you’ve got to be to beat them.”





Celebrate good times, come on!

"I wanna do a no-handed wheelie at the end of a race but I think on a cross bike with flat-ish tyres it might be a bit hard, unless it's an uphill finish," Tom Pidcock says.

For most of us a no-handed wheelie on any bike would be a crowning achievement of our cycling careers. For Pidcock it's just the next instalment in a franchise of finish-line celebrations. There was the hands-free, feet-free star in the Bradford National Trophy round in 2015; the wheelie in the Namur Cross World Cup round last winter; the one-handed wheelie on the Côte de la Redoute in the 2016 Philippe Gilbert Juniors road race; the one-handed superman at last year's National Championships and again in Abergavenny in his first senior National Trophy victory this October.

"Yeah, they're all planned," he says. "I'm just trying to be a bit different and stand out."

These acrobatics are part and parcel of Pidcock's panache. He may have been dubbed 'Mini-Sagan' by the Belgian press (for his celebrations as much as his prodigious talent) but Pidcock is adamant that he's not copying the elite road world champion.

"I'm not bothered when people say the next Sagan," he says. "It gives me a lot of confidence that I'm gonna make it."

Pidcock swept the cyclo-cross boards this season



**Adding the prestigious Junior
Paris-Roubaix title to his palmarès**



Leading the seniors up Riddings Road in the Ilkley Cycle Races

Pidcock has been beating bigger and stronger opposition for all of his young life. He was trouncing middle-aged men in 2/3/4 races when he was a first-year junior. When he stood on the podium in Roubaix last April, his two rivals were literally head and shoulders above him. He won his elite national circuit race title by peppering the field with attacks and leading out the sprint: two days later, having finished his A-Levels, he broke up for the summer holidays.

This explains how Pidcock has made the seamless transition from junior to U23 in the Telenet-Fidea Lions team managed by cyclo-cross galactico Sven Nys, who told *Rouleur* magazine earlier this year that he was first drawn to Pidcock when he did something “incredible” at Zonhoven in October 2016, “riding like a Belgian guy, riding sections that other riders were struggling on”. Never mind relocating from Leeds to the Côte d’Azur and living away from home for the first time, before Christmas 2017 he’d already racked up three World Cup rounds, two rounds of the Superprestige and the Koppenbergcross. He even won

his first senior round of the National Trophy, too.

Great expectations

Pidcock seems to take winning so much in his stride that the biggest challenge comes with managing the expectations of himself and those around him. We wonder, what does it feel like when he targets a race and doesn’t win?

“Erm, well, to be fair, I think in the last year or so there’s only been one race that I’ve targeted and not won, and that was the Worlds road race,” he says. “But then I won the TT instead so... I wasn’t really bothered.” Quite.

He owes a lot of that coolness to his local team and the much-maligned British Cycling system, which has provided coaching support and racing opportunities on the Junior Academy since late 2015. “Races where there’s expectation and I do win, you meet expectations. It’s not a case of being on top of the world,” he explains. “And when you don’t do well it’s disappointing because you haven’t met expectations.

“The fluctuations in how you feel are narrower than like a year ago when

winning was really high and losing was... well, you get used to dealing with it.”

Pidcock’s parents realised their son might have something special when Tom won the final round of the Junior National Youth Series with a finish line up on Oliver’s Mount in Scarborough aged 14. He has won there every year since, in youth and then in junior categories.

“About five years ago we had a conversation about what he thought it would look like if he made it. But his answer to that was a world title, or winning Paris-Roubaix or stages of the Tour,” his father says. “Each time he gets a result he sees it as a stepping stone, rather than an achievement.”

It seems almost superfluous to say that a bright future awaits Tom Pidcock. Yet regardless of whether he wins his elite Paris-Roubaix, senior rainbow jersey or Tour de France stages, we will get to watch the progression of a rider who is simply having fun racing his bike. Long may it continue.

“I don’t have an ultimate goal or anything,” he says. “Win races. It doesn’t really matter what races they are.” ■

THE BIG QUESTION

What is the worst cycling-related item you've ever been given for Christmas?

A Schrader bike pump, capable of 80psi. Shame I only have a road bike, with presta valves and tyres that want 100psi. Maybe I need to buy a mountain bike.

Ian Robinson

A workshop bike stand. My bike at the time was a Zipp 3001 and no part of the wide aero tube would fit the jaws. If only they'd asked what I really wanted!

Sam Westhead

A chain catcher and some gear inners... and nothing else. The best bit was I really thought it was jewellery due to the size of the packet, but alas no.

Heather Evans

A book about the Tour de France that was so riddled with errors I gave up reading it halfway through.

Martin Croxall

A pizza cutter in the shape of a bicycle that does a better job of slicing your hand open due to the pressure you have to put on it to even mark the surface of your circular cheesy feast. It's now on the windowsill as a dust-collecting device and works quite well.

Mark Sharp

Has to be the testicle lights... I've never gotten around to putting them on.

Geoffrey Simpson

Turn signals. It was a very well intentioned gift, though, because I got one for each bike. Three altogether at the time.

Tony Crabtree



"If this isn't a Vector 2S power meter, I'm literally going to cry"

A cycling book that I already owned, a pair of shorts so baggy that the whole family could have fitted into them, a multi-tool with some of the vital tools strangely absent, a 'novelty' T-shirt that I would not wear in public... all received with a smile and a big thank-you.

Dave Northey

When I really got into cycling, my mum and dad bought me a sheepskin seat cover!

Iain McIver

Concussion, courtesy of a careless driver.

Ciaran Smith

White cycling shorts! My Mickey Mouse briefs have never been so exposed.

Dave Rowe

A pillow with a drawing of a bike on it.

Christian Binder

A turbo-trainer.

Kev Brown

A saddle pack that turns into a rucksack. I thought this was quite clever at the time, but have found in the past 12 months that I haven't actually used it. There's not enough room in the pack for anything more than a tyre lever and when converted to a backpack it hangs on your behind like a wet jellyfish.

Kieran Small

A mug with a bike on it!

Andrew Griffiths

Next week's big question...

What is your New Year's cycling resolution?

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Letters

Letter of the week
wins a Lazer O2
helmet worth £69.99



Go bananas!

STAR
LETTER

Having taken up cycling three years ago after a knee injury forced me out of running and playing squash, one of the things that I have found difficult to adjust to is nutrition. Both a 10k run and a typical squash match take about 40 minutes; no need to refuel during either.

A three-hour cycle ride is another thing altogether. I first tried eating dates, which worked up to a point; then home-made chocolate-muesli balls, which were better but a faff to make and sickly after five or six; next, gels which played havoc with my bowels; and bananas which, like gels, are a pain to peel and eat while holding a wheel at 25mph.

My solution is, essentially, home-made banana milkshake. I blend one large banana (30g carbs) with 500ml milk (25g carbs; 16g protein) and top up with water (so that it comes out of the bottle more easily) per 750ml bottle. Two of these during the ride after a breakfast of porridge with sultanas and I've not 'bonked' on a three-hour ride since.

I sometimes add strawberries or blueberries to enhance the flavour but, regardless, it's nicer, less faff and cheaper (around £1 per ride) than eating gels (around £5 for five gels). Great mag.

Andy Ashwell, email

Budgeting the fun

We all know the French love the romance of our sport but I'm astonished at the attitude of the new UCI president to team budgets. Restricting budgets

will stifle the top teams with ambitious backers and patronise the smaller teams. It's like limiting Manchester United's budget to match Rotherham United's budget for the FA cup. What this also says to teams like Ag2r is, "You know what lads, you're nowhere near as good so we'll level the playing field for you" — how patronising!

Chris Moreman,

Saddleworth Clarion, email

Bright eyes, cushy brakes

Two responses to previous letters: 1. The love of lumens: I think Becky will change her point of view when someone shines a 1,000 lumen flashing floodlight in her face! I am still waiting for some 'expert' to explain how repeatedly turning a light OFF makes a rider more visible. IMHO flashing modes are nothing more than a battery-saving measure. I note that dynamo lights with flashing modes are as rare as battery lights without.

2. Not ready for discs? Well done British Cycling! About time too! The suggestion that all riders having crap

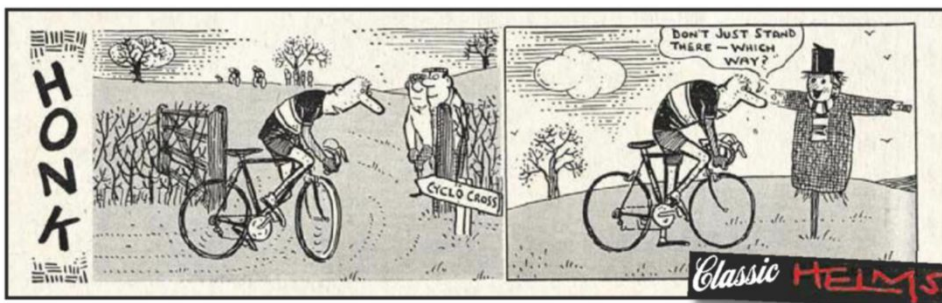
brakes improves safety is stupid. The rider in front doesn't need powerful brakes to put a rider who is already an inch off his back wheel up his backside. All he needs is an inconsiderate and stupid attitude. Riding on the back wheel of an erratic rider is a recipe for a disaster regardless of the efficiency of his brakes. Efficient brakes allow a rider to get a bit closer to the wheel in front without compromising safety margins.

Nigel, email

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Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road,
Farnborough Business Park, Farnborough, Hants, GU14 7BF

Editor: Simon Richardson

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Fitness editor: David Bradford

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Web writer: Henry Robertshaw

Video presenter: Oliver Bridgewood

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ADVERTISING

Head of market: Sean Igoe

01252 555372, sean.igoe@timeinc.com

Senior media adviser: Nick French

01252 555375, nick.french@timeinc.com

Senior media adviser: Robert Hudson

01252 555338, 07946 513 184, robert.hudson@timeinc.com

Account director: Ben Day

01252 555362, 07973 655 198, ben.day@timeinc.com

Sales executive: Georgia Yardley

01252 555303, georgia.yardley@timeinc.com

Marketing manager: Victor Alway

Events executive: Dawn Brooks

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Sports managing director: Gareth Beesley

Sports editor-in-chief: Simon Collis

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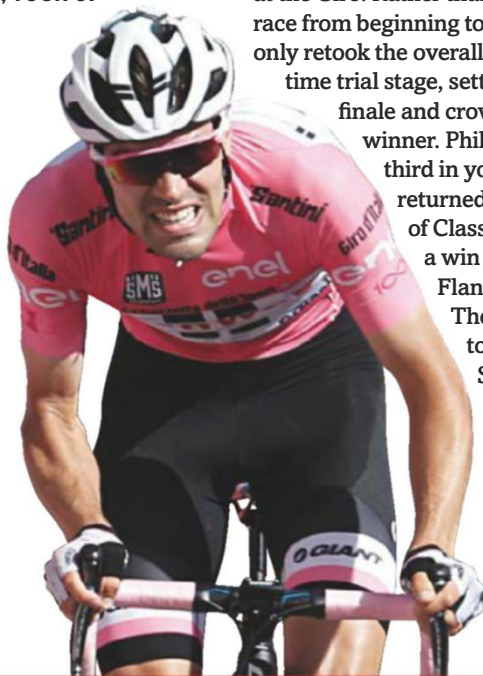
Performance of the year

- 1 TOM DUMOULIN, GIRO D'ITALIA
- 2 CHRIS FROOME, VUELTA A ESPANA
- 3 PHILIPPE GILBERT, TOUR OF FLANDERS

Last year's winner:

Mathew Hayman, Paris-Roubaix

It's amazing that Froome's fourth victory at the Tour doesn't even figure in the top three of this category. Perhaps fans have become bored with the apparent ease with which he can win the race? Instead,



Froome's Vuelta-winning ride has to settle as runner-up to Dumoulin's win at the Giro. Rather than dominating the race from beginning to end, Dumoulin only retook the overall lead on the last time trial stage, setting up a fitting finale and crowning a worthy winner. Philippe Gilbert is third in your voting, having returned to the very top of Classics form with a win in the Tour of Flanders in the spring. The Belgian is back to his best at Quick Step Floors after a disappointing final year at BMC in 2016.



Cycling Weekly 2017

Welcome to the results of *Cycling Weekly's* reader poll, which closed on November 20. The outcome of the 2017 edition has thrown up some

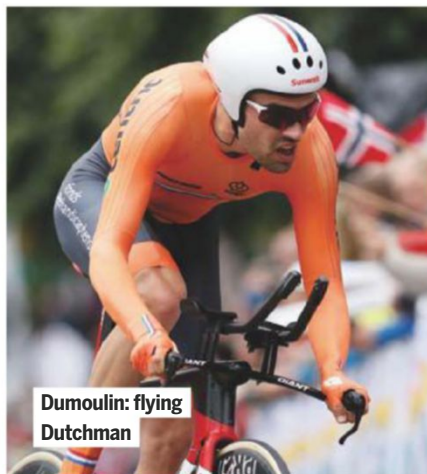
Most impressive international rider

- 1 TOM DUMOULIN
- 2 PETER SAGAN
- 3 MICHAL KWIATKOWSKI

Last year's winner: Peter Sagan

For many, 2017 will be remembered as the year that Dutchman Tom Dumoulin came good as a Grand Tour winner. That Dumoulin would win the crucial mid-race individual time trial was almost a given, but he also underlined his form by taking stage 14 to Santuario di Oropa. After letting Nairo Quintana borrow the pink jersey, Dumoulin ended

the race's decisive final time trial by retaking the lead when it counted. He also managed to stop off for a mid-race poo and not let it soil the result. Second-placed Peter Sagan put in a typically dominant performance throughout the year, and topped it off with a third consecutive road race world title. Sky's Michal Kwiatkowski had an amazing season too, winning Milan-San Remo, Strade Bianche and the Clásica de San Sebastián, as well as putting in a strong ride for the team at the Tour de France.



Dumoulin: flying Dutchman



Sky: no stopping them

Most impressive team of the year

- 1 TEAM SKY
- 2 TEAM SUNWEB
- 3 QUICK STEP FLOORS

Last year's winner: Team Sky
 Previously, one could have attributed Team Sky's dominance of this category as being a result of a healthy dose of British bias. This year, though, you cannot deny that Sky's performance at the Tour de France and Vuelta a España delivered the goods. Along with Kwiatkowski's collection of one-day victories, the team topped the WorldTour rankings for the first time since 2012. Sunweb rightly attracted a healthy amount of votes after an impressive ride in support of Dumoulin at the Giro, and both the KOM and points jerseys at the Tour thanks to Warren Barguil and Michael Matthews respectively. Third-placed Quick Step are a factor in every race they take part in and with an almost embarrassing list of victories.

reader poll results

surprising results compared to previous years. Your voting signals a change in pro cycling, with new names and events rising in popularity

Most impressive British rider

- 1 CHRIS FROOME
- 2 KATIE ARCHIBALD
- 3 STEVE CUMMINGS

Last year's winner: Mark Cavendish

With an almost unprecedented 69 per cent of all votes, Chris Froome is resoundingly your pick as the most impressive British rider of 2017. Team Sky's main man claimed a



historic double when he took overall honours at the Tour de France and Vuelta a España, to become the first Brit to win two Grand Tours in a calendar year.

Second is Katie Archibald, who proved that there's no such thing as a quiet year off after the Olympic Games, scooping the omnium world title and putting in a dominant display wherever she rode.

Steve Cummings may not have had as stellar a season as 2016, but he still rounds off the top three British performers after taking both road and time trial national titles on the Isle of Man in June this year.

Photos: Yuzuru Sumada

Best cycling TV broadcaster

- 1 EUROSPORT
- 2 ITV4
- 3 SPORZA

Last year's winner: Eurosport
They call it the 'home of cycling', and you seem to agree wholeheartedly. There's no denying that Eurosport has the monopoly on coverage of pro cycling and has a solid team of commentators, special guests and expert analysis to keep viewers entertained during lulls in the action. This year we were blessed

with start-to-finish Tour de France coverage, which saw Eurosport's commentators take on a tag-team approach to a marathon stint on the microphone. British channel ITV4's cycling coverage is in second. Although ITV covers fewer races than Eurosport, those that it does cover — the Tour and Tour of Britain in particular — it does very well. Featuring in our poll for the first time ever, Belgian channel Sporza is in third place.



Most exciting British race

- 1 TOUR DE YORKSHIRE
- 2 TOUR OF BRITAIN
- 3 WOMEN'S TOUR

Last year's winner: Tour of Britain
Upset alert! For the first time in our annual poll, the Tour of Britain has been usurped in your affections for the best British race. The Tour de Yorkshire came of age in 2017 in its third edition with a fantastic route, great start list and exciting racing. Its status can only be increased

in 2018 with the addition of an extra day for both men's and women's events. The ToB slips to second spot in CW's poll, but still gathered a significant number of votes. The eight-day race's popularity certainly does not seem to be waning, with the roadsides as packed with spectators as ever. The Women's Tour rounds out the top three. The race's fourth edition saw it further establish itself as a high point of the UCI Women's WorldTour calendar.



White Rose rises to the top

Photos: Andy Jones, Yuzuru Sumada

Most exciting international stage race

- 1 GIRO D'ITALIA
- 2 VUELTA A ESPANA
- 3 TOUR DE FRANCE

Last year's winner: Tour de France
Not only was the 2017 Tour not your favourite international stage race, it wasn't even your second favourite. Could the shine be fading on Le Tour? The Giro certainly proved to be an entertaining battle, with eventual winner Dumoulin and his Colombian rival Quintana fighting for the pink jersey to the bitter end. Of course, you simply cannot deny that Italy provides a sensational backdrop to the racing — it was an event that had it all. After winning the Tour in July, Froome was pushing it to attempt victory in the Vuelta just weeks after standing atop the podium in Paris. He took the overall lead on stage three and never relinquished it, despite a couple of shaky moments. The Tour de France is third here, in a year that it was really outclassed by the other two Grand Tours. Must do better.

Best team kit

- 1 TEAM SKY
- 2 CANYON-SRAM
- 3 BMC RACING

Last year's winner: Team Sky
The befuddling dashes added to Team Sky's 2017 kit design didn't seem to put you off, as the blue-and-black jersey successfully defends its position as your favourite team strip. However, Sky evidently decided that it preferred the white version used during the Tour de France, as that is what Sky's kit will resemble in 2018. It's great to see women's team Canyon-SRAM place second in this category for the first time.



Canyon-SRAM's colourful kit is distinctive and classy, with a design that carries over to the squad's bikes, too. Red and black is a timeless combination, and BMC's classic kit continues to be a popular choice with fans.





Giro: grandest Grand Tour



Nothing can topple Paris-Roubaix

Most exciting international one-day race

- 1 PARIS-ROUBAIX
- 2 TOUR OF FLANDERS
- 3 MILAN-SAN REMO

Last year's winner: Paris-Roubaix

Paris-Roubaix is more firmly fixed in its top position in this category than one of its famous cobblestones. Once again, you voted 'the Hell of the North' as the most exciting single-day race on the calendar — and quite right too, it's a race that seldom disappoints. Greg Van Avermaet secured his first Monument victory from a five-man sprint at the end of a gruelling day in northern France. Fellow Spring Classic, the Tour of Flanders ranks as your second-fave one-day race. Philippe Gilbert refound his Classics mojo, attacking on the Oude Kwaremont and keeping the chasers at bay to take a fine win. In third is Milan-San Remo, which finished with Michal Kwiatkowski edging out Peter Sagan for a memorable triumph.

Villain of the year

- 1 PETER SAGAN
- 2 GIANNI MOSCON
- 3 FABIO ARU

Last year's winner: Bradley Wiggins

This is something of a shock result. Peter Sagan has gone from your hero last year to your villain this year. From those of you that left a reason for voting for Sagan, it is clear that his involvement in the pile-up on stage four of the Tour de France that saw Mark Cavendish crash out and Sagan disqualified had a lasting impression. Cavendish seemed to be on the rough end of criticism at the time but that is certainly not how you voted here, with Sagan's third consecutive Worlds win doing little to make amends. Italian Gianni Moscon is in second spot after a frankly torrid year that saw him suspended by Team Sky for six weeks after making a racist comment to Kevin Reza during the Tour of Romandy. Fabio Aru is third in your voting, presumably as a result of attacking Chris Froome on stage nine of the Tour as the Sky leader suffered a mechanical.



Hero of the year

- 1 CHRIS FROOME
- 2 TOM DUMOULIN
- 3 MICHAL KWIATKOWSKI

Last year's winner: Peter Sagan

Another win for Chris Froome. This appears to be a strong sign that the quiet Sky man is growing considerably in race fans' affections. Although his wins in the Tour de France and Vuelta a España in 2017 established himself as one of the world's best Grand Tour racers in history, it was the manner in which he did it that received recognition. He is always humble when interviewed and quick to praise the work of his team-mates. Giro winner Tom Dumoulin is runner-up to Froome. Dumoulin put in a strong, battling ride to take the pink jersey in a nail-biting finale. Pole Michal Kwiatkowski is third, having been almost ever-present this season, claiming big wins for himself and being instrumental in assisting Froome with his Tour win.

Most entertaining cycling tweeter

- 1 GERAINT THOMAS
- 2 PETER SAGAN
- 3 DR HUTCH

Last year's winner: Geraint Thomas

Geraint Thomas really hit the highs and lows in 2017. His aspiration to place well at the Giro was scuppered after a crash involving a race moto. Then he won the opening stage of the Tour and earned the right to wear the coveted yellow jersey for the first time in his career before then crashing out of that race. Through

it all, Thomas provided a funny and engaging insight into the world of pro cycling via his Twitter account. World champ Peter Sagan is second, with his eclectic social media output that included such highlights as tattooing a friend,





Sagan and Cav collide in France

Best new cycling product

- 1 SHIMANO ULTEGRA R8000
- 2 PINARELLO DOGMA F10 DISC
- 3 CANYON ULTIMATE CF SLX 8.0

Last year's winner: SRAM Red eTap

The latest incarnation of the smooth-shifting Ultegra groupset from Japanese component giant Shimano is your pick of the year's new cycling products.

Ultegra got a serious upgrade from Shimano, benefiting from the trickle-down of technology from the top Dura-Ace component line. The new group's ability to accommodate 28mm tyres and shift on a 11-34t cassette will find it new fans. Second most popular new product is Pinarello's tasty Dogma F10 Disc. Its release came as something of a surprise as company owner Fausto Pinarello had previously said that they were not

interested in disc-equipped road bikes. *Cycling Weekly's* bike of the year for 2017, the Canyon Ultimate CF SLX 8.0, is third in your voting. "There are very few bikes on the market that offer such a superb riding experience for less than £3,000," was our verdict.



Ultegra: sublimely smooth

Unluckiest rider of the year

- 1 RICHIE PORTE
- 2 MARK CAVENDISH
- 3 DAN MARTIN

Last year's winner: John Degenkolb

Richie Porte's crash on stage nine of the Tour de France was a dreadful incident. The Australian had been riding well with the lead group on the steep and twisting descent of the Mont du Chat when disaster struck. He hit the verge on one side of the road, and skidded across the tarmac into a rock face. The result

was a fractured pelvis and collarbone, and the end of his 2017 Tour. Thankfully, he recovered well and returned to racing in October. Cavendish is second, having also crashed out of the Tour as a result of a controversial clash with Peter Sagan on stage four (see 'villain of the year'). In third place is Irishman Dan Martin, who was caught up in Porte's crash at the Tour. Martin remounted and battled on through the race, placing an amazing sixth overall despite fracturing two vertebrae.



Thomas: irreverent

breathing in helium, trick riding videos and anything else that took his fancy. *CW's* own columnist and time trial multi-champion Michael Hutchinson rounds out this virtual podium in third. Something that we have no doubt he will rank as one of his best-ever results.



Porte was thankfully not seriously injured

Photos: Jeff Pachoud/AFP/Getty Images, Wouter Roosenboom, Philippe Lopez/AFP/Getty Images

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The secrets of Britain's fastest time triallists



Duggleby has proved himself an ultra-distance specialist

It's a tough and lonely row to hoe, but the race of truth remains a signature of the British cycling calendar. And we keep getting quicker...

Richard Abraham

Believe it or not, the sun was out in Hull on the Sunday of the August Bank Holiday weekend earlier this year. The air was warm and slippery. Winds were light. The traffic was flowing smoothly on the A63 and James Gullen arrived at the Hull Ionians rugby club car park and got changed. He had raced a sporting 10-mile TT the previous day and was training hard for the upcoming Tour of Britain; feeling the efforts of the previous weeks' efforts, he casually rode up and down the back roads to warm up for the Team Swift charity open 10.

The JLT-Condor rider set off and got to the turn of the notoriously quick V718 course in just eight minutes, but he didn't feel that 35mph seemed particularly speedy. Being overtaken by cars and lorries doing in excess of 60mph, it probably wouldn't. Nevertheless he stopped the clock at 16-59 to become the fastest man over 10

miles in the country this year and only the second member of the elusive sub-17 club. Marcin Białobłocki, who clocked 16-35 on the same course last year, is the only man to have gone faster.

"It's only when you catch another rider that you feel how fast you're going. I caught my two-minute man and he still did a 19," Gullen recalls. "It's crazy when you think of it like that... he does a PB and a 19 and gets caught for two minutes!"

"It was always talked about whether sub-17 was even possible, let alone whether I could do it. So it is nice to join the club... it's just a shame I couldn't join it first and get in the record books."

It turns out that Britain's fastest riders seldom know that they are the fastest until they are back at the village hall with their tracksuit trousers on, bikes in the boot and a cup of tea in their hands. Good weather can give them an inkling, and so

can a fast course, which this year was the V718 for 10 miles, R25/3H for 25 miles and E2 for almost everything else. Sometimes their cycle computer gives the game away but they generally don't know for sure until the fat lady sings or, in Rachael Elliott's case, until *Cycling Weekly* rings. The Drag2Zero rider only found out that her time over 10 miles — 19:40 on the same day as Gullen — was the fastest in the country this year when we phoned her up in December.

Her time would have been good enough for a competition record 18 months ago were it not for Hayley Simmonds's 18-36

"It's only when you catch another rider that you realise how fast you're going"

in near perfect conditions in September last year. But just as Gullen was targeting the Tour of Britain, Elliott had other goals on her mind: the National 25 earlier that month and

breaking her own record for 30 miles.

"Because time trialling is such a fickle thing you can target championships but you can't really target times," she says, "so you can put in good times when you're trying to peak for another event. The National 25 in August was a target so the 10 was symptomatic of that."

Elliott finished second in the National 25 (behind Simmonds) and then went on to break the 30 record in October. That

Fastest times of 2017

MEN

10 miles – James Gullen (JLT-Condor) 16.59 on the V718, 27.8.17

25 miles – John Dewey (Team Bottrill) 45.20 on the E2/25, 8.4.17

50 miles – Carl Donaldson (GS Metro) 1:36.13 on the E2/50c, 15.7.17

100 miles – Adam Duggleby (Vive le Velo) 3:16.51 on the E2/100c, 18.6.17

WOMEN

10 miles – Rachael Elliott (Drag2Zero) 19.40 on the V718, 27.8.17

25 miles – Hayley Simmonds (Team WNT) 50.10 on the R25/3H, 5.8.17

50 miles – Kate Allan (Drag2Zero) 1:45.36 on the E2/50c, 15.7.17

100 miles – Alice Lethbridge (Drag2Zero) 3:42.37 on the E2/100c, 18.6.17

she did know about, and she shrieked with delight when she crossed the line after one hour and 34 seconds to knock nearly three minutes off her previous best. Conditions could hardly have been more different than Hull's balmy bank holiday however; rain soaked the riders and a wind gusted around the E2 near Newmarket. But luckily numb fingers and numb toes meant numb nerves too.

"I didn't have much pressure for the 30 because the weather was dire," Elliott says. "You can get overly stressed if you do target events, you can put a lot of pressure on yourself to get those times. But if you do too many events then you can become a bit *laissez-faire* about all of it. You do need some adrenalin."

Britain's fastest have to roll with the punches as the clouds, wind and rain roll in off the sea.

They target events but accept that even the best made plans can be undone by the British summer (or come to think of it, the British autumn, winter and spring too). To be Britain's fastest you require that goldilocks level of pressure along with a very British expertise in making the best of a weather-affected situation. When it rains on your summer garden barbecue, stick the sausages under the grill. When it chucks it down on the A14 in Cambridgeshire, keep calm and carry on. Rain can never stop play.

"You have to be selective with events and just hope that you get decent conditions," Elliott says. "Cycling, it can be a lottery sometimes."

The long run

You might imagine that long distance testers would need to target their events more precisely, reducing the margin for error and aiming for a specific window of peak performance. After all, scrunching yourself onto a time trial bike and eating nothing but energy gels for 12 hours is a little bit more extreme than a 20-minute effort in the mid-afternoon. However for the fastest riders over 100 miles and 12 hours in 2017 — Adam Duggleby and Alice Lethbridge — that wasn't strictly true.

Duggleby, medallist in the pursuit, time trial and road race in the Rio Paralympics with his tandem partner Steve Bate, set himself the goal of being

the Best British All-Rounder (BBAR) in 2017. To do so he decided to try out successively longer events, eventually realising that his quick 50 and record-breaking 100 somewhat obligated him to ride the 12 hour too.

"I didn't have a clue how good I was at long distances because I'd never done it before," he says, with astonishing matter-of-factness. "I didn't know this year that I was going to be any good at all. It was just part of doing the BBAR."

Britain's mid-June heatwave gave him perfect conditions to shave 4-40 off the 100-mile record on the E2/100, even if he felt his pacing was off and he dropped his chain inside the final few miles. But the 12 hour, ridden in Norfolk, was far from ideal. He endured 15 miles of the cyclist's bane — loose surface dressing — in

order to get onto the 25-mile circuit that made up the course, deciding to throw his power averages out of the window and ride flat out to the smooth tarmac. He then had two punctures and a further wheel change. Having previously never ridden further than 160 miles in one go, he was pleasantly surprised that he didn't at least run out of energy. His computer didn't show quite the same aptitude for ultra-endurance: it conked out after 11 hours.

"I didn't know how fast I was going, how many miles I'd done," he says. "I thought I'd done 310, then people were

telling me they thought I was near the record."

He came an agonising 0.6 miles short

of Andy Wilkinson's competition record, clocking 317.343 miles. Yet it was more than enough to win the BBAR, where Duggleby became the first man to average over 29mph. Duggleby now confidently says he has no unfinished business with Wilko's 12-hour record and

that long distance solo efforts are behind him for the time being, arguing that "there are plenty of other things to do in cycling.

"It's hard to describe what it's like," he says of record-breaking long-distance TTs. "You just sort of keep asking yourself questions all the time: 'can I keep this up? Am I hitting the right numbers?'"

"In the end you're just thinking, 'I'm still riding alright.' That's all it is really."

The science of speed

Britain's fastest may have been unproven over long distances this year, but that didn't mean they were any less motivated to succeed. Alice Lethbridge had seen Hayley Simmonds win the BBAR Trophy in the previous year's CTT Champions Night and decided that this year she wanted the silverware for herself.

Fast times are also about bravery and a willingness to push your limits. Lethbridge knew she'd need a good time in the 100 miles to stand any chance of winning the BBAR, but added the competition record pace to a set of sticky notes on her top tube just in case.

"I wrote what pace I needed for a PB," she says. "And then I thought, just write down what the record is. Because if everything goes perfect you might be able to get close.

"The whole time I'm time trialling, whatever the distance, I'm always doing sums in my head," she adds. It comes as no surprise when she later reveals she is a science teacher.

Her record-breaking ride in the 100 alongside Duggleby in the hot morning of June 18 was her standout performance. "I'd never had a performance like that and I think I shocked myself as much as I shocked anyone else," she says. It was

"The whole time I'm time trialling, whatever the distance, I'm always doing sums in my head"



Elliott enjoyed a successful year on her TT rig

that ride which meant she considered tackling 12 hours: unnecessary for the BBAR but somewhat tempting for a ‘tester’ in the true meaning of the word.

However, her trip back to Cambridgeshire for the National Championships on August 18 was a nerve-ridden ride into the unknown. Lethbridge had never ridden a TT bike longer than 100 miles. She had only ridden for 12 hours once before in her life. She was worried about the effects of half a day of holding aero-bars on a long-term shoulder injury. The existing competition record had stood for 50 years; its holder was a certain Beryl Burton.

In the end Lethbridge’s sticky notes meant she knew she was on record-breaking pace the whole day, eventually riding 285.645 miles. Her success, her scintillating form from a string of races, and a threat from her own team-mate then spurred her on to the BBAR title.

“I was in the lead in the BBAR for most of the year then my team-mate Kate [Allan] got in the lead towards the end. I put in my hardest two weeks of training ever after the 12 hour, to get the 25 time down. Because it’s your average speed, 10 seconds faster in the 25 counts for 40 seconds faster in the 100.”

Committed to the cause

Riders may not have been specifically training for their record efforts, but doing so evidently requires no less dedication to the cause of cycling. Elliott enjoys riding 400 miles a week to and from work. Duggleby rode at least 120 miles every Monday for several months. Lethbridge still gets up at 5am three times a week to fit in turbo sessions around her job, doing longer rides on the weekend and overloading her training in the school holidays.

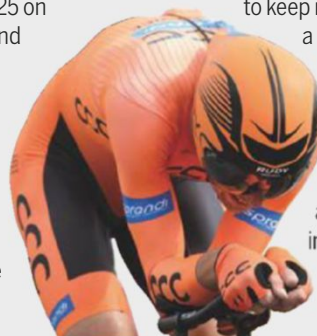
They have made it routine to push their limits. But Britain’s fastest also feel that they can go further. They are never satisfied. For Duggleby, it’s new challenges. Gullen knows he can work on his position some more, although reckons that Białobłocki’s 10 record may be out of reach for some time. “The person riding it would have to be at the sort of level where they should be doing bigger things than a 10 at Hull,” he dryly observes.

Elliott has already worked on her position and has enlisted a coach for the first time, none other than former national champion and multiple competition record

A mixed bag for Marcin

Marcin Białobłocki ended the year as a kind of Shroedinger’s time triallist: he is simultaneously the fastest and not the fastest over 25 miles. His astonishing ride on the R25/3H in South Wales on August 20, in which he stopped the clock in 43 minutes dead to wipe 1-04 off his own competition record from the previous year, was officially discounted after it was judged that he had ridden dangerously far from the left side of the dual carriageway.

The official fastest in 2017 is John Dewey, who rode 45-20 on the E2/25 on that beautiful spring weekend in early April. However the 34-year-old Pole, who this season rode at Pro-Conti level with CCC Sprandi Polkowice, remains proud of his achievement: “I’m not disappointed, it gives me some motivation for the future as well.”



Białobłocki, who also holds the comp record over 10 miles with 16-35, describes his ride as “almost perfect,” although he slowed down to ride past police attending a collision and believes that added 20 seconds to his time.

“This time I could see my Garmin and I knew that I was going fast. The weather conditions were perfect. I was thinking that the record was possible, I was going like 60kph almost all the way to the turn and I knew that I had the speed to keep my average high, but it was a big headwind on the way back and it was very, very difficult.”

And it’s that ‘almost’ that will see him go back and attempt the record again in 2018. In the quest for TT perfection, fastest is never fast enough.

holder Julia Shaw. “She threw her hands up in horror when she saw the type of training I’ve been doing!” Lethbridge also sees improvements to be made. “I ended up just eating gels and sweets, which prompted my coach to tell me I need to do a 12hr properly next year! Nutrition is something I can definitely work on.”

What are the secrets of Britain’s fastest? Favourable conditions and courses, talent, training and motivation, a mixture of boldness and calmness under pressure, and that little bit of luck. But in actual fact the perfect ride never exists: Britain’s fastest always feel that they can go faster. Which is why we all do it, isn’t it? ■

British Best All-Rounder (three distance)

MEN					
Name	Team	50	100	12hr	Avg speed
Adam Duggleby	Vive le Velo	1:36.20	3:16.51	317.343	29.356mph
Richard Bideau	Pendle Forest CC	1:38.22	3:18.54	312.101	28.891mph
Peter Harrison	AS Test Team	1:38.41	3:18.58	312.868	28.876mph
Mark Turnbull	TORQ Performance	1:38.13	3:21.00	312.612	28.815mph
Carl Donaldson	GS Metro	1:36.13	3:22.11	305.098	28.760mph

WOMEN					
Name	Team	25	50	100	Avg speed
Alice Lethbridge	Drag2Zero	50.20	1:47.20	3:42.37	28.220mph
Kate Allan	Drag2Zero	50.14	1:45.36	3:50.38	28.095mph
Laura Bartlett	a3crg	53.57	1:53.04	3:57.02	26.550mph
Karen Ledger	Team Bottrill	53.21	1:51.35	4:07.15	26.423mph
Chris Melia	Born to Bike	54.58	1:55.14	3:55.41	26.260mph

Winter training FAQs

Top coaches and riders tackle the six fitness questions every cyclist asks when the temperature drops



Michael Stokoe

Winter is never easy for British cyclists. Trying to build fitness in wet, cold weather brings many challenges and sometimes, let's be honest, isn't entirely pleasant. But we know that winter training provides the fitness backbone for the season ahead: it must be undertaken, if you want to be in good shape come spring. And despite its bad reputation, the British winter isn't really so formidable, provided you're well prepared.

In fact, triumphing over winter is all about the preparation. Of course, the weather occasionally throws a spanner in the works, but most of the time winter training can be enjoyable as well as effective. A hatred of winter usually only arises out of mistakes and misjudgements. To that end, *CW* provides a winter training trouble-shooter, answering the six most commonly asked questions.

1 Do I need a winter training plan?

1 Yes! Drafting a winter training plan is essential. Without structure, your winter training could end up being a hotchpotch of activities without focus and without translation into real performance benefits for the coming months. The important thing to remember is that no one training plan suits everyone.

Matt Rowe, a coach at Rowe and King, says: "There's no one-size-fits-all approach. No two people we coach have the same programme, and that's important to remember. But there is a key theme that always applies: you need to work through a series of phases. The first phase is strength and endurance, looking ahead to becoming more powerful, and then it's top-end speed as spring approaches."

The winter is about evaluating the season that has just gone, thinking about what you got right and where you could have done better. Coach Gareth Pritchard from Cutting Edge Cycling believes each winter plan should start with addressing a rider's weaknesses.

"This is how I work with my clients: I get them to lead on technical aspects, the areas they feel they need to work on," says Pritchard. "The winter programme should address those weaknesses. If we can use some base work and incorporate some technical stuff, that's best."

Another important part of a winter training plan is setting a target event, be it a race or sportive. In fact, the target could be just reaching a desired power output or losing 'x' amount of weight. The important part is having the target earmarked early in your winter training, to motivate you, especially through January and February as the cold weather drags on.

When drafting your winter plan, it's best to finalise the sessions on a week-by-week basis. That way, you don't get ahead of yourself and can adapt according to any unforeseen circumstances. A typical week should have balance: two or three hard sessions with at least one recovery ride. Don't be a slave to it; make the most of dry, mild weather to train outdoors, and don't press on if you feel unusually tired.

Planning harder sessions must be individually tailored to suit your fitness level and objectives. A high-intensity interval session adding up to 20-30 minutes of hard effort is a weekly staple for many riders. Once your plan is in place, consider how you are going to adapt your schedule to begin working on sharpness as spring approaches.

Key guidelines: Periodise your programme, set some attainable goals; focus on staying motivated and working positively towards spring.

2 Stay warm on the turbo or brave the outdoors?

Now you've set some goals, it's time to get to the crux of your winter training: getting the miles in. Indoors or out? A subject of debate about winter training is whether you should focus on turbo sessions or longer rides outdoors.

Rowe says: "The problem with doing lots on the turbo is that it doesn't give you very much endurance, very much volume." Pritchard has a different criticism of turbo-fixation: "When you prescribe turbo sessions, you're always worried about producing a robotic cyclist who works to numbers — someone who sits on a turbo and neglects the aspects that can only be picked up outside."

Hour after hour on the turbo in the garage can become very boring. On the flip side, the riding conditions are always warm and dry, and it's ideal for working on top-end fitness. ▶



“The turbo is a very good training tool,” adds Rowe, “and it’s even possible for some riders, especially amateur second, third and fourth-cats to do most of their training indoors. But psychologically, that gets boring.”

Working on a turbo is also effective for working towards a desired cadence or power, as precise numbers can be maintained — whereas outdoors myriad variables come into play. For those looking for a happy medium between turbo and the fresh air, Pritchard suggests doing a couple of turbo sessions during the week, while continuing to ride outdoors with friends and clubmates at the weekend.

Make sure you get that balance between the turbo and outdoor rides. Sitting on a turbo can be tough work — but you can make it more tolerable by varying the sessions you do. Doing the same session every week will only drain motivation. Try doing two different turbo sessions a week, and when the weather is good, ride outdoors.

There are plenty of quality turbo sessions to choose from. Want to work on strength? Up the resistance, drop the cadence, and push harder. For example, warm up for 10 minutes, then do the following sweet-spot intervals:

Dani Rowe's top three winter training tips



The 2012 Olympic champion offers her winter wisdom

Plan your schedule: Make sure your plan is specific to you — look at your personal goals, your strengths and weaknesses and plan around them.

Retain quality sessions: Over the winter, I'd ride six days a week, with four of those days including an element of intensity. I am very much of the belief that quality trumps quantity — gone are the days of racking up 'winter miles'.

Eat sensibly: It's about moderation. You can't live like a monk all winter, so eat well during the week and enjoy a cheat day on the weekend. Fuel well for long or intense days — the cold weather may mean you use more calories, and vitamins and minerals are vital to keep colds and illness away.

10 minutes at 60rpm, five minutes at 90-100rpm, 10 minutes at 55rpm, five minutes at 90-100rpm, and a final 10-minute burst at 50rpm, with 10-15 minutes' warm-down.

Key guidelines: Avoid repetitiveness and boredom by mixing up your turbo sessions. When the weather is good, get out and make the most of it, and keep a social aspect to your riding.

3 Base miles only, or keep doing high-intensity sessions?

Another winter conundrum is whether to follow traditional winter training advice and restrict yourself to long, easy-paced miles — or, on the other hand, to continue doing high-intensity work. Riders of the Seventies and Eighties tended to take the view that the more miles you could ride, the more competitive you would be. But times and technology have changed.

Dr Gary Brickley, GB Paralympic coach, says: “The danger of riding at too low an intensity is that it doesn't have much training benefit. If the baseline has been set at 200 watts, equating to a heart rate of 140bpm, you don't want to be doing all the training at 100 watts and 120bpm. You want to be within 100 watts and a few beats of the target heart rate.”

Of course, the best type of training depends on the target event. If you're preparing for an ultra-long-distance race, you need to focus on endurance.

“There's no beating around the bush,” says Rowe, “you need to be in the saddle for a long time. But for most riders, the whole 'winter must mean long miles' is a thing of the past.

“Our motto at Rowe & King is, 'train smarter, not more'. You can get fitter by going out and riding your bike lots, but you can get the same physiological gains, if not better, by training smarter: doing the right intervals, targeting the right attributes.”

The volume versus intensity debate is unresolved; there is no consensus among scientists and coaches on exact proportions. But there are some useful rules of thumb. Pritchard says: “I advise three turbo sessions to one longer outdoor ride. I've seen riders get fit relatively quickly on that ratio, while also building a very good base.”

You need to establish a suitable blend of low and high-intensity riding. There is

Anita Bean's top three winter nutrition tips



Take-away morsels from the sports nutritionist

Feed your immune system:

Make sure you're consuming plenty of foods rich in immunity-boosting nutrients: vitamins A, C and E, B6, zinc, iron and magnesium.

Favour the fresh: Focus on fresh fruit, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, beans, lentils, nuts and seeds, while limiting highly processed foods.

Fuel up for big rides: If you're doing a high-intensity or long ride of 60 minutes or more, take in 30-60g carbohydrate per hour. This can reduce stress hormone levels, and the associated drop in immunity, following exercise.

evidence that a 90-minute session with periods at varying thresholds is more beneficial than a four-hour steady ride. But it's all about the blend of training over the whole winter period; there is still a place for long, relatively slow, fat-burning rides.

Key guidelines: Train smartly. Retain some high-intensity sessions in your schedule — at least one per week — but don't overdo it, and don't neglect your endurance.

4 Am I overtraining? Should I take a winter break?

Winter can feel gruelling, and most of us have at some point had reason to ask ourselves: is this getting silly, am I overdoing it? Overtraining is defined by H. Kuipers and H.A Keizer, authors of *Overtraining in Elite Athletes*, as “Fatigue accompanied by a number of physical and psychological symptoms in the athlete”. They warn that persistent “staleness” could be the sign of “overtraining syndrome”.

So how do cyclists avoid falling into this trap during the winter months? Pritchard says: “I monitor my riders carefully. I'm looking at different variables through the week, and their feedback — how they are feeling — is crucial. I like to vary the stimulus, giving the body a chance to adapt, as the cardiovascular system can take quite a ▶



YOU SAY

We asked CW's Facebook audience for their thoughts on winter training...

Ste Hardie

I hate, hate, hate turbos! I absolutely love going out riding during the winter: getting geared up to keep warm and be seen; and the solitude of riding at night with decent lights is superb.

Stuart Bird

Zwift has been a game-changer for winter training/riding: no bad weather, no traffic to

worry about, no winter gear needed. I can race, I can ride with others, so I'm getting more miles in and working harder than I would be on the road.

Paul Wright

I love the structure of indoor training and the weekend outdoors rides, which can be stunning in winter. I always feel I make biggest gains in the winter.

Johnathan Scarth

I am enjoying indoor training over winter. Getting loads of distance in and climbing with a smart trainer. The best bit is, I no

longer need to fork out for winter gear — saves loads of money.

Pete Ganderton

I find it far easier to do focused training blocks over winter — fewer events to muck up the training schedule, and dark evenings force you indoors onto the turbo. It's a great opportunity to target weaknesses, and structure your training around key sessions. It can get a little depressing only getting outside for one or two rides at the weekend, but you can focus on the positives: less bike cleaning, and less chance of coming a cropper.



pounding and you can open yourself up to a low immune function.”

Helping to prevent staleness and overtraining during the winter means getting proper rest and recovery. Of course, that can be difficult, given work and family commitments and other priorities. Fitting at least one rest day into your schedule is imperative; some riders will need two or three days off each week, depending on age, fitness level and resilience.

Graham Briggs, a pro rider with JLT-Condor, says: “You tend to get ill quite often during the winter — I know I used to. You shouldn’t be afraid to have a day off if you don’t feel right. There are gains to be made at this time of year, but you don’t want to get to be stuck in a rut by, say, March.”

Rowe adds: “Even Luke [Rowe] and Dani [Rowe], who train at the top level, have a rest day every week. It’s absolutely vital: you get training benefits while resting, physically and psychologically.”

If you’re feeling tired over a prolonged period of time and you notice your performance levels are not where they were at the start of winter, you might be overdoing it. The cure for overtraining is not simple. In some cases it might mean a couple of weeks off the bike, or avoiding hard sessions for a while. At worst, a full recovery can take months — so don’t let fatigue accrue.

Key guidelines: Remember, winter training is not about immense volume or heroic sessions — it’s about training smartly, making steady progress and working on areas of weakness.

5 Should I do regular gym work over the winter?

If you want to improve your performance and your robustness, then we’re afraid it’s a yes: some gym work will be beneficial. Some riders embrace the gym enthusiastically, whereas others loathe it, but everyone can benefit from it. And when the weather’s terrible, even the hardest riders can appreciate the relative comfort of the gym.

Working on upper body strength, posture and flexibility over winter pays dividends. Pritchard says: “All cyclists should do some weight-bearing activity outside of cycling, if only to get their bone strength up.”

Gym sessions need not involve

muscle-rippingly intense efforts or hours of repeats. On the contrary, gym work can be extremely time-efficient, as Brickley explains: “Gym work and doing some aero work on the cross-trainer has certainly been beneficial to some of my athletes, and between 30 minutes and one hour of good-quality activity is all it takes.”

Gym work for a cyclist is not remotely like that for a body-builder. There’s no need to strain your body with very heavy weights. Simply two short, productive sessions of around 30 minutes each is all you need.

The key rule for cyclists is: keep the weight at the right level to allow seven to 10 reps per set. A good example is the leg press: do three sets of seven to eight reps twice a week, gradually adding weight week by week — but making sure every rep is controlled.

“It’s making sure you get the correct technique,” stresses Briggs, whose JLT-devised schedule includes regular core work and conditioning, “and it’s important not to use weights that are too heavy.”

Key guidelines: Gym time is not wasted time; it’s highly valuable. Avoid very heavy weights, and instead focus on cycling-specific areas — legs and core — twice a week.

6 Should I eat differently during the colder, darker months?

Eating well — and consistently — over winter can be hard, given all the alcohol and seasonal treats being passed around. Try to maintain your normal habits. First and foremost, fuel appropriately before and after rides.

For any ride long or high-intensity ride, you need to be fully fuelled. Sports nutritionist Anita Bean advises: “Have a meal that contains a combination of carbohydrate and protein, as well as a small amount of fat between two and four hours before you exercise.”

After you get back from your ride, consume some carbohydrate (for fuel) and some protein (for muscle repair) within 30 minutes.

How to avoid Christmas excess? Bean believes the key is to plan meals in advance, making a pact with yourself not to ‘graze’ on treats between meals.

“Avoid highly processed foods, and stick to wholesome, unprocessed foods

Rider’s view: Luke Rowe



Although Team Sky’s Luke Rowe is currently working his way back to fitness following a leg break, the 27-year-old has ridden

through many British winters on his way to WorldTour level

“The first priority for winter is to get strong,” says Rowe, “so include a variety of strength and power-related sessions through the winter. Bear in mind that maintaining good form is key in developing your strength.

“Making the most of winter is easier when you’re a full-time rider and have plenty of time on your hands,” he admits. “But for amateurs or those strapped for time, always prioritise quality sessions. Hit the zones that are going to support achieving your big goal.”

Finally, on gym work, he adds: “It’s more beneficial for some than others. We’ve found it vital for female riders, less so for male endurance riders.”

such as fruit, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, dairy products, lean meat and fish,” she says.

On rest days or lighter training days, cut down on carbs and fill up on protein and fat. Dropping your carb intake down by around 50 per cent could help you improve your fat-burning efficiency. It also gives you an excuse to eat a more varied diet and lots of nutrient-dense fresh foods.

“Rest days used to be difficult,” admits Briggs, “as I tended to think about food more. But I found it was because I was underfeeding on the days I was riding.” The JLT rider’s advice is to refuel fully on training days while modestly reducing carbs on rest days.

Do you need extra vitamin D in the winter? We know that the British winter lacks sunshine, meaning your skin produces less of the vitamin. Either take a supplement or make sure you eat plenty of vitamin-D-rich foods, such as fish and eggs.

Key guidelines: Don’t comfort-eat just because it’s cold and dark outside. Fuel and refuel intelligently, according to your training workload. Eat plenty of nutrient-dense fruit and vegetables to maintain immune function. ■



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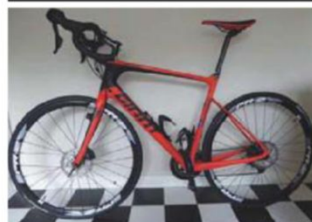
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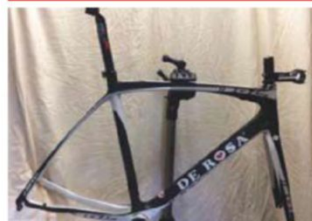


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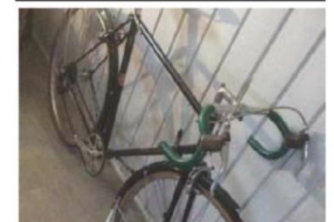


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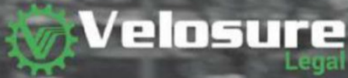
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Dr Hutch

The Doc looks back and gives kudos to this year's cycling standouts

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Since it's December, and nothing interesting in the world of cycling ever happens at this time of year (I mean, who ever heard news of a rider returning an adverse urine sample in December), it's time to present the round up of the season. This year it is going to take the form of the coveted Doctor Hutch awards.

Unfortunately there are several awards we have to withdraw from the ceremony this time around. They include perennial favourites "Best Decongestant", "Best Brand of Padded Envelope" and "Best Appearance before a Select Committee".

So we shall start with the prestigious Nostradamus prize for far-sighted prediction, which goes to Geraint Thomas for his suggestion when he pulled out of the Giro d'Italia that at least he'd got his bad luck out of the way before the Tour de France. He hadn't. Not by a long chalk.

Next we come to "Best Celebration". This goes to Luka Pibernik of Bahrain-Merida for the exuberant way he crossed the line on stage five of the Giro d'Italia. It was only slightly marred by the fact he still had a full lap of the circuit to go. A more conservative rider might have divined a clue from the bell that was being rung.

Missed opportunity of the year to ASO for yet another weak format for La Course. An event that should be instrumental to attracting interest to women's cycling ended up climaxing with a one-horse time trial in Marseille. Annemiek van Vleuten was a worthy winner, but it should have been so much more. Perhaps it's time to try running a proper bike race.

The award for "Improbable Career Move" goes to Sir Bradley Wiggins, who in February was reported to be thinking of taking up acting. "I was offered a part in *EastEnders*," he said, "but was too busy to do it. But

it's something I'd be interested in pursuing." Subsequent events have led some unkind wags to suggest he might be a better fit in CSI Sky.

The gong for "Worst Time Trial" goes, as it always does, to a French rider. In this case it's Romain Bardet for his effort in the final TT of the Tour de France. He came up against the hottest of competition from Nairo Quintana. But while neither of them is a naturally gifted TT rider, Bardet combined his lack of physical aptitude with the kind of wildly overambitious pace judgement not seen since the 1990s.

Baffled in Bergen

Still in the time trialling arena, the award for "Best Use of a Carpet Sample" goes to the organisers of the men's World Championships event in Bergen. Their "changing mat" at the bottom of the final climb provided confusion and hilarity in equal measure.

The "Conservation of Momentum" award goes to Movistar for their intra-team shoving at the Tour of Catalonia. They also receive the Graeme Obree special award for prompting panic and confusion among the commissaires, who produced three different decisions



about this in quick succession, giving us four different leaders of the race in 24 hours.

The jury was tempted to award the Catalonia commissaires the prize for “Most Confusing Event” for the same incident. But instead it plumped for the Hammer Series, which had as its grand finale a bunch-sprint team time trial. It was as magnificent as it was bewildering.

The award for not being very interesting goes to the Tour of Britain. You know your route has missed the mark when the highlight is a 10-mile time trial in Clacton. Honourable mentions in this category to Wiggins’s appearance on *The Jump*, and to the UK Anti-Doping report on Team Sky.

“Best Doping Excuse” goes to British amateur Stephen Costello, who claimed his wife had been spiking his smoothies. Since he tested positive for 1,3-dimethylbutylamine, Ostarine, and the highly experimental (and carcinogenic) GW1516, you’d have to reckon his wife is worth a tenner each way for the next Nobel Prize in Physiology.

The award for the highest ratio of “Interest at the Time” to “Interest Now” goes, as it does every year, to the Tour

Down Under. A very fine race it may be, but if you can remember who won it last January, you may consider yourself a cycle racing nerd. If you can remember full details of how the race unfolded you should probably come and work for *Cycling Weekly*.

“Hardnut of the year” is always a tightly contested category. This year it goes to Lauren Dolan, who finished the junior girls’ TT at the World Championships, despite crashing and giving herself the sort of exfoliation you’d normally expect with a sand-blaster. Chapeau, Lauren.

Taxi for two

The Vincenzo Nibali award for exceptionally durable car door handles goes to the supplier of Ag2r La Mondiale team vehicles, after Alexandre Géniez and Davide Denz were filmed hitching a very considerable ride on stage 15 of the Vuelta.

Best bike handling. This year the jury was unanimous in awarding it to EasyJet, whose baggage handlers were videoed in March dropping bike bags several feet on to the concrete airport apron. The same airline was also accused by Aqua Blue Sport rider Peter Koning of essentially snapping his bike in half in May. (The rumour that EasyJet had received a secret award from the Confederation of Major Carbon-Fibre Bicycle Makers is, I’m sure, completely baseless.)

Acts of Cycling Stupidity

An email arrives, with festive timing, from a man calling himself Andy of Tring. “Last Christmas,” it says, “my wife gave me a Christmas-themed cycling jersey.

“Unfortunately, it was a lightweight summer fabric, with short sleeves, so entirely useless in winter. So I took to wearing it in summer. And unexpectedly drivers seem to be so amused by it that they give me more room than usual.”

So, there we have a festive road safety tip. And I’m sure it’s amusement that prompts the drivers. Not the concern that they’re dealing with a dangerous lunatic who thinks it’s Christmas in July.

The award for “Biggest VO2 Max” goes to the Shetland pony that joined the peloton in the Tour of Poland. It galloped along for several hundred yards, before being elegantly herded into a side road by Ivan Savitskiy of Gazprom-RusVelo, who therefore receives the rarely awarded “Reining King of Cycling” prize.

“Cloakroom Attendant of the Year” to Peter Sagan for so elegantly collecting a spectator’s jacket on his handlebars at the Tour of Flanders. Just a shame he got so much mud on it seconds later when it caused him to crash.

And finally, the “Rider of the Year” is, entirely unironically, Katie Archibald. And no, she doesn’t get “*Cycling Weekly* Columnist of the Year” as well.





Shimano SPD pedals

Robust and a cinch to use, no wonder cyclists clicked with them

Shimano Pedaling Dynamics, to give it its full name (which no one does), made its debut in Shimano's 1991 catalogue, with the original PD-M737 pedals available as part of the range-topping Deore XT off-road group. It's been a fixture of the range ever since. Here's why.

By the early Nineties, clipless pedals were becoming the norm for road racing, thanks largely to Look's revolutionary Delta cleat and pedal system, based on the firm's successful ski binding designs (Shimano itself just licensed Look's design for its first road-specific clipless pedals). But clipless had made little impact on the mud-plugging market because Look pedals were just as bad as clips and straps for off-road riding. It was hard to flip the pedal and clip in when remounting on rough ground, although fortunately that wasn't a problem as

instead you'd be writhing on the ground in pain after slipping over in a tangle of limbs and metal when your big plastic cleat slipped off a tree root.

With the rise of mountain biking, a whole new generation of riders were coming into cycling who'd never used clips and straps, didn't want to learn, and wanted a system which actually worked properly off-road. You might wonder why generations of cyclo-cross riders hadn't come to the same conclusion and demanded a better system years before. But you have to remember that cyclo-cross riders are a bit strange — they like misery and celebrate gruesome injury.

Game changers

The SPD system transformed off-road riding. SPD pedals were small, with no jagged edges, so less likely to injure you than traditional designs. They were adjustable for tension so you could ease yourself into using them, turning up the tension as you got more confident. And they were double-sided, so it didn't matter which way up the pedal happened to be, you just stamped and clicked in.

Crucially, rather than the big, slippery plastic cleat used by Look, Shimano used a small and extremely tough metal cleat, which would allow for some grip on mud, as well as keeping the cleat itself clear of the floor when walking normally. The effect of that last point was to make the SPD the pedal of choice for tourists and leisure riders as well as off-roaders — you can buy SPD-equipped sandals these days, for heaven's sake.

And that was important for the SPD system's incredible staying power, because the one downside of the SPD's tiny metal cleat was that it didn't offer a very stable platform for power transmission — the more power you tried to put through it, the more it was likely to deform the sole of your shoe and hurt your foot.

Consequently, serious racers quickly moved on to more efficient systems. That simply isn't a problem for most leisure and touring cyclists, however — longevity, simplicity, and practicality off the bike trump power transmission every time. SPDs are certain to be around for a good while yet.



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