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**Road Bikes Reviews: The Giro D'italia Is The Italy's Answer To The Tour De France**

**By Alastair Hamilton**

The Giro d'Italia has a fine history behind it, like the Tour de France it was started to publicise a

newspaper, just like the Tour de France the organisers made the leaders jersey the same colour as the paper, yellow in France from the L'Auto newspaper and pink in Italy from the La Gazzetta dello Sport. The first Giro was in 1909 and was 2448 kilometres long (the shortest), split into 8 stages and was won by the Italian rider Luigi Ganna, 127 riders started in Milan, but by the finish, also in Milan, there was only 49 left, this was not the worst edition, in 1914 only 8 out of the 81 starters managed the full distance.

The winners.

Just like the Tour de France and the Vuelta a España, the Giro d'Italia always has a deserving winner, three riders have won it five times, Alfredo Binda and Fausto Coppi of Italy and the great Belgian, Eddy Merckx, Merckx of course also won the Tour de France five times and the Vuelta once. There have been many other "stars" who have won the Giro over the years, French heroes Jacques Anquetil and Bernard Hinault and from Spain Miguel Indurain have all won 5 Tours de France and the Giro more than once. The home riders have obviously been the big winners, Felice Gimondi, Gino Bartoli, Ivan Gotti, Gilberto Simoni and Paolo Savoldelli have all shown their winning ways, but the battles between Giuseppe Saronni and Francesco Moser in the 80's are epic. The strangest rider to have taken part in the Giro d'Italia would be Alfonsina Morini Strada who is the only woman to have ridden the race, and finish!

The race itself.

The Giro has started outside of Italy on eight occasions, the furthest away being either Belgium, Greece or possibly the Dutch town of Groningen, which hosted the opening individual time trial in 2002. When the race is on Italian soil the main difficulties are usually the Alps, Dolomites and the Apennines, the Giro is in May so the big climbs can get dreadful weather, snow, rain and cold temperatures can shape the race and determine the winner.

The future of the Giro d'Italia.

The future of the Giro d'Italia looks good, since the UCI (cycling's governing body) brought in the Pro-Tour all the top 20 teams have to ride the race, before they would only get all the Italian teams and a few foreign teams with sponsor interests in Italy, now the race is also shown free on television, where as before it could only be seen on a private station. The 2005 edition was one of the best for years, top teams, top riders and a hard course brought the race to life, for years the Giro had become a procession until the last hour, then the sprinters took over. The climbers had some good hard stages and the team leaders would do there work for the overall on the hills or the time trial, and that was it, now its one of the most exciting stage races there is from begging to end.

Alastair Hamilton is a successful writer who offers a truly unique depth of experience in competitive cycling, he also contributes adding technical articles about

<http://www.bike-cycling-reviews.com/road-bikes.html>

to some cycling online magazines. Read further

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## **Major Road Bikes Cycle Races**

**By Alastair Hamilton**

The major professional road bikes riders ride the major cycle races, and they are grouped together into the UCI Pro Tour and all the best races are included

The Best Riders Ride The Best Races.

The major cycle races in the world of bike racing are now all part of the UCI Pro Tour Races, this is quite a big list, which you can find below. All of the twenty Pro Tour teams have to ride them along with other teams invited by the organizers, who are usually local teams or the best of the lower ranked Continental Tour teams. All the races have a complicated points system that would take too long to explain here.

The Pro Tour Races are split into sections, which are: –

· The Spring Classics, · The Major Tours, · The Autumn Classics, · The Shorter Tours, · The World Championships,

And then there are the other important but not so famous races.

The Major Tours.

The BIG three, the Tour de France, the Giro d'Italia and the Vuelta a España, they are all three weeks long and are the hardest races on the calendar and are the major cycle races of the year. All three go

over the biggest mountains in their respective countries and venture in to neighbouring ones, sometimes for a few days. Until recently all bike racers rode the "Big Three", now they specialise and pick and chose their objectives. The organisers are not too happy about the UCI Pro Tour as they feel they are losing some of their power over their own races and were only included at the last minute this year and are still arguing over next year.

### The Spring Classics.

The Spring Classics are the monuments of the one day races, all are held in the more northern European countries, apart from the first one, Milan–San Remo, but which is in the north of Italy in March and can get bad weather, like the others. The Tour of Flanders, Gent–Wevelgem and Paris–Roubaix are all ridden over the worst road conditions possible, with short sharp hills and cobbles, when it rains these roads turn into mud baths and are as easy to ride on as an ice rink. The others are more hilly and more suited to Tour riders and the better climbers, all these races are a must to see as anything can happen, but it is always a hard man who wins a major cycle race in the spring.

### The Autumn Classics.

The Autumn Classics start just after the Tour de France, before and after the Vuelta a España and around the World championships. All these races have different characters and are held in different countries around Europe. The best known are the Classic San Sebastian in Spain, which is hard and hilly, the Paris–Tours, which is mostly flat and to round off the season, the Giro di Lombardia, which is

the last big race of the Pro Tour and is held, like Milan–San Remo, in the north of Italy.

### The Shorter Stage Races.

These shorter stage races are dotted around the season and around Europe, some are used as training races for the stars to tune there form for the big stage races, but all are very important and carry much prestige for all. Paris–Nice is the first and is always a good pointer to a riders form for the Spring Classics or the Giro d'Italia. Then the more hilly races like Pays Vasco, Tour de Romandie, Tour de Swiss and the Dauphine Libere are a good build up for the Tour de France. They are all hard fought for wins in themselves and never easy.

### The World Championships.

The World Championships are now held very late in the season (September) and the big stars of the Tour de France don't usually ride, but for the single day specialists its still the race to win, and never won easily. The rainbow jersey is the jersey all riders dream of wearing for a year and will fight hard for it. The "Worlds" are the only races that riders compete for their country and not their sponsor, so there can be some strange allegiances.

### Other Races.

There are other races on the Pro Tour calendar that are very important but not so well known,

everyone wants to win these also, and in the end a win is a win. The Pro Tour teams can also ride in the lower Continental Tour races, some of these are well known and very prestigious, they carry less UCI points but are hard fought over, there is never an easy win in Professional cycle sport, especially in the major cycle races.

Alastair Hamilton publishes regularly technical articles on road bikes (

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) to some cycling online magazines. Reach

further reviews on bike components and cycling news at

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