

The history of Cycling is a story of sacrifice and passion of people who love bicycles. Few sports are as tough and demanding as Cycling. However, the costly victory fills the winner with glory and honor.

Cycling: the Epic of Sport

Spain (1955). Complete sheet of cinderellas of Tour of Catalonia, known as "La Volta". Probably the ONLY complete sheet known.



Synopsis of the collection:

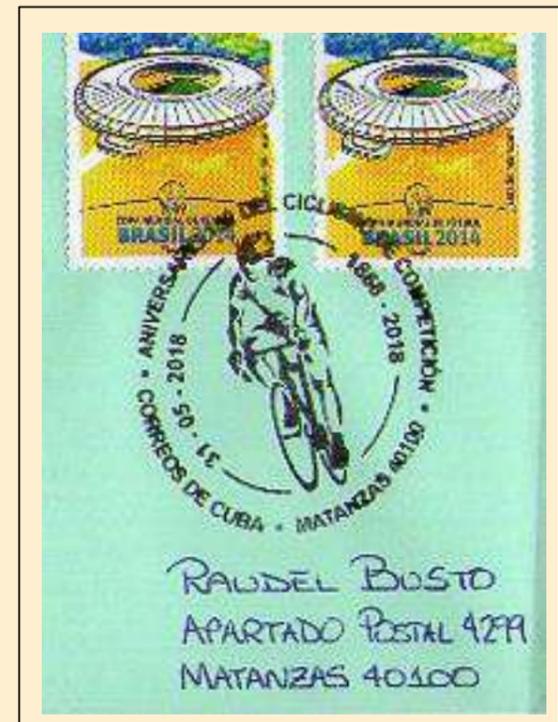
The bicycle is the result of an exciting historical and technological evolution that revolutionized society and the industry until the boom of internal combustion engines. But the oil crisis and climate change gave it a new impetus, making it a symbol of a sustainable society. And sport took this highly efficient vehicle and created Cycling, a hard and very demanding sport.

The collection takes a tour of the main aspects of this sport: its organization, its main disciplines, its events, scenarios and its most outstanding heroes, those who write the most epic chapters in the history of sport.

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The first bicycle race is popularly accepted to have been a 1,200-meter race on 31/05/1868 at the Parc de Saint-Cloud, Paris. It was won by Englishman James Moore.

Cuba (2018)
Pictorial rubber
commemorative postmark from
Matanzas given the same day
(31st May) in which the race
was held in 1868, but exactly
150 years later.



The Célérifère was an early bicycle precursor invented in 1790 by Frenchmen Comte Mede de Sivrac. It had no steering and no pedals. A rider would power forward by using their feet for a walking/running push-off. However, lacking steering, it was not useful as a means of transport because before a curve it was necessary to stop and redirect the vehicle.



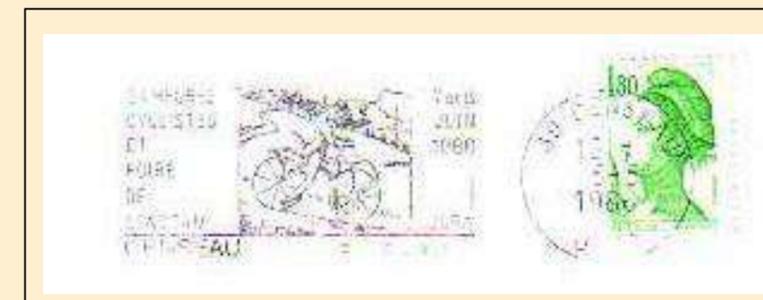
The concept was picked up by Denis Johnson who improved the Drais' model, making it notably more elegant. New names were introduced like "Pedestrian Curricule" or "Vélocipède", but people preferred nicknames like "Hobby-horse" or "Dandyhorse". In 1819, thanks to Johnson's marketing skills it became a fashion in London society.



Yugoslavia's sheet margin shows a Célérifère.

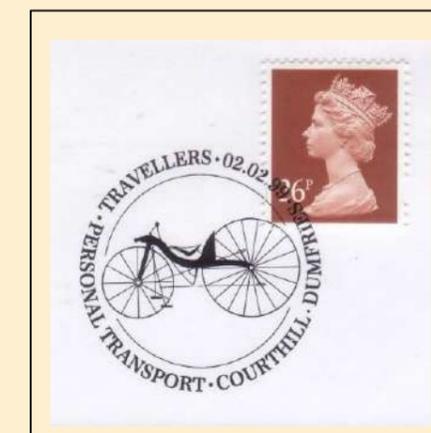


Johnson cycle erroneously identified as Draissienne.



The first mechanically propelled two-wheel vehicle is believed by some to have been built in 1839 by Kirkpatrick Macmillan, a Scottish blacksmith. He developed a rear-wheel drive design using mid-mounted treadles connected by rods to a rear crank, similar to the transmission of a steam locomotive. Lacking ambition, he used his cycle only for his personal use.

Its effectiveness was demonstrated when riding a tour of 140 miles, in Glasgow he hit a kid with his bike, being fined with 5 shillings but for "inadequate speed" in what constitutes the first bicycle traffic offence.



German Karl Drais von Sauerbronn invented an improved two-wheel version of the Célérifère, now 200 years ago (1817), called the Laufmaschine –running machine–. It was steerable, made entirely of wood and had no pedals. Hence, a rider would need to push his feet against the ground to make the machine go forward. Drais' vehicle was first exhibited in Paris on 06/04/1818. He demonstrated its efficiency taking 4 hours from his native Karlsruhe to Strasbourg in contrast with 15 hours needed walking.



Germany (1985). Machine cancellation type Francotyp "Cm7000-10000" with slogan 200th anniversary of Drais bird in Karlsruhe, used on 17/05/1985.

Germany (2011). Pictorial rubber commemorative postmark of Wood Crafts Museum in Hiddenhausen.



Germany (2017). Maximum card with concordance commemorating the 200th anniversary of Laufmaschine in Germany.

The pedals on the front wheel appeared simultaneously in 1861 in several European countries, although it was the French Michaux family who achieved commercial success. In 1869, 500 workers made 200 Michaulines daily, as they were known in France. In England they were called "Boneshaker" because of the extremely uncomfortable ride, which was caused by the stiff wrought-iron frame and wooden wheels surrounded by tires made of iron.



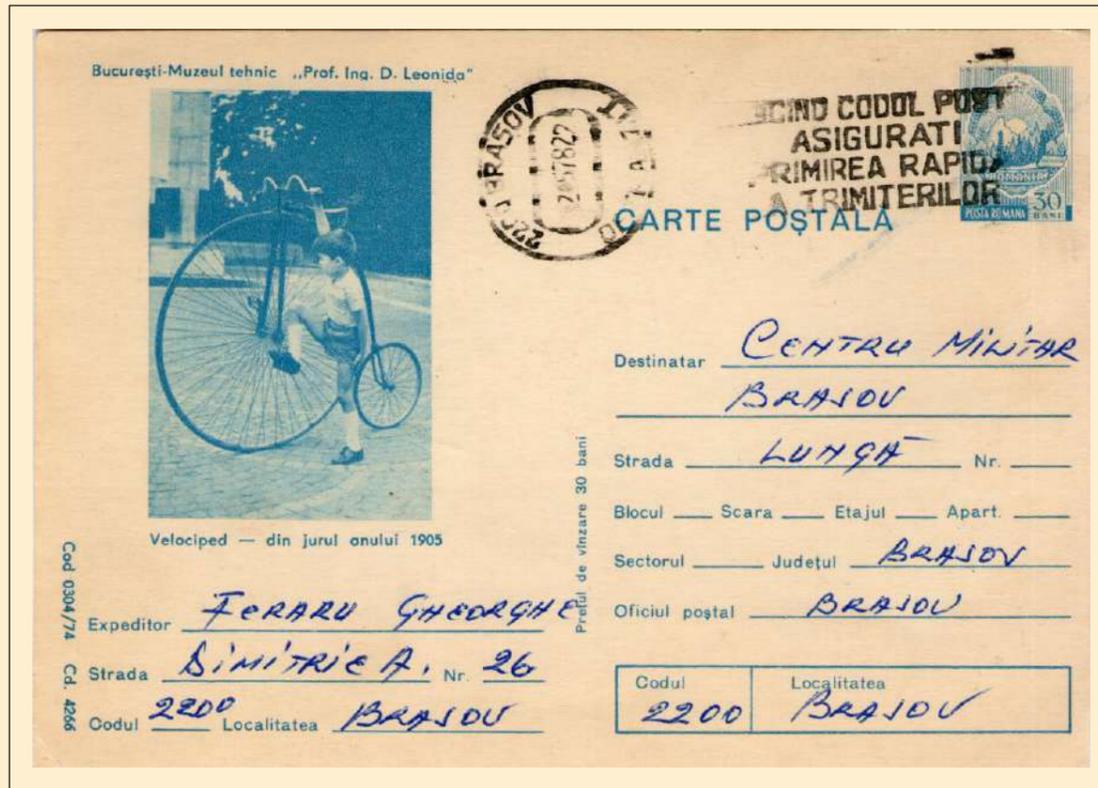
France (1983). Bottom right-hand corner of a sheet of French's Michaux stamp with the engraver's signature Jean Delped, pictorial rubber commemorative postmark and colour control.



Its success was increased when the first competition took place between Paris and Rouen and where the winner surpassed 300 rivals by covering the 124 km at a speed of 12 Km/h.

With the pedals anchored to the front wheel, each pedaling cycle is equivalent to a wheel rotation. People began to demand more speed, so the diameters of the driving wheels began to grow and grow... up to 1880 to the magnificent "High-wheel" cycles, up to 1,7 meters of diameter. These cycles, known as "Grand-Bi" in France and "Ordinary" in the USA (because being the most common model) were a sign of distinction and elegance.

The Ordinary had safety problems because it had the center of gravity very high and long fall over the handlebars were usual. The solution was Safeties, designs that sought ingenious solutions to stabilize the center of gravity. Cycles of the most diverse types were designed with chain drive as the mechanism of transmission of force. The chain drive, coupling a large front sprocket to a small rear sprocket to multiply the revolutions of the pedals, allowed for much smaller wheels, and replaced the need for the large, directly pedalled front wheel of the "High-wheel" bicycles.



Romania (1974). 30 bani imprinted stationary postcard for inland mail, used on 02/05/1978.



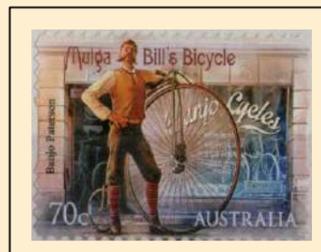
Germany (1887). Private mail Hansa of the city of Bremen. Stationery with advertisement Seidel & Nauman, tricycles producer.



Tricycles were the most immediate solution.

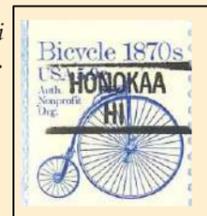
Pictorial tab label of a tricycle

Stabilizing or changing the gravity center.



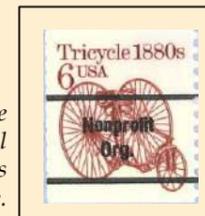
Perforation shift.

Hawaii pre-cancellation.



Sociables, such as the Salvo (1878) or the Rudge (1884), allowed the pleasure of pedaling as a couple. The development of the safety bicycle shifted their use and public perception from being a dangerous toy for expert men to being an everyday transport tool for men and women of all ages.

"Non-Profit org" surcharge with a reduction of the postal rate, specific for associations with the aim of social service.



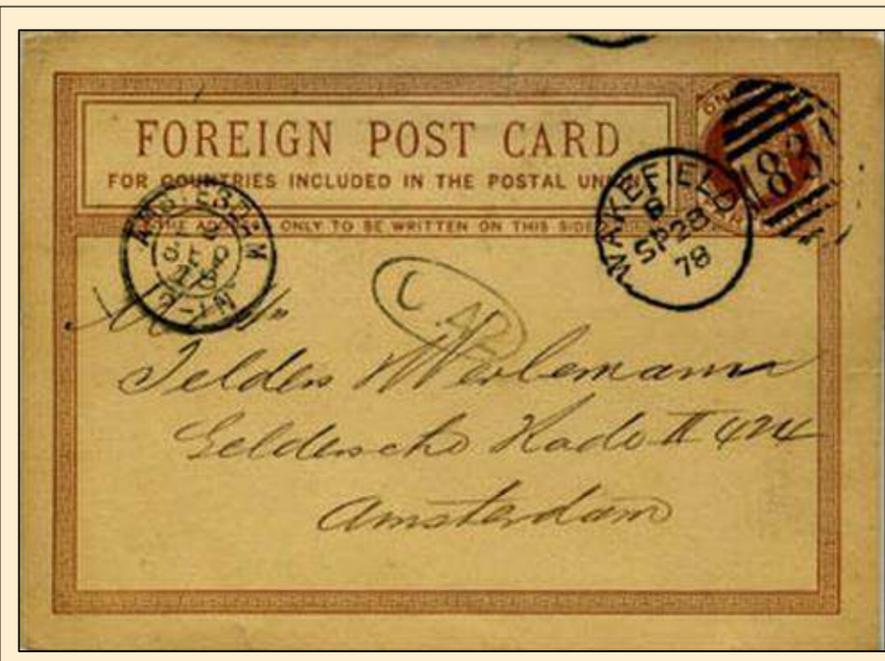
The chain drive improved comfort and speed, because the drive was transferred to the non-steering rear wheel and allowed for smooth, relaxed and injury-free pedaling.

The first bicycle to be called a "Safety" was designed by Henry Lawson in 1876.



When this type of cycle fell into disuse, modern cyclists laughed at their last users. Contemptuously this cycle was called the "Penny-Farthing", for its similarity with the larger and smaller English coins at that moment.

England (1875). In that same period the rate for the UPU foreign postcards was a penny farthing (from 01/07/1875 to 30/09/1891). One Penny Farthing imprint stationary card for foreign postage addressed from UK to The Netherlands on 28/09/1875.



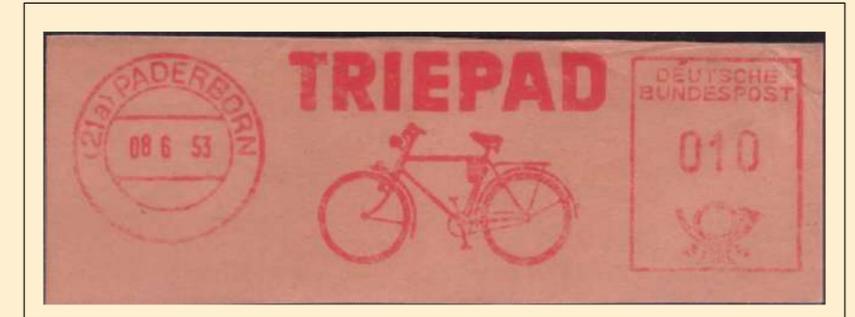


The high-wheeler's direct front wheel drive limited its top speed. John Kemp Starley produced the first successful "Safety Bicycle", the Rover (1885), which he never patented. It featured a steerable front wheel that had significant caster, equal sized wheels and a chain drive to the rear wheel. Widely imitated, the Safety Bicycle completely replaced the high-wheeler in North America and Western Europe by 1890 because it was clearly much more effective.



The comfort provided by pneumatic tires made all of these previous bicycles obsolete. Frame designers found a more rigid frame design, finally adopting the trapezoidal symmetry frame, known as "diamond pattern". The industry, which had been focused on the production of large-wheeled bicycles, had to adapt quickly to the demand for safeties.

The Rover III (1888) by John Kemp Starley is considered to be the modern bike prototype.



The new bikes also presented inconveniences. As with the original velocipedes, safety bicycles had been much less comfortable than high-wheelers precisely because of the smaller wheel size, and frames were often buttressed with complicated bicycle suspension spring assemblies.

The Hironnelle (1889) took advantage of the curved structure of the frame to absorb the irregularities of the terrain.



Several solutions for the uses of the springs.

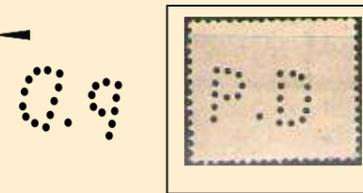


The trapezoidal frame is also known as a diamond-pattern frame. Several brands in Germany and France adopted the name Diamant, as stated on the postage meter below.

John Dunlop's reinvention of the pneumatic bicycle tire in 1888 had made for a much smoother ride on paved streets. The previous type were quite smooth-riding when used on the dirt roads, common at the time.

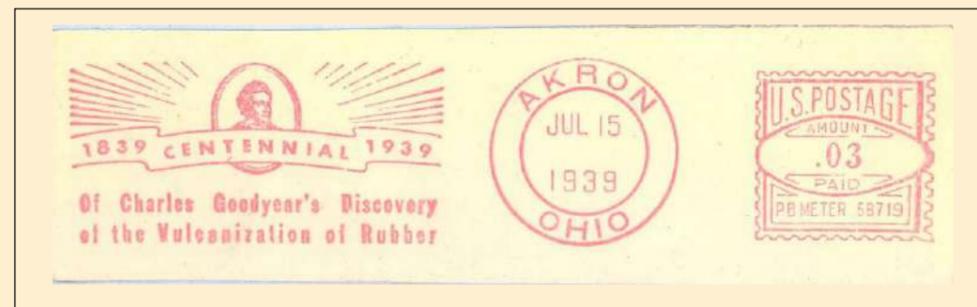


France (1924). Commercial letter of Dunlop with perforated stamp P.D (pneumatiques Dunlop). Period of usage 1911-1934. Used on 18/11/1924.



Commercial letter with advertisement postage meter, used on 12/10/1954.

Vulcanization, discovered by Goodyear, allowed manufacturers to polymerize the rubber with Sulphur at high temperature and not to depend on the natural resources for production on a large scale.



Italia. Perfins P&C (Pirelli & Co) were used in the period (1901-1922). Left perfin used on 5L 1906 issued stamp.

Here ends the exciting history and evolution of the bike that began 200 years ago. Since then, for last 130 years, bicycles have been essentially identical.



Advertisement postage meter commemorating the centennial of Goodyear discovery of vulcanization. Type Universal Postal Frankers Ltd (Pitney Bowes Inc. subsidiary) model "CVS". Used on 15/07/1939.

The design of the bicycle has never stopped evolving, either by the improvement of the materials or the adaptation to new necessities.



The bearings were one of the great details to make the bicycle a highly effective machine.

Sweden (1976). Stamp booklet, 5 stamps of 1.30 Kr for foreign rate, devoted to technological pioneers (Sven Wingquist, inventor of bearings and founder of SKF).

The initial solution was the fixed wheel. In the descents the wheel revolved jointly with the pedals, so you had to lift the feet or support them in the rest-feet.



The evolution of the transmission was key for the triumph of the bicycle as a means of transport, allowing to overcome any unlevel. freewheel was developed first, derailleur later.



Germany (1953). Machine cancellation type Francotyp "D" with slogan about 50th anniversary of invention of freewheel, used on 02/10/1953. Torpedo patented the freewheel (freilauf).

The wheels have evolved from the wood to the sophisticated racing wheels.



Before derailleurs, the wheel had different size gear on each side. Campagnolo developed the quick release wheel locking mechanism which is in use today. Also in 1949, he introduced the first modern derailleur.

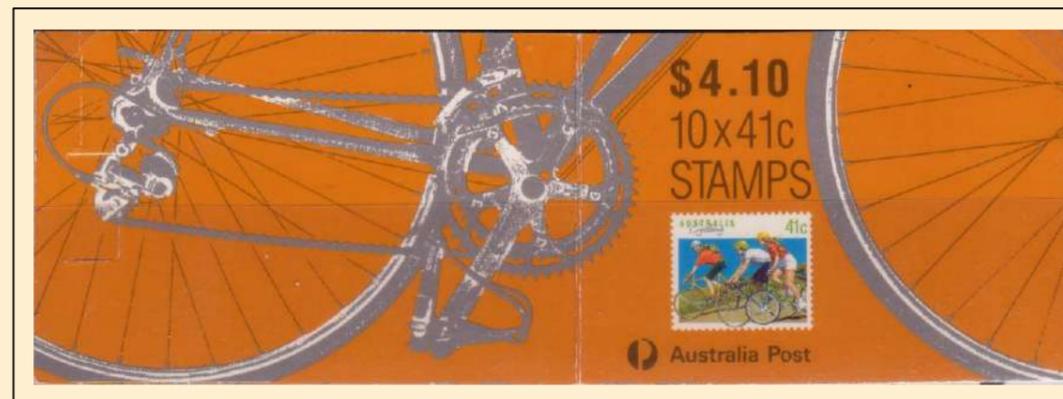
Italy (1976). Advertisement postage meter type Sima "76, 90" with Campagnolo slogan, used on 09/07/1976.

In the construction of the frame, wood, iron, steel, aluminum and carbon fiber have been used to look for the best balance between resistance and weight.



France (1960). Advertisement postage meter type SECAP "N" advertising aluminium tubes.

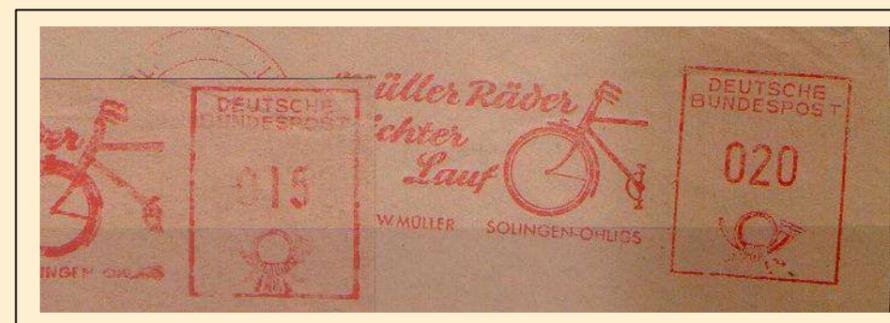
Carbon fiber.



Australia (1989). Stamp booklet, consist 10 stamps of 41c for domestic rate.



The rod brakes fell into disuse about 50 years ago. In competition many more years ago brakes type Caliper were used. However, the brake discs are the last great revolution.



Germany (1965). Advertisement postage meter type Francotyp "Cc/Ccm/Cm" showing a bicycle with rod brakes.

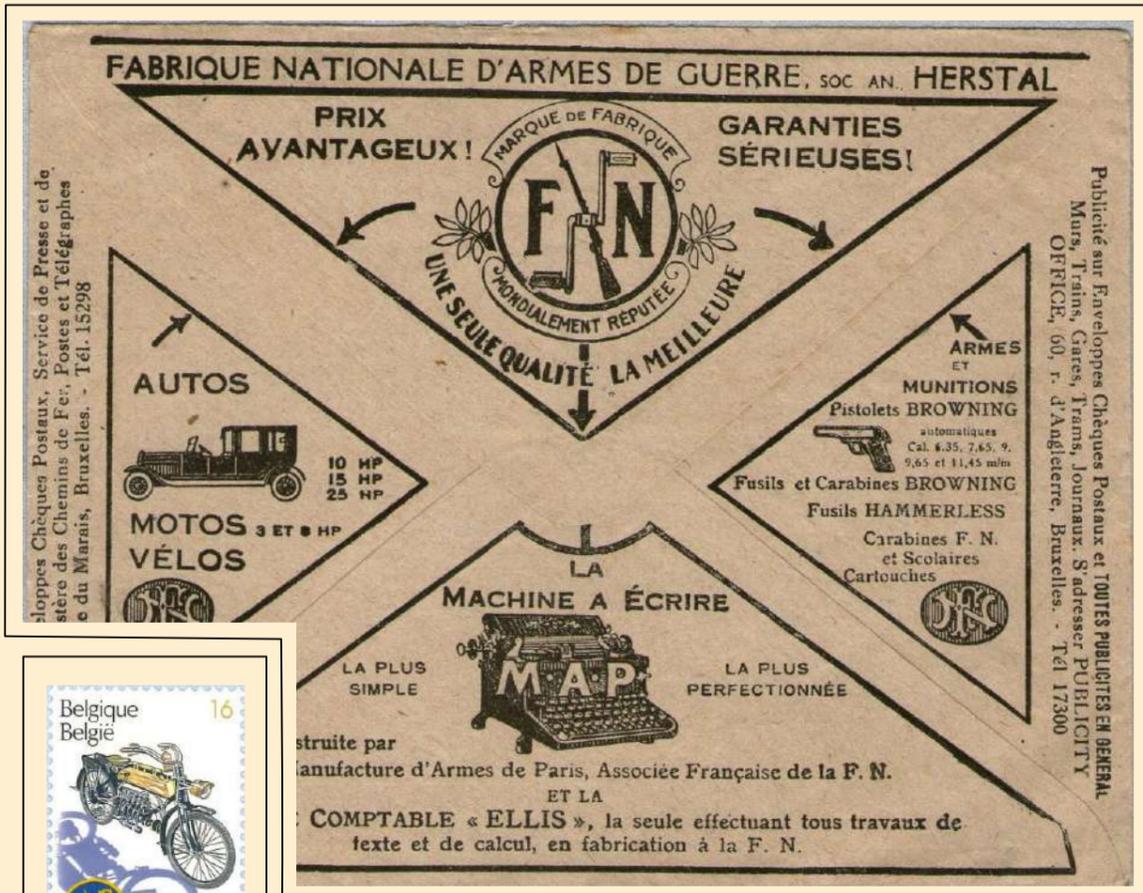


Disc brakes.



Germany (1984). Advertisement postage meter type Postalia "D2/D3" showing caliper type brakes.

The technological evolution of the bike happened in parallel to technological development in general. At the beginning the technological benchmark was the manufacture of carriages. The industrial production of the bicycle boom coincided with the Industrial Revolution. It would not have been possible if previously the steel industry of "small things" had not been developed: small machines of great mechanical complexity and wide deployment (weapon, sewing machines, umbrellas, typewriters, etc...).



Belgium postage free advertising cover from Postal Check Bureau with advertisement of Fabrique Nationale of war weapons, used on 01/08/1923. FN kept bicycle pedals in the logo even when they were no longer producing bicycles.

FN's logo.



Italia (1924). Advertising Singer industry tab. Singer, known for its sewing machines, also produced bicycles.



The German brand Opel followed all the path of the bicycle industry's evolution, from the sewing machines, through to bicycles, to become an automotive giant.



Typewriters and bicycle parts on a commemorative rubber postmark from Germany (1935).



Some steel industries turned to bicycle production due to high bicycle demand, being in some cases the main activity.



Derbi motorbikes, winner of the World Motorcycling Championships.

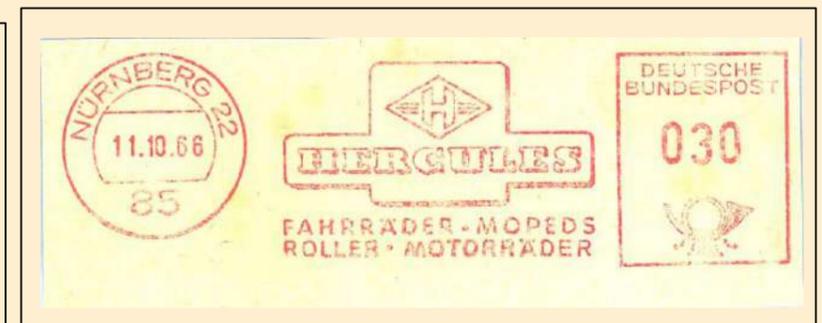


The first automobile (1886) was mounted on a cycle very similar to the safe model designed in 1877 by James Starley.



Germany (1986). Maximum card with concordance commemorating the 100th anniversary of the first car, a Mercedes-Benz.

France (1926). Peugeot advertising telegram from Saintes to Fontaine Chalendroy used on 13/02/1926. Peugeot produced all kind of vehicles.



The bicycle became the most popular form transport in the World when workers, around the 1890s, adopted it as a means of transport. 1,000 million bicycles flooded the World. Behind the phenomenon is a powerful industry, craft-based at the beginning and then tech-based.



In Germany, the first Drais' bicycle was simultaneously also patented in 1818 in Prussia, France, England and USA to obtain legal protection. Unfair imitations ruined baron Von Drais. The cycle of Johnson, known as "Dandy-horse", had its origin in the license of the patent in England.



UK (1969). Commemorative rubber postmark of the centenary of the bicycle industry in Coventry.

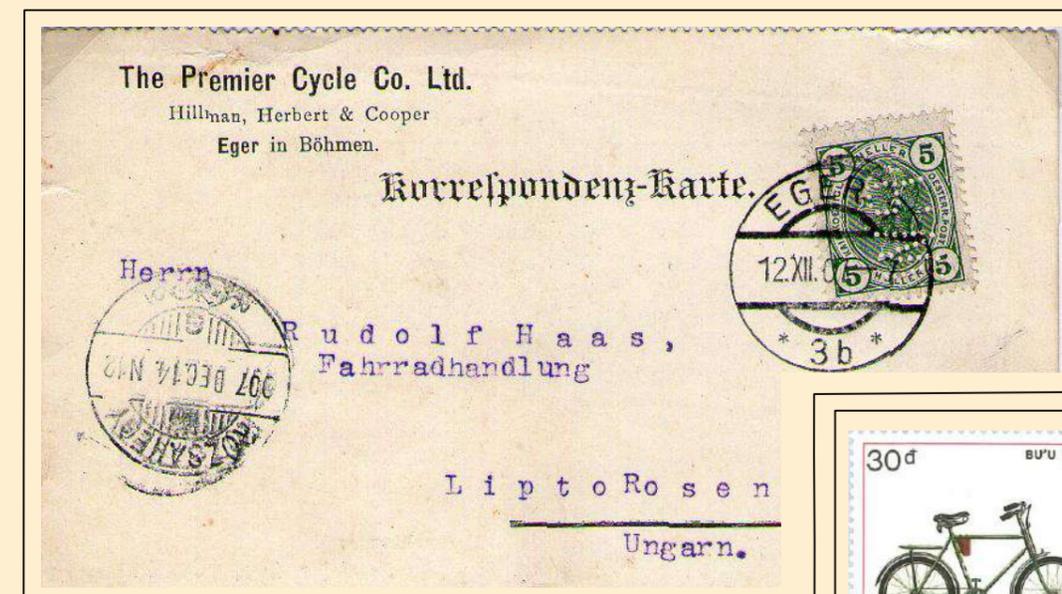


Lallement's bicycle

Pierre Lallement argued with the Michaux family about the intellectual property of the Michaux bicycle. He moved to USA and introduced the bicycle there. He failed, like Michaux, due to the industrial dynamism and competition of the markets.

Premier Works Co., one of the most iconic brands of Coventry.

The production moved to England when the Franco-Prussian War started. This allowed to boost depressed Coventry industrial area transforming it into the reference of bicycle industry. The industrial dynamism that occurred in England and USA caused a great competition that generated many technical innovations that made Ordinary bicycles a real gadgets.



Germany (1907). Perfin P.W. of Premier Works Co. mailed from the German delegation, over a 5 pf stamp for international postage. Perfin's period of use 1901-1938. Used on 12/12/1907 and arrived two days later to Hungary.



Premier bicycle



In France, the Michaux were the first to implement high production methods. In 1869 with circa 500 workers they produced 200 bicycles daily.



During the interwar period Germany was the main center of bicycle manufacturing. In 1887 the half of the 20,000 bikes sold in Germany were produced in the UK but 10 years later they already produced 200,000. Before the WWI they produced 500,000, an amount that increased to 2.85 million just before the WWII.



France (1939). Commercial cover with rubber cancel from Manufacture-St. Etienne. Letter postmarked at inner postal office of the National Factory of Weapons (and bikes), in Saint Etienne.



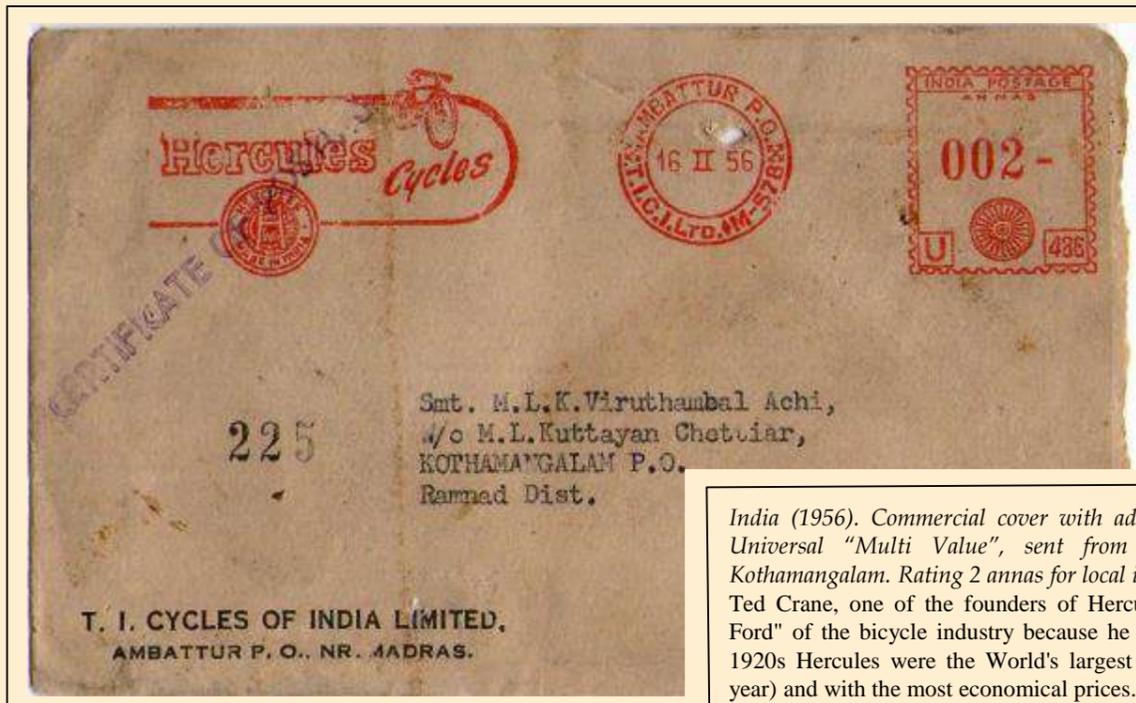
Saint Etienne area was the most important center of production in France between WWI and WWII.

The National Factory is now a technological museum.



Germany (1911). Commercial stationary cover from Stukenbrok factory. Used on 28/04/1911 with postmark from Einbeck, the headquarters of the factory.

Some brands are a reference in the World because of their industrial potential and the success of their models.

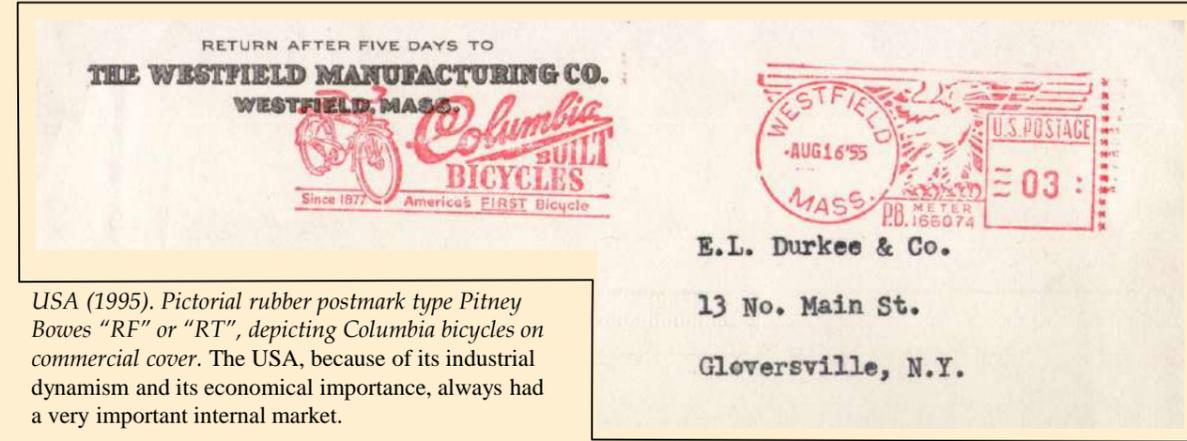


India (1956). Commercial cover with advertisement postage meter type Universal "Multi Value", sent from Ambattur on 16/02/1956 to Kothamangalam. Rating 2 annas for local inland letter. Ted Crane, one of the founders of Hercules, was known as the "Henry Ford" of the bicycle industry because he optimized its production. In the 1920s Hercules were the World's largest producer (250,000 bicycles per year) and with the most economical prices.



UK, 1978. TT Raleigh - The World's largest bicycle manufacturer... as the text of the commemorative rubber postmark states.

Raleigh is the benchmark in the Commonwealth. This centennial brand grew by absorbing a large number of brands such as Hercules, Rudge, BSA, Triumph, Humber, among others.



USA (1995). Pictorial rubber postmark type Pitney Bowes "RF" or "RT", depicting Columbia bicycles on commercial cover. The USA, because of its industrial dynamism and its economical importance, always had a very important internal market.

Eastern European countries remained outside the international market because of their own socialist and anti-capitalist ideology. In order to maintain domestic demand, each country had a reference brand.



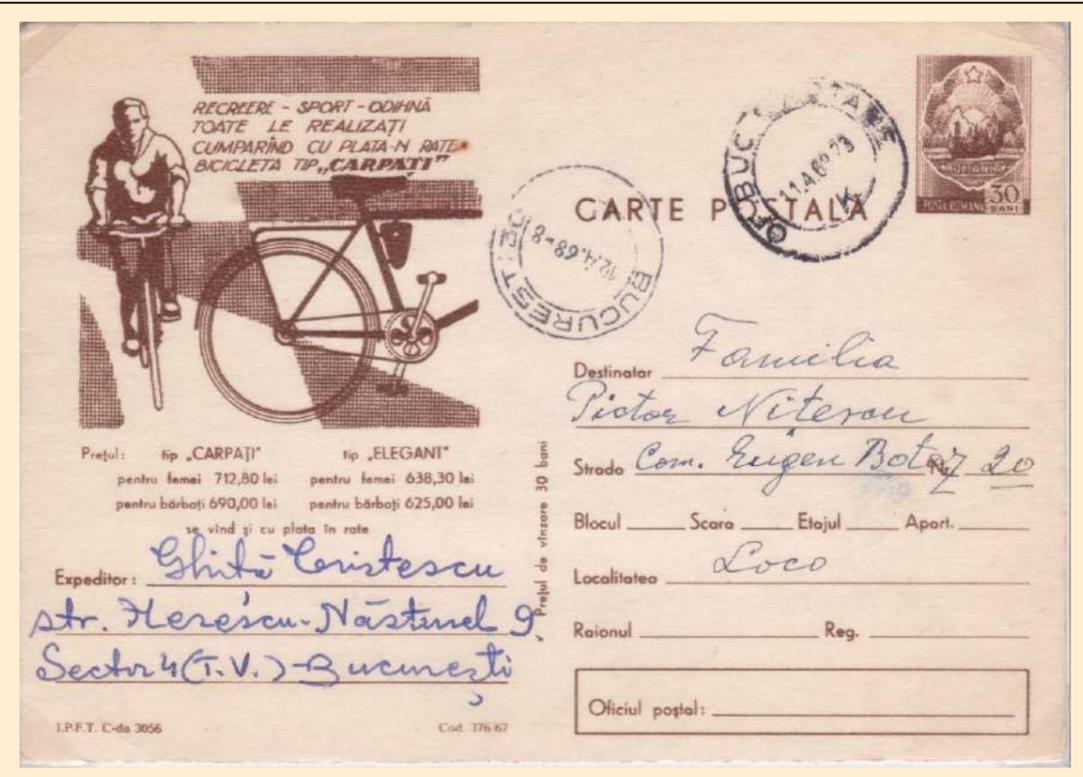
Romania (1968). 30 bani imprinted stationary envelope for inland mail, used on 11/04/1968, depicting Carpati bicycles advertisement, showing its strengths and prices.

The Netherlands (1988). Gazelle bicycles advertisement postage meter type Francotyp "A9000".



Gazelle is the largest bicycle producer in The Netherlands, with 400,000 units/year. In 1992, year of its centenary, they also celebrated 8 million cycles produced.

The Chinese government estimates that 500 million "Flying Pigeon" bicycles, the bicycle that was a symbol of Communist China, still circulate. With Mao's arrival, the bicycle industry was promoted in society where it played a key role in the development of the country.



Czechoslovakia (1982). ESKA bicycle advertisement postage meter type Francotyp "B" on registered commercial cover (R label hidden under window).



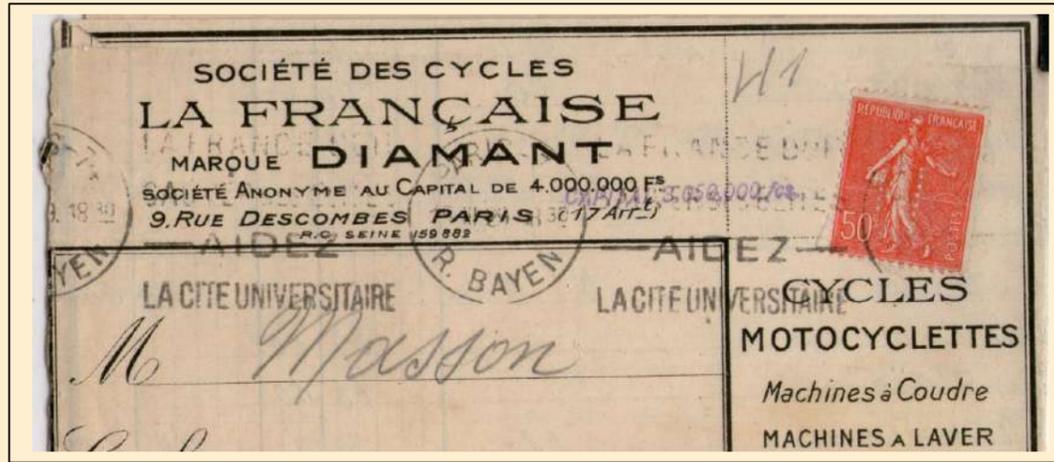
P.R. China (2002) stamp of 60 fen depicting the New Year of the Horse. Imprinted stationary card depicting a postman carrying a Flying Pigeon bicycle.



P.R. China (2002) stamp of 60 fen depicting the New Year of the Horse. Imprinted stationary card depicting a postman carrying a Flying Pigeon bicycle.

The successes of the great champions would not be possible without great bicycles. For all brands, a big win is their best publicity, so they would like to be present in the big competitions.

Maurice Garin, the first winner of Le Tour de France (1903), as well as the rest of the first five in the classification, used La Française-Diamant bicycles. In 1923 it was absorbed by Alcyon, another of the glorious brands, with 6 Tours of France, 12 Paris-Roubaix and innumerable great successes in 50 years of presence in the top competitions.



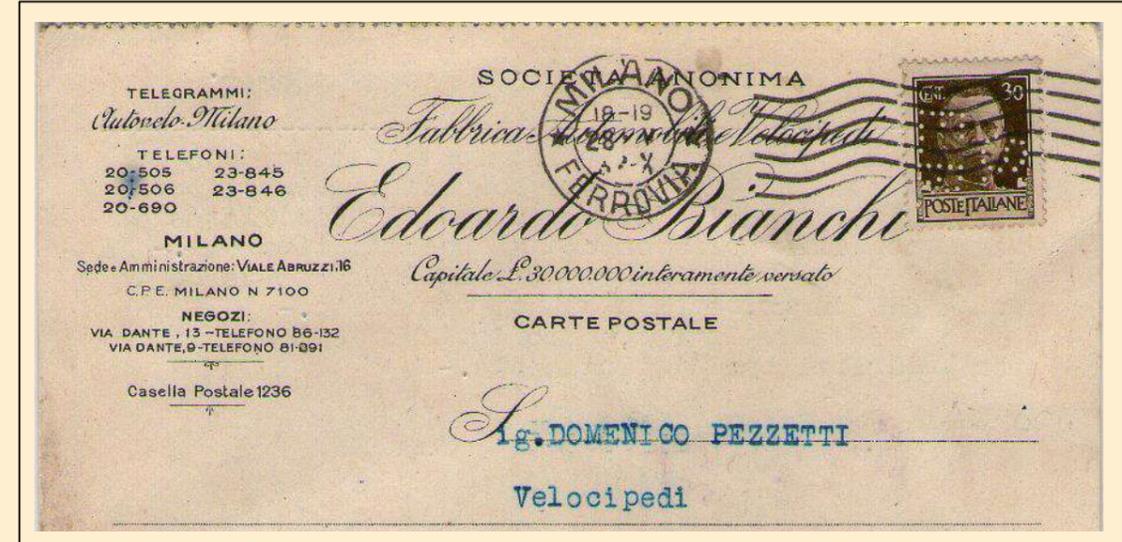
France (1923).
Perfin (H) of
La Française.
Period of use
1920-1927.

The Centenary Bianchi (1885) is the great Italian bicycle brand. With them legends of Le Tour and Il Giro as Bartali, Coppi, Gimondi or Marco Pantani have given glory to Italian Cycling.

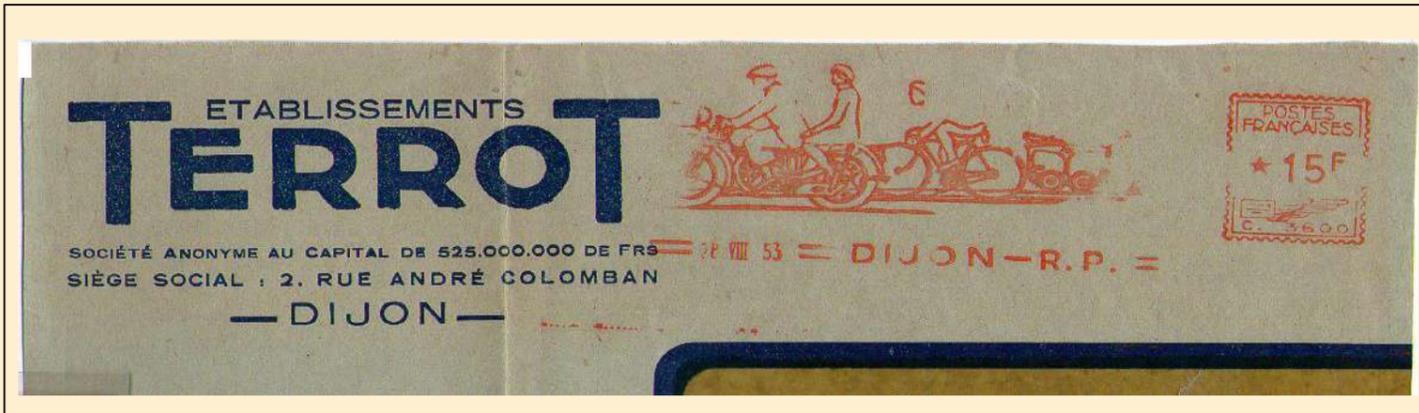
Italia (1932).
Perfin (S.E.B.) of Bianchi.
Period of use 1924-1929



The celestial green color is
synonymous of Bianchi.



France. Perfin (T&C.)
(period of use 1902-1913)
of Terrot on 10c red Semeuse
issued in 1907.



France 1953.
Franking Machine Havas "C".

With Terrot Ottavio Botecchi
won Le Tour in 1924, the first
Italian to win a Tour.

Orbea and BH, the two main
brands from Basque country
that set the pace of Spanish
Cycling for decades, specially
in Spanish teams and races.



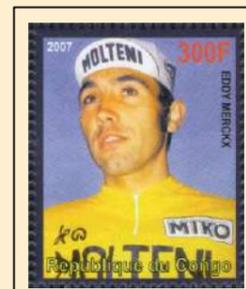
Peugeot, winner of 10 Tours
in 7 decades (from 1905 to
the last in 1977), and with
World champions like Tom
Simpson.

Raleigh, the great
English brand, winner of
Le Tour of 1978, as the
postmark stated.

The greats of French
Cycling, like Anquetil,
Hinault or Fignon, won
with Gitane bicycles.



A great triumph,
the best publicity, as
this French booklet
(1924) stated.



Molteni and Bianchi made
champions E. Merckx and F. Coppi.

Both created their own
brands of racing bikes.

A Merckx brand bike made
E. Merckx champion, as a Coppi
brand did for F. Bahamontes.



No brand manufactures their bicycles completely and all are supported by the auxiliary component manufacturing industry. The fact that the bicycle is one of the most efficient forms of transports is due to the innovations presented by this kind of industries.

Bearings play an essential role in efficiency because they minimize friction, and SKF is the World's leading company.

Aluminum and Reynolds tubes, essential component in the 20th century racing bicycles.



Belgium (1951). Commercial cover with Dérailleurs SIL advertisement postage meter, sent from Jette. Rating 5,75 Fr for local inland letter, up-rated to 8 Fr because the letter is registered (label at the bottom of the cover and hidden under window).



Czechoslovakia (1932). Commercial letter with SKF advertisement postage meter, used on 16/01/1932. Type Francotyp "A" with "butterfly" type.



Brakes, rims, wheels and tires form the cycle part.



Mavic, the most prestigious rims and wheels.



The leadership of the Torpedo brand during the first half of 20th century was snatched by Campagnolo.



The transmission was key factor in the evolution of the bicycle but the introduction of the derailleur was key at the races.

Italia (1920) Advertising postal stationary card. Face value 15 c for domestic rate.

Founded in 1872, Pirelli's activities were primarily focused on the production of tyres and cables for telecommunication.

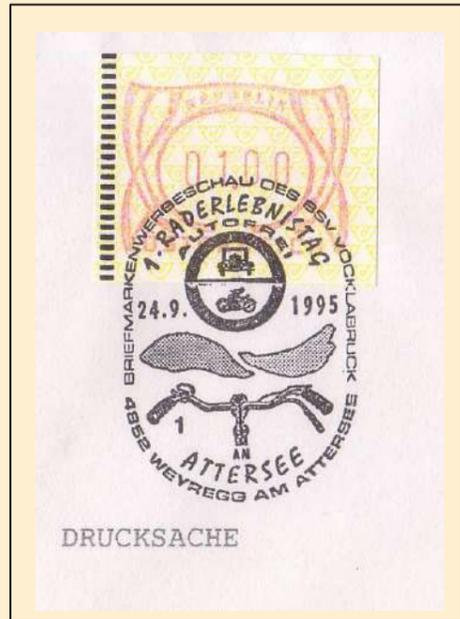


Germany (1940). Commercial cover with advertisement postage meter, type Francotyp "B".

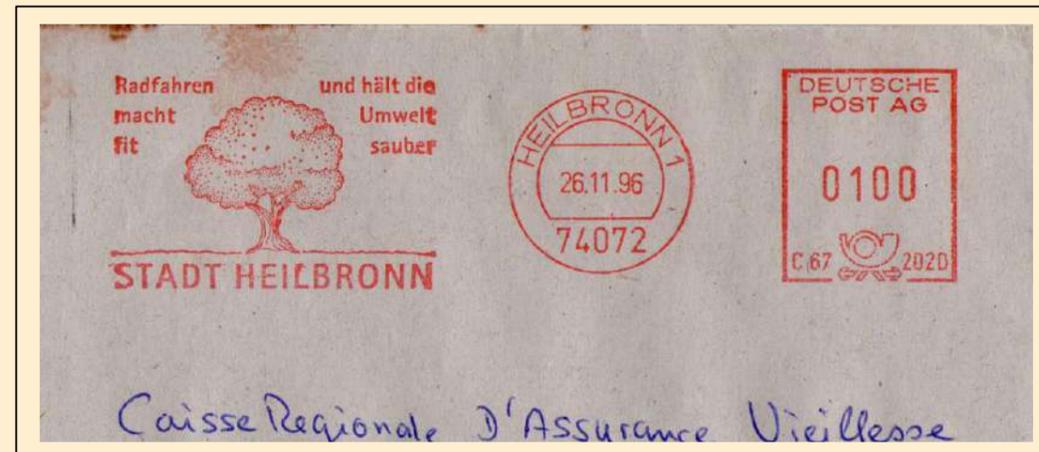


Environmentalism. In 1900 bicycles became affordable to all and evolved from a status symbol to an object of practical use for workers, women... until the economic boom of the 1950s. Motorbikes and cars quickly took hold and led to changes towards a model of dependence on oil. The bicycle experienced a boom during the oil crisis in the 1970s. Ecological awareness developed and the bicycle began slowly to become important again and was one of the symbols of environmentalism and the struggle for a better World.

Health. Cycling is a healthy, low-impact exercise that can be enjoyed by people of all ages, from young children to older adults. Regular physical activity can help protect you from serious diseases and riding a bicycle regularly is one of the best ways to be fit and to reduce your risk of health problems associated with a sedentary lifestyle. Emotionally it also decreases stress and increases self-esteem. No one hesitates to promote its use.



Austria (1995). Pictorial rubber commemorative postmark of Bicycle Day and Car-free Day in Attersee.



Germany (1996). Machine cancellation type Hasler "Mailmaster" with slogan "The bicycle keeps you fit and respect the Environment".



Luxembourg (1985). Slogan pictorial postmark with slogan "Sport as leisure is satisfactory and good for health".



Germany (1980). Machine cancellation type Francotyp "C/Cm" with slogan "Always keep fit with your bicycle".

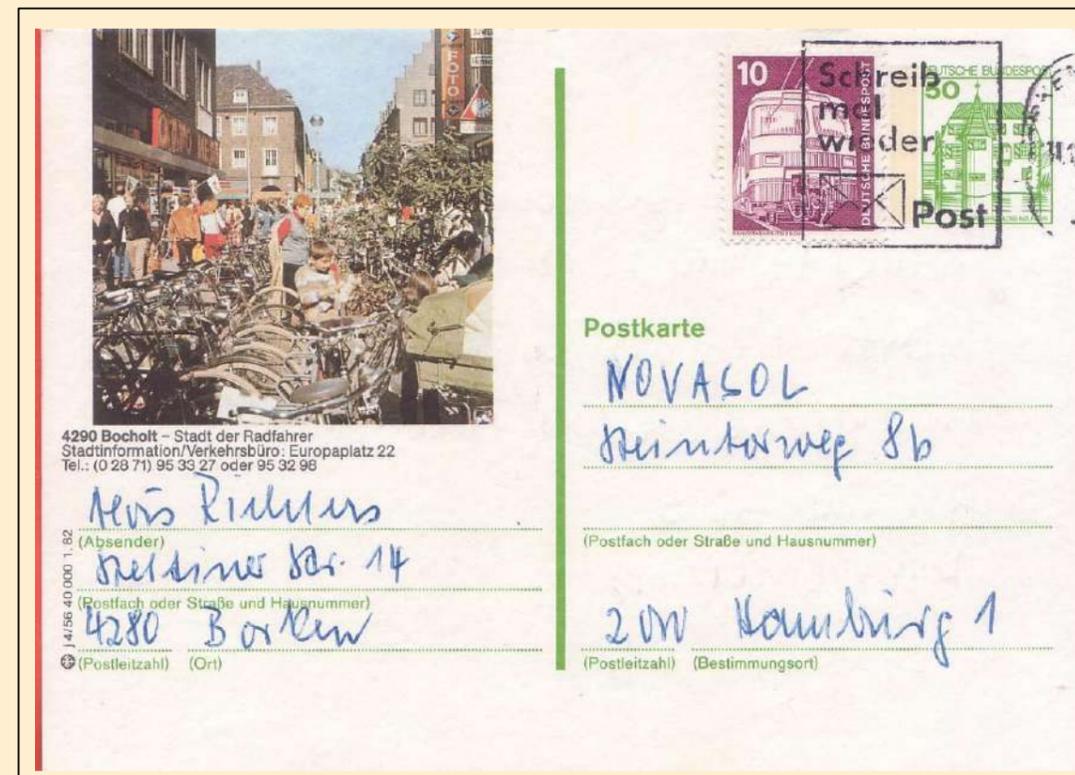
Sustainability. Cyclists were expelled from the public thoroughfare in the 2nd half of 20th century when cities were designed exclusively for cars. New alerts (pollution, health...) and new values are imposed in our society to reconcile both development and sustainability. In this context, nowadays the bicycle is regarding its prominence and will be key to urban sustainability.

Urban bicycle parking lot at Bocholt, the city of bikes, as stated in the legend of the picture.

Civility. Cyclists, due to their small size, are among the most vulnerable road users. To enhance their safety on the road, everybody, cyclists, pedestrians and motor vehicles, must obey all traffic rules and regulations. Many cyclists' accidents can also be prevented by respect.



Germany (1995). Machine cancellation type Pitney Bowes "A931" with slogan "Park your car. Change (your mind) and start. Go to work by bike".



4290 Bocholt – Stadt der Radfahrer
Stadtinformation/Verkehrsbüro: Europaplatz 22
Tel.: (0 28 71) 95 33 27 oder 95 32 98

Postkarte
NOVALDOL
Reintorweg 8b
20W Hamburg 1



Always respect cyclists !!!



Traffic accidents, the great danger for cyclists.

Infrastructures and policies can promote the use of the bicycle in our cities.



Urban cycling path.

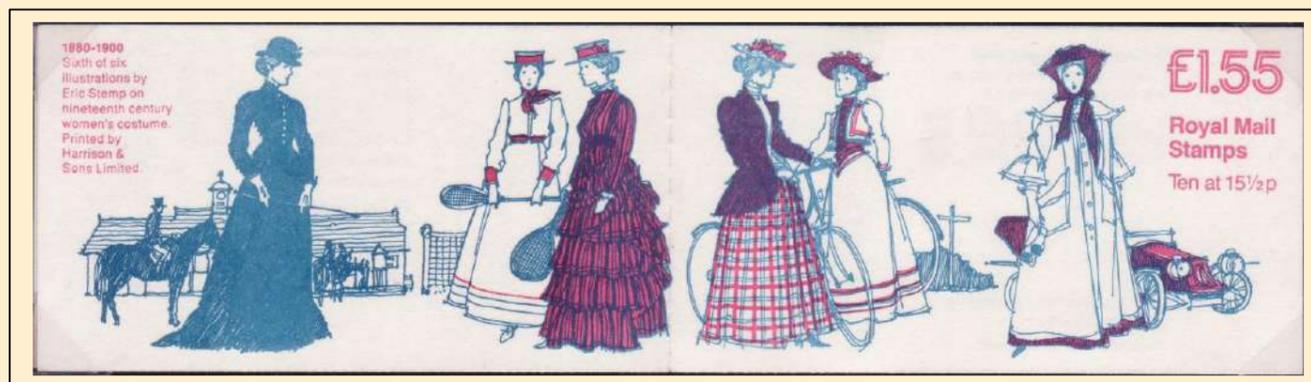


Car-free Day.



Germany (1960). Machine cancellation type Francotyp "C/Cm/Cm" with slogan "Avoid traffic accidents. Do you want to be next?".

Females & bicycles. The bicycle in the 19th century became a symbol of freedom for the feminist movement and was often associated with universal vote movements. Soon the bicycle became a way of challenging the male chauvinism in society of that time and women emerged who raised the use of the bicycle as a symbol to fight for equality.



In childhood and youth a bicycle represents something special, a dream and freedom. The challenge of learning to go by bicycle, the most desired gift at Christmas time, rides with friends...



Specimen (Muster)



Bicycles at work, as leisure, sport or as a mean of transport.



Susan B. Anthony, an activist for universal suffrage carried out its struggle on a bicycle.

War. At the beginning of the 20th century, the bicycle in armies sought to replace the cavalry, in a classic conception of war. And so it was until WWI when the conflict become paralyzed in the trenches and evolved into modern war, with heavy armament, tanks, aviation... In the WWII its role was mostly to speed up communications.

Belgium (1921). Military post with postal franchise of the Cyclist Battalion of the 2nd Cavalry Division.

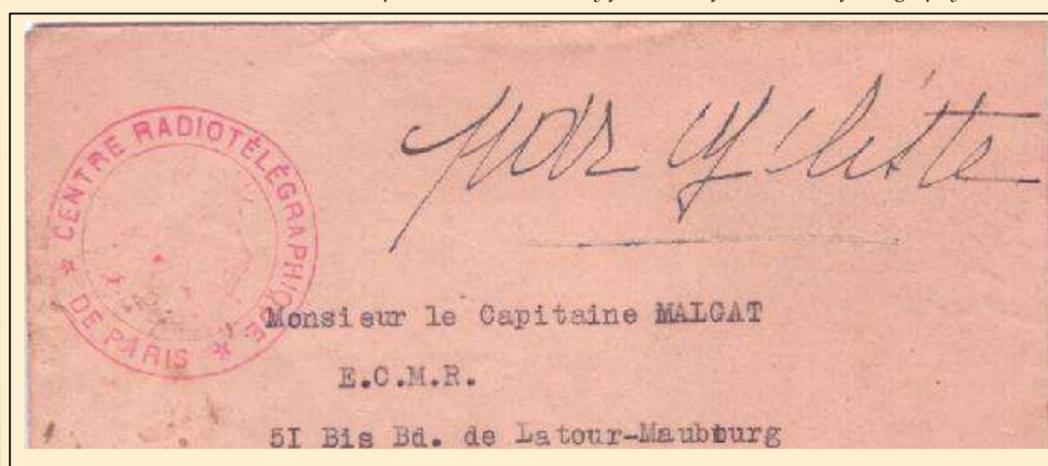


Post delivery. The speed and efficiency of the bicycle made it one of the preferred ways for postal delivery. By the 1930s most countries had greatly diminished the use of bicycles for the mail delivery in favor of the automobile. Sustainability and ecologism values regains the splendor it had in the past and it has never ceased to exist in less developed countries.

France (1940). Routing handwritten mark "Par Cycliste" in military correspondence with military franchise of the Center of Telegraphy in Paris.



Spain (1904). Private courier Barcelona Postal Express. 1st issue (black ink) with cyclist postmark type. RARE. Barcelona Postal Express delivered letters, parcels and goods in the city center and used its own stamps from 1904 to 1906. Several postmarks were used until 1933.



Cuba (1902). Error "inmediata" instead of *immediata* under USA occupation and postal dependence.



Panamá (1929). Proof with control punch hole, from Waterlow archives.



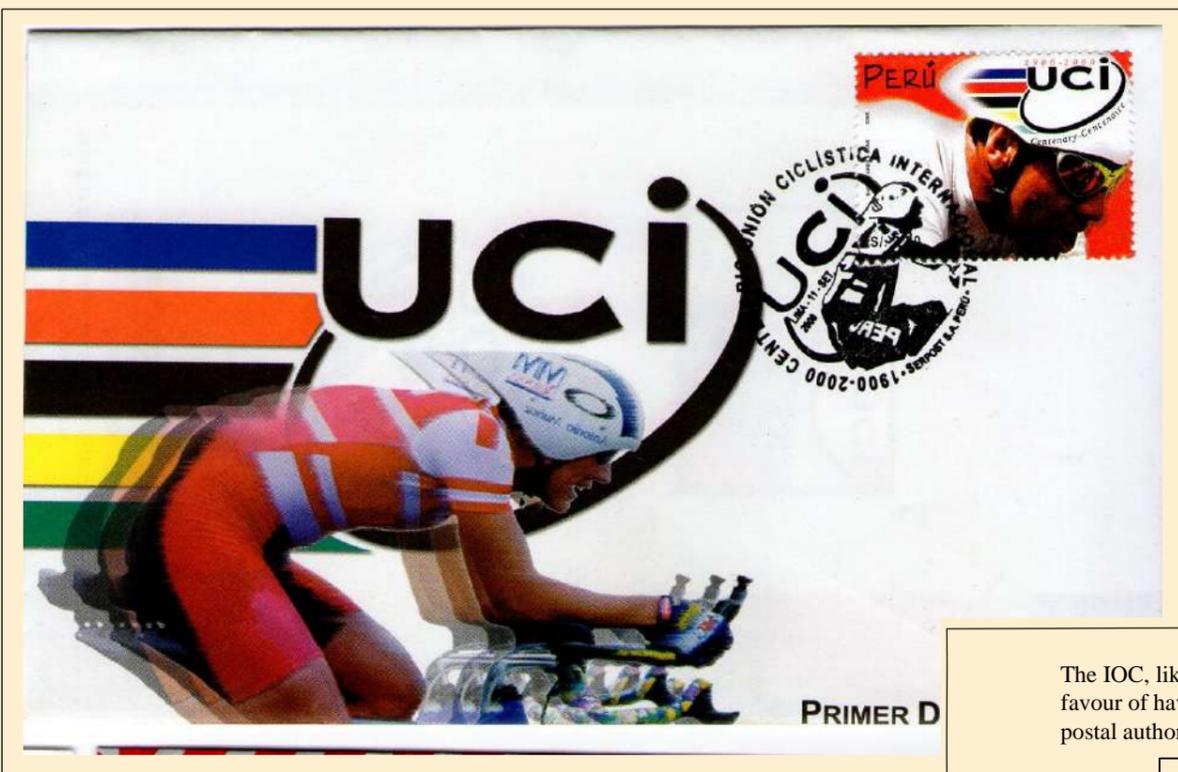
South Africa (1899). Dark blue and pale blue varieties. Siege of Mafeking in the 2nd Anglo-Boer War.



Italy (1942). Militar post with postal franchise of the 4th Cycling Regiment of the 21st Battalion, from Croatia's front of war.

UCI and IOC, both centennial, are the two organizations that manage cycling as a sport in the international sphere.

Founded in 1900, in Paris (France), the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) is the worldwide governing body for cycling. It develops and oversees Cycling in all its forms, for all people as a competitive sport, as a healthy recreational activity, as a means of transport, and also just for fun. It also issues professional licenses to cyclists and is responsible for enforcing regulations, such as doping.



Perú (2000). Stamp and rubber first day cancel to commemorate the 100th anniversary of UCI.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC or CIO) is a non-governmental sports organisation created by Pierre de Coubertin and Demetrios Vikelas in 1894. It is the authority responsible for organising the modern Summer and Winter Olympic Games. The IOC is the governing body of the National Olympic Committees, which are the national constituents of the worldwide Olympic Movement.



Switzerland (1985). Advertisement postage meter with IOC slogan, type Hasler "F66" with horizontal frank inscribed "HELVETIA" at top and with outlined "P"s at the sides, used on 25/10/1985.

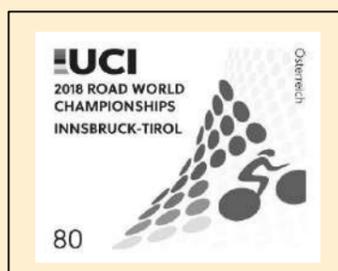
The Olympic motto is the hendiatis Citius, Altius, Fortius, which is Latin for "Faster, Higher, Stronger". It was proposed by de Coubertin upon the creation of the IOC: "These three words represent a programme of moral beauty. The aesthetics of sport are intangible". The "Olympic Rings" are five interlocking colour rings which represent the five continents.

The IOC, like other international organizations, enjoys the favour of having stamps for exclusive use, issued by the postal authority of the country that houses its headquarters.

Spain (1994). Text and pictorial tab label commemorating the 100th anniversary of the IOC.



Three different logos of UCI over the time.



Imperforate trial color proof in Black, and issued stamp.



Switzerland (2008). "Timbre de service" for own IOC post.



The year 2000 was the UCI's centenary year.



Monaco (1993). Stamp booklet, of eight different stamps of 2.8 Fr, Perforation: 13¼ x 13.



With the popularization of the practice of the sport, clubs and groups of practitioners quickly emerged and were in need to self-organize at national level in order to promote activities and to structure their competitions. Thus emerged the nuclei of crystallization of what would later be national federations.



Bavaria (1901). Postal stationery card, printed to private order announcing the 16th Congress of the Allgemeine Radfahrer-Union. 5 pfenning Green, used on 08/07/1901.

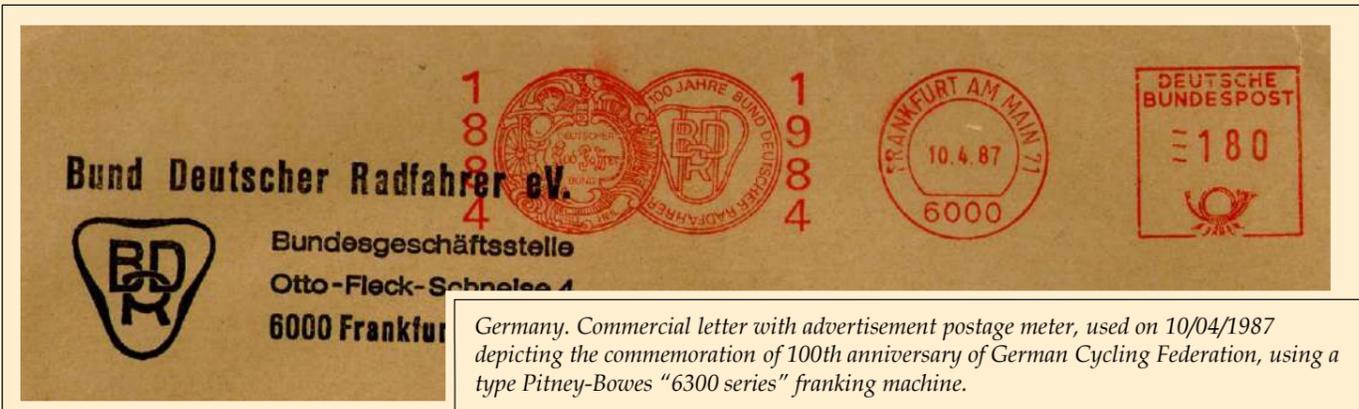


The Allgemeine Radfahrer-Union was the founding nucleus of the German Federation (BDR, Bund Deutscher Radfahrer) as well as the Union Vélocipède de France (U.V.F.) was of the French Cycling Federation.

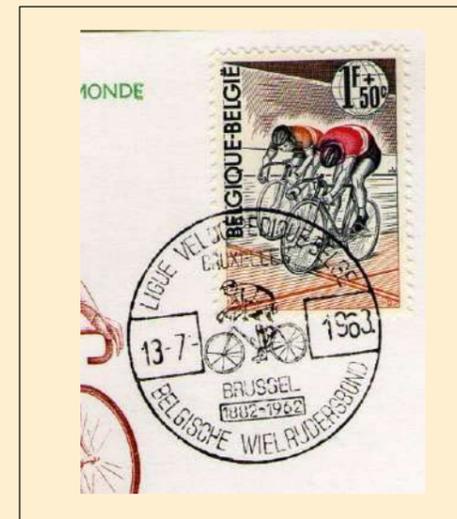
Many of them were the predecessors of the current federations.



France (1927). Slogan pictorial postmark, advertising a cycling event in Reims organized by Union Vélocipède de France, used on 26/07/1927.



Germany. Commercial letter with advertisement postage meter, used on 10/04/1987 depicting the commemoration of 100th anniversary of German Cycling Federation, using a type Pitney-Bowes "6300 series" franking machine.

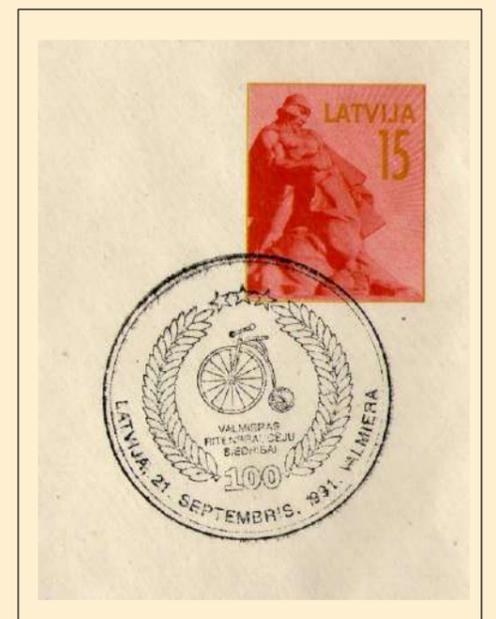


France (1966). Type Havas "M" used on 03/11/1966.

Spain (1980). Advertisement postage meter of Spanish Cycling Federation type Francotyp "Cc/Ccm" and number machine #11941.



Italy (1994). Commercial letter with advertisement postage meter, used on 20/07/1994 of Italian Cycling Federation, using a type Pitney Bowes-GB "5000" promoting the World Championship.



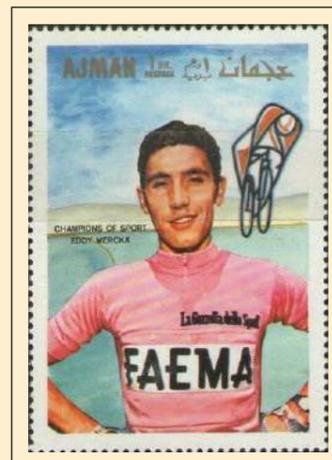
Pictorial rubber commemorative postmark of 100th anniversary of Luxembourg (on issued stamp) and Latvian federations.



France (1930). First model of franking machines used in France: type Havas "Tirany", used 08/05/1930 with the slogan "Lisez tous L'Auto".

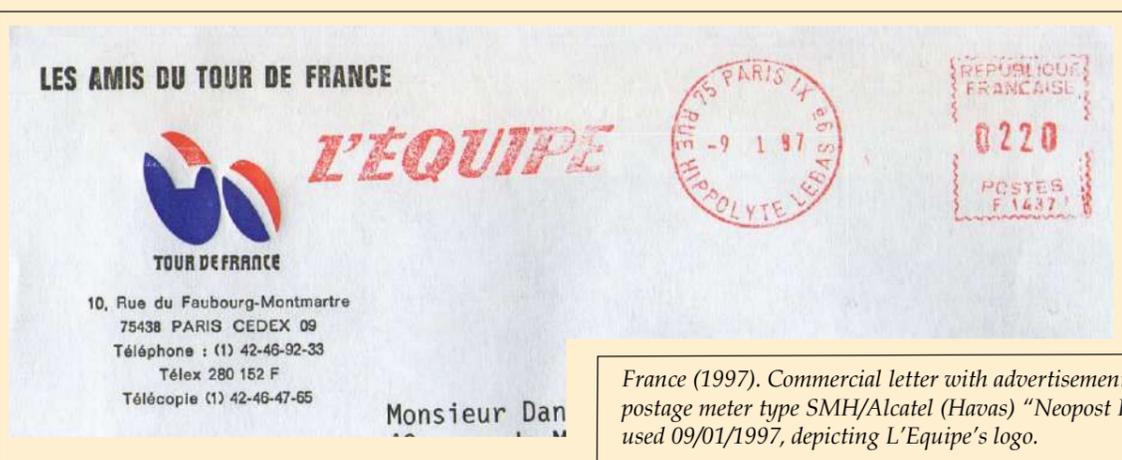
Before Soccer, Cycling was the king of sports and hogged privileged spaces in the press of Europe during the first half of the 20th century. In fact, it was born and developed under sponsorship of the main daily sports press, like La Gazzetta dello Sport (Milan, 1896) or L'Auto-Vélo (Paris, 1900). In an attempt to achieve readers' loyalty and daily attention during some weeks, they created the great races: Le Tour (1903) and Il Giro (1909).

The yellow jersey of Le Tour and the pink maglia of Il Giro have their origin in the characteristic yellowish colors of the pages of L'Auto and pink color of La Gazzetta dello Sport.



Italy (1953). Slogan pictorial postmark, advertising that Il Giro was organized by La Gazzetta dello Sport, used on 31/05/1953.

The Tour of Catalonia, known as "La Volta" is the 3rd most ancient stage race of the calendar (1911) and its creation was promoted by sports newspaper El Mundo Deportivo (1906) in the same way as Le Tour of France.



France (1997). Commercial letter with advertisement postage meter type SMH/Alcatel (Havas) "Neopost F", used 09/01/1997, depicting L'Equipe's logo.



Spain (1981). Pictorial roll cancellation, announcing the 75th anniversary of the newspaper El Mundo Deportivo, used on 05/11/1981.



During WWII, L'Auto refused German requests to run Le Tour de France during the war. After the WWII its editor, Jacques Goddet, defended its paper's role in a court case brought by the French government accused of being close to the Germans. Because of clandestine printing of Resistance newspapers and pamphlets in the L'Auto print room, it was allowed to publish a successor paper called L'Équipe.

Poland (1951). Pictorial rubber commemorative postmark depicting the names of three newspapers involved in the race organization.

The Peace Race was a bicycle race held in the Eastern Bloc states of Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Poland. First organized in 1948, it was originally created with the intent of relieving tensions existing between Central European countries following the interwar period and WWII. Created by the three Communist parties' newspapers – Rudé Právo, Neues Deutschland and Trybuna Ludu–, it was dubbed to be the "World's biggest amateur Cycling race" and known as "Le Tour de France of the East".



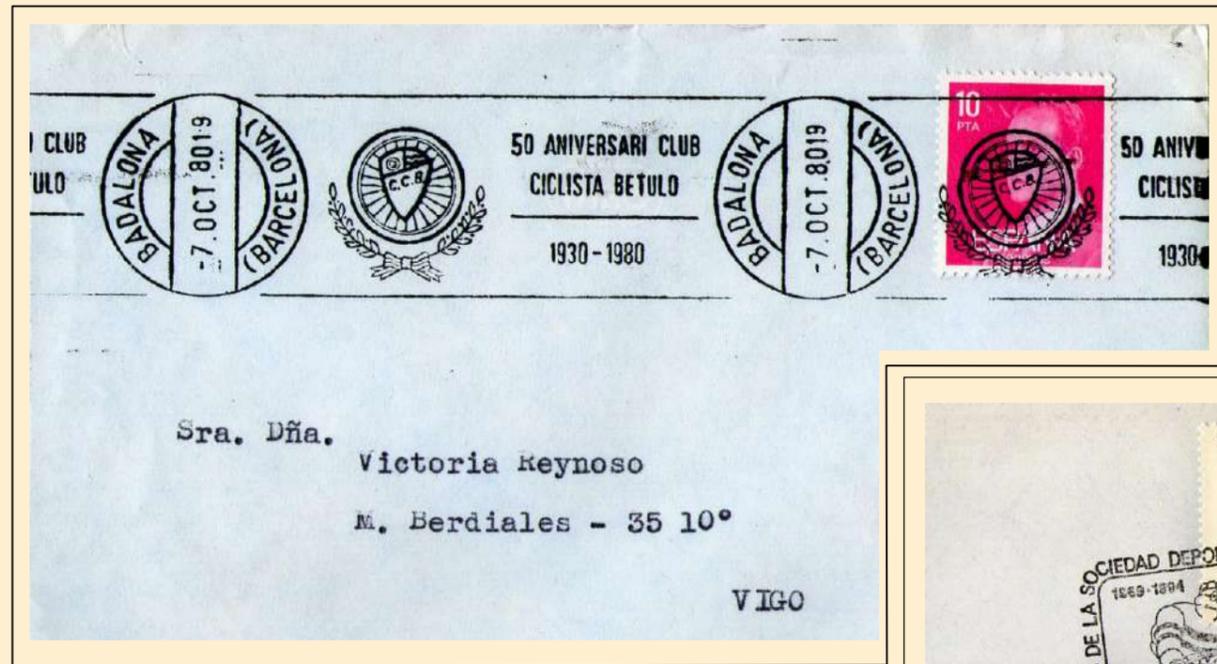
Among all great races, the tour of Spain, known as "La Vuelta", was the most difficult to consolidate. Newspapers like Ya and El Diario Vasco, among others, were at the forefront of its organization.



Spain (1984 and 1985). Pictorial roll cancellations, announcing both the 50th anniversary of some newspapers involved in La Vuelta organization.

Cycling is not only competition. Because of its healthy nature, leisure or promotion of the base sport, there are many people who practice it with a non-competitive nature.

Amateur cyclist races allow everyone to feel close to competition. Some races for amateur cyclists have a high degree of physical demand and to be fit is essential.

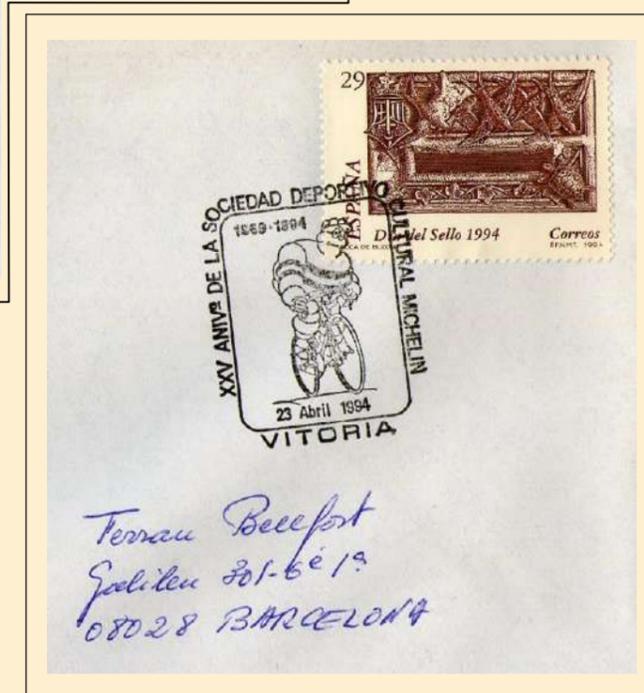


Spain (1980). Pictorial roll cancellation, depicting the 50th anniversary of an amateur cycling club in Badalona, used on 07/10/1980.

Cycling clubs, with their federated cyclists, are the embryo of formative cycling and, at the same time, a place for all those cyclists who only enjoy riding with their group of friends in a non-competitive way.



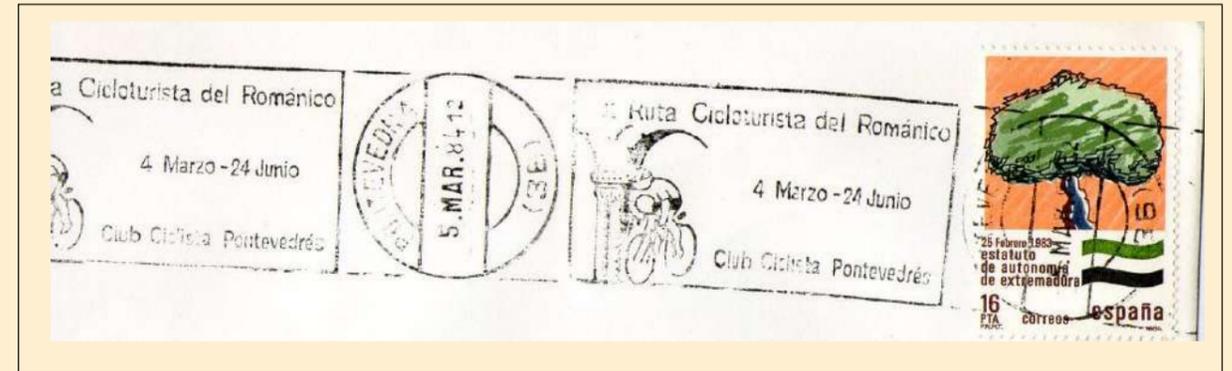
In some countries, such as France, the cycling culture as leisure and tourism is widespread and numerous meetings are held.



Spain (1994). Pictorial rubber commemorative postmark. 25th anniversary of sport club of Michelin Company's workers.



USA (1993). Pictorial rubber postmark, promoting the Oregon Trail by bike.



Spain (1984). Pictorial roll cancellation, advertising an amateur race in the Santiago de Compostela area, used on 05/03/1984.



In many cases these type of events honour great sports legends, as the above rubber postmark –devoted to L. Bobet– or Andorra stamp stated.



Over 2000 people take part in "La Purito" each year. Joaquim "Purito" Rodríguez, a long-time resident of Andorra, organizes La Purito cycle race, covering the same route as the legendary stage of the 2015 Vuelta de España, the toughest in the history of the Spanish race and with the finish line in Andorra.



Pictorial rubber commemorative postmarks of amateur races in Andorra (1980) (top), Italy (1979) (bottom) and France (1989).

And for those who shy away from competitive races and only need to enjoy the path and landscapes there are minor non-competitive races and cycling concentrations, very popular in several countries of Central Europe.

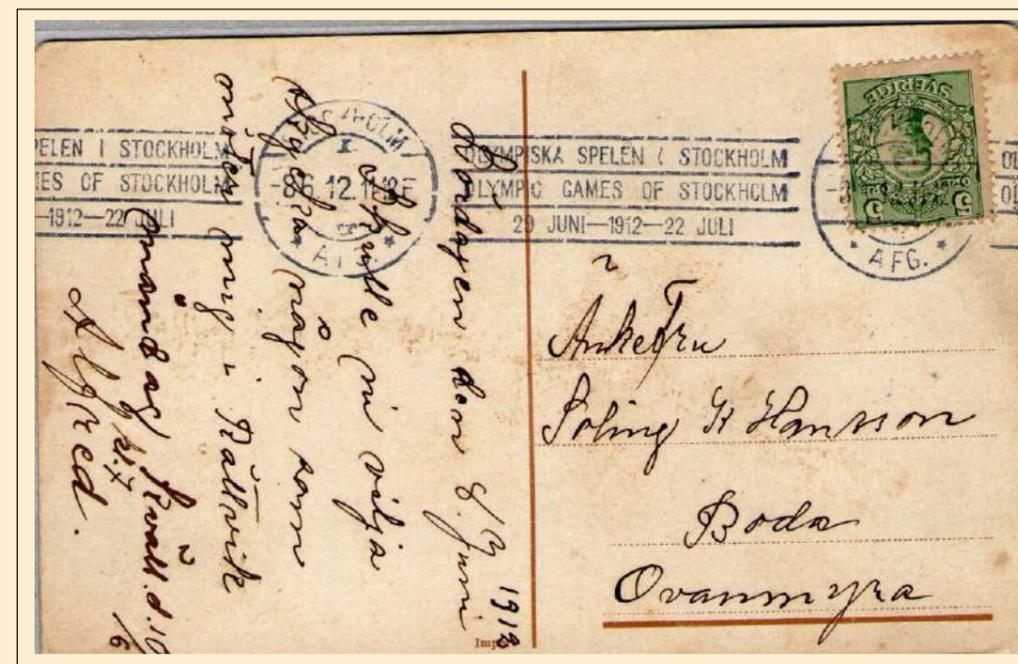




Their creation was inspired by the ancient Olympic Games, which were held in Olympia from the 8th century BC to the 4th century AD. The 1896 Olympics were regarded as a great success. The rules of the International Cycling Association were used for the cycling competitions and the track cycling events were held at the newly built Neo Phaliron Velodrome. Only one road event was held, a race from Athens to Marathon and back (87 kilometers) won by Aristidis Konstantinidis.



Aristidis Konstantinidis.



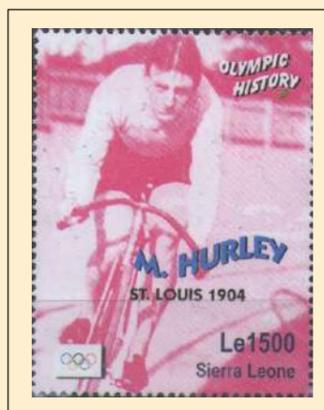
The 1912 Olympics event held in Stockholm and Jim Thorpe was the star of these Olympics. Only one cycling event was contested. This event was a Time Trial which also counted as an Individual Race. For the only time in Olympic history, no track cycling events were held.



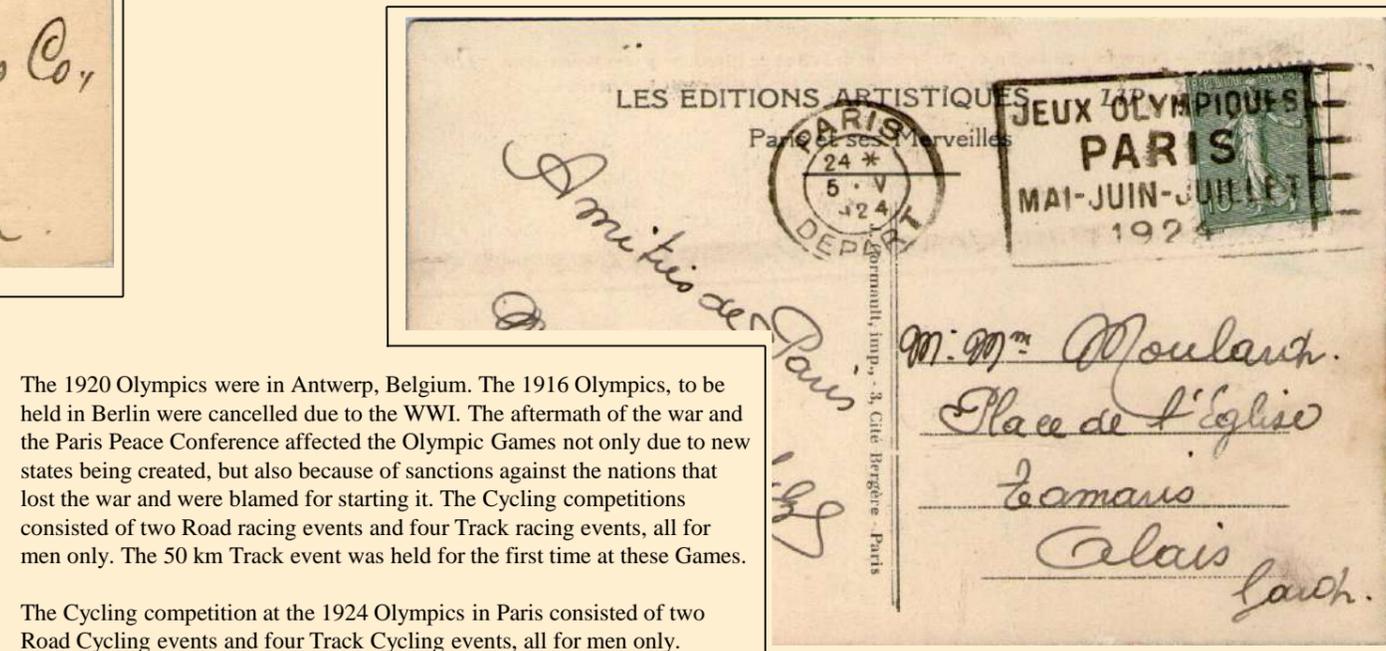
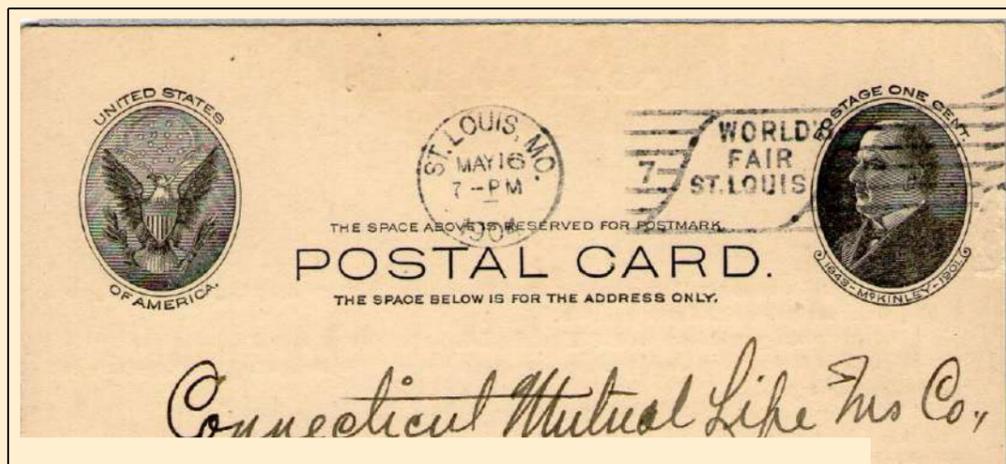
The 1900 Paris Games were held as part of the 1900 World's Fair. All cycling events were a track events, hosted at the Municipal Velodrome of Paris.

Sweden (1911). Pictorial roll cancellation, depicting "Olympic Games of Stockholm", used on 06/12/1911.

The 1904 Olympics were celebrated in St. Louis as part of an extended sports program in the time frame of World Fair. The difficulty of getting to St. Louis in 1904 may have contributed to the fact that very few top ranked athletes from outside the US and Canada took part in these Games.

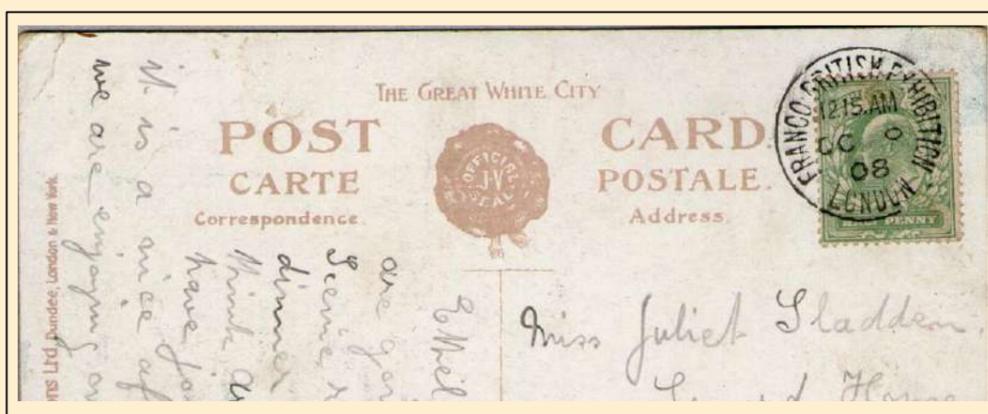


Marcus Hurley was the winner of the most track events, and most riders and all podium places were from the USA.



The 1920 Olympics were in Antwerp, Belgium. The 1916 Olympics, to be held in Berlin were cancelled due to the WWI. The aftermath of the war and the Paris Peace Conference affected the Olympic Games not only due to new states being created, but also because of sanctions against the nations that lost the war and were blamed for starting it. The Cycling competitions consisted of two Road racing events and four Track racing events, all for men only. The 50 km Track event was held for the first time at these Games.

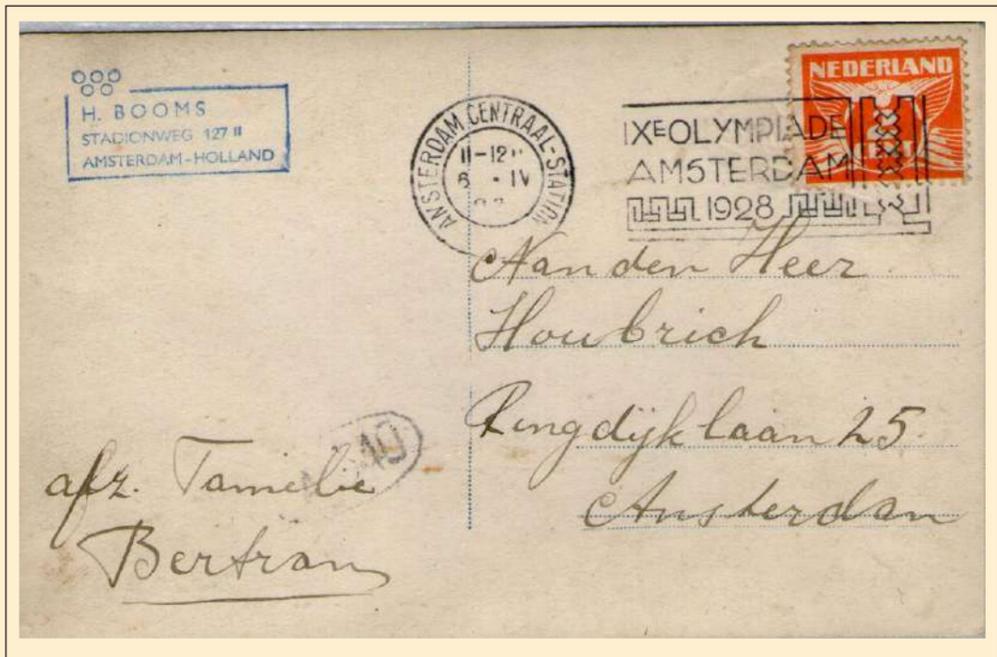
The Cycling competition at the 1924 Olympics in Paris consisted of two Road Cycling events and four Track Cycling events, all for men only.



GB (1908). Pictorial rubber commemorative postmark of Franco-British Exhibition.

The 1908 Olympics were held London, UK. These Games were originally scheduled to be held in Rome, but were re-located because of a disastrous eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1906. At the 1908 Olympics, seven track cycling events were contested, all for men only.

The Cycling competition at the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam consisted of two Road Cycling events and four Track Cycling events, all for men only. The individual event in Road Cycling was a Time Trial over a distance of 168 km and the team competition was decided by aggregating the times of the three fastest riders from each nation.



The Netherlands (1928). Slogan pictorial postmark.



Specimen with control punch hole.



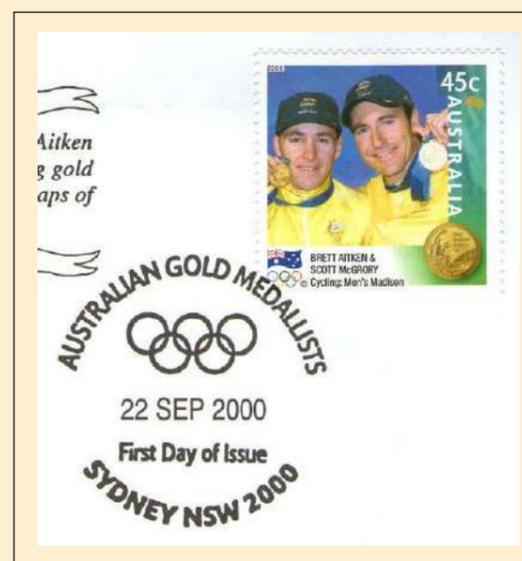
Sr. D.
Ignacio GALINDO del HIERRO
Agustina Simon, 5
CALATAYUD, Espagne.-

The Olympic program has evolved over the years, removing certain modalities, such as fast and dangerous tandem races, or incorporating new disciplines, such as MTB or BMX. And women have also achieved more relevance.



Czech Republic (2013). Registered letter from Czech Republic to Catalonia on 19/11/2013 franked with an olympic stamp depicting a woman cyclist.

Monaco (1953). First stamp where a cyclist was depicted was issued by Monaco in 1953 to commemorate the Helsinki Olympic Games. Letter from Monaco to Spain, used on its first day of use and up-rated because the philatelic nature of the letter.

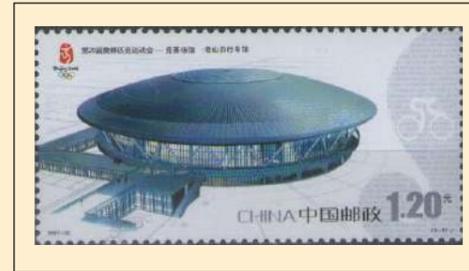


An Olympic gold medal immortalises the winner and inscribes his name in Olympic History, especially in his countries of origin.





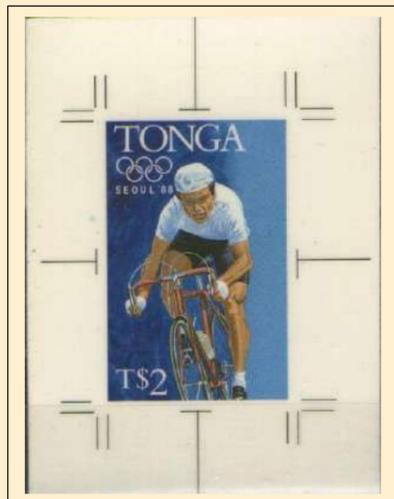
Mongolia (1996). Imperforate color and progressive color proofs on thin paper of offset printing process.



The Olympic events are a unique opportunity to build sports infrastructures, such as Velodromes.



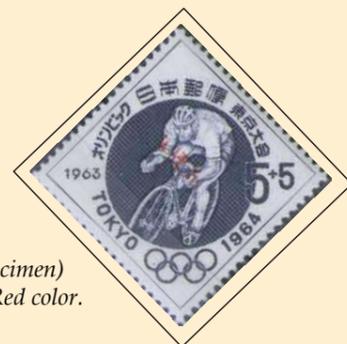
Spain (1992). Pictorial rubber postmark used in the mobile post-office sited in the Olympic Velodrome during the Barcelona Olympic Games, at Vall d'Hebron neighborhood.



Tonga (1988). Chromalin proof VERY RARE. As an important part of the printing process, this chromalin proof was produced by Walsall Security Printers on thick card and in full colour directly from the color separations prior to final production of the printing plates. Each color is layered on top of the next thus building up to the full color design. It is at this stage that any final color change and occasionally design adjustment is made. As only 4 or 5 were done, chromalin proofs are scarce due to the very small number done.

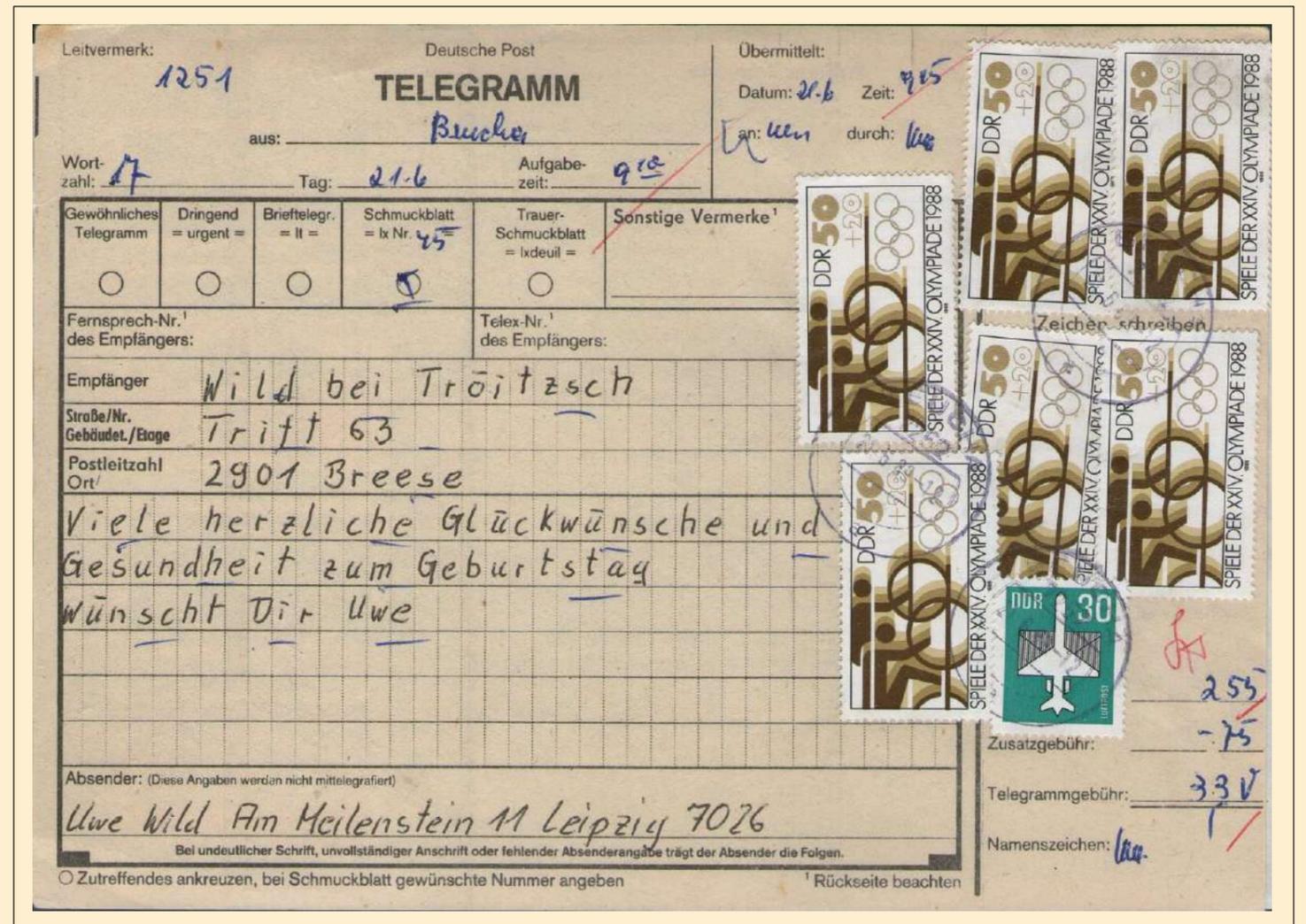


"Muestra" (specimen).



"Mihon" (specimen) overprint in Red color.

Throughout history, many Olympic sets were issued with surcharge which was usually allocated to the promotion of sports in that country.



DDR (1989). Telegram rated 330m for inland, franked mostly with 1988 olympic surcharged stamp.

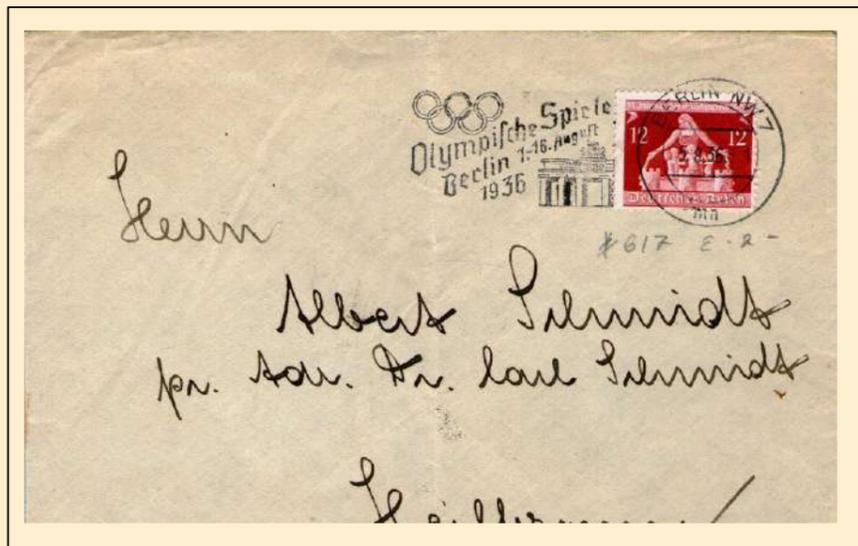
Policy has been part of Olympic history for a very long time. The prelude of WWII and the Cold War conditioned the Olympics during several Olympic cycles.

The first boycott took place in Berlin 1936 when it won the bid to host the Games. Hitler saw the Games as an opportunity to promote his government and ideals of racial supremacy and antisemitism. In Barcelona The People's Olympiad was intended to take place and conceived as a protest event against the Berlin Games, which was then under control of Nazi Germany.

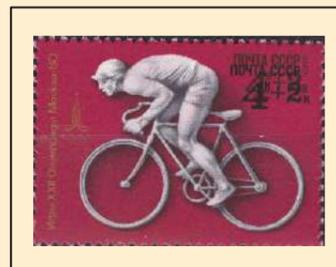


The fight of the Black Freedom Movement by USA sportmen and contestants in Mexico demanding civil rights were protagonists of Olympics in 1968.

Rep. Korea (1968). Se-tenant pair.



In protest against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the USA called for a boycott the 1980 Moscow Olympics. Other countries joined the boycott and some other countries competed under the Olympic flag.



USSR (1980). Black colour shift.

In 1984, Los Angeles hosted the Olympic Games, but in response the USSR boycotted these Games and the Soviet allied countries also joined the boycott.

The sporting nature of the 1972 Olympics was largely overshadowed by the Munich massacre, framed against the background scenarios of Cold War and the Arab-Israeli Conflict.

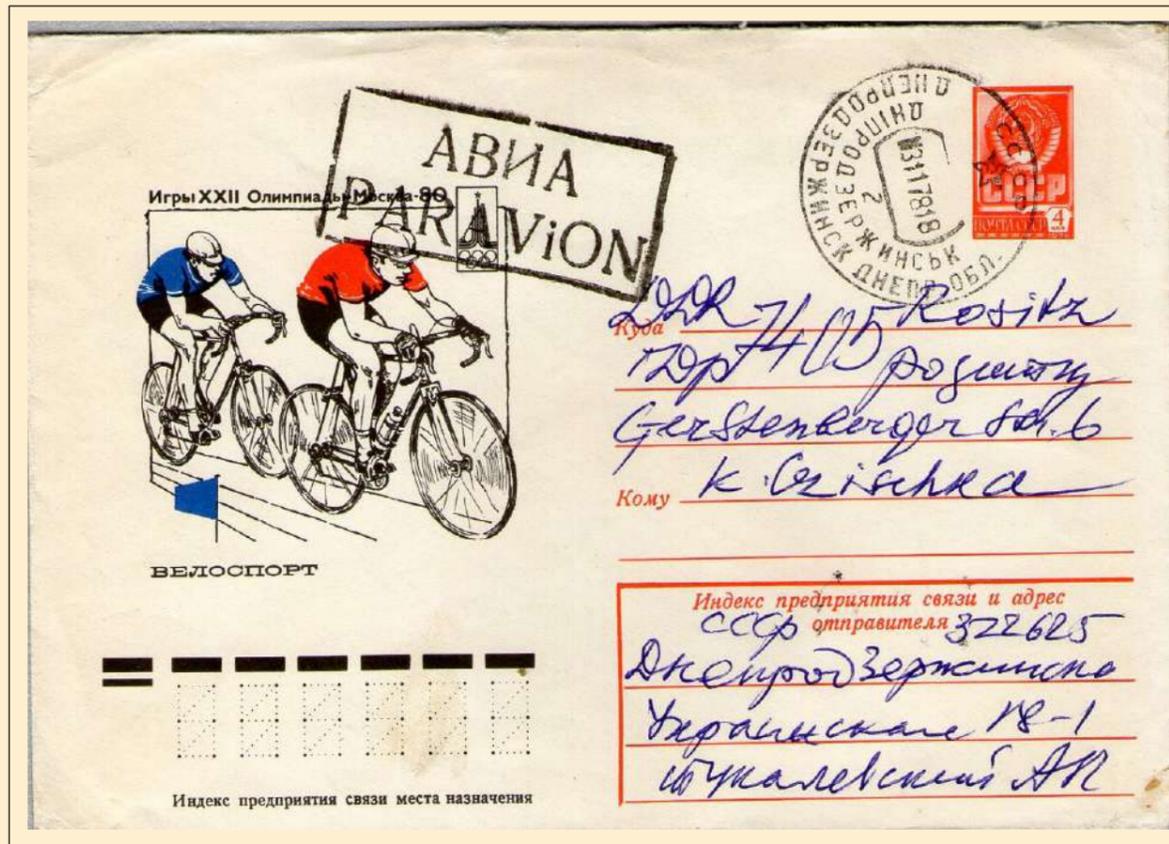


USA (1972). Misperforation error over plate number (left) and Green colour shift (right).

When the USSR ceased to exist on December 1991, its Olympic Committee did too. In the 1992 Olympics, 12 of the 15 former Soviet Republics competed together as the Unified Team and marched under the Olympic Flag.

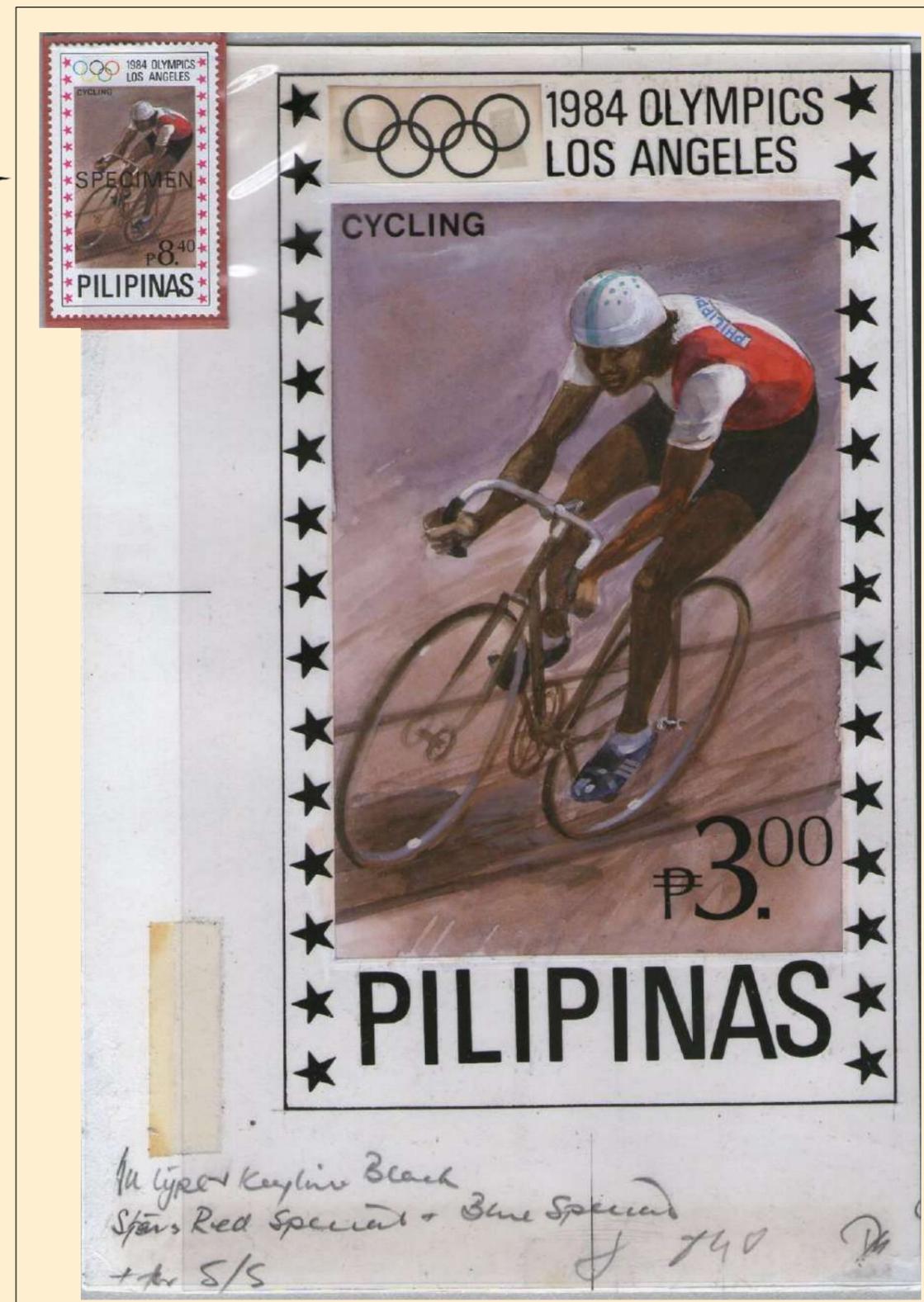


Tonga (1992). Monochrome proof in Black and White on thin card to check the design. Only 20 were done by Walsall Security Printers of London (UK). RARE.



USSR (1980). 4k imprint stationary cover for domestic usage.

Specimen



Philippines (1984). Original final artwork, watercolor on cardboard, pencil notes from design process and acetate overlay for lettering. UNIQUE. Additionally in the top left-hand corner specimen of "Red stars" variety is shown.

Given the lack of liquidity of the Philippine postal authority, this emission was considered speculative when entrusted to an international agency; in fact, it does not appear in some catalogs. However, the issue was used regularly for postal purposes. Only reprints of "Blue stars" variety in minisheets and imperforate are considered bogus stamps.

The UCI World Championships are annual competitions promoted by the UCI to determine World champion cyclists. They are held in a different country each year and in several different styles of racing, including pro, women, youth and amateur riders.



GB (1978). Right bottom-hand corner of a complete sheet with traffic light marking on margin which indicate displacement of color. Gold color is not placed correctly and Queen head is displaced down.



Traffic light marking on interpanel indicate slight displacement of Blue (down) and Gold (up) color.

The first World Championships were track events in 1895. In that period it was the prevailing modality due to the poor state of the existing unpaved roads.

The Winter velodrome, known as Vel D'Hiv, held the track World Championships of 1900, the first organized by UCI after its foundation.

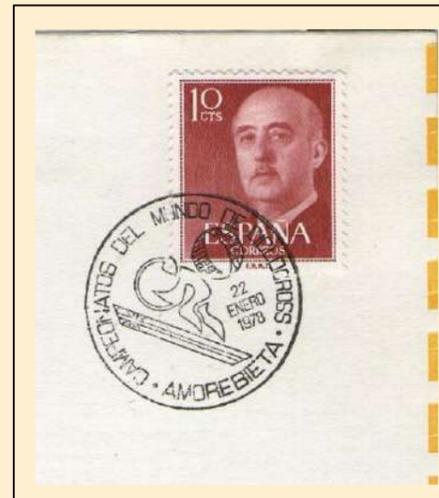


France (1904). FIRST thematic cycling cancel, corresponding to the winter velodrome (Vel d'Hiv) in Paris during the Youth Festival held in this venue and organized by Le Matin newspaper. Perfin M related to Le Matin newspaper, period of usage 1903-1908. Used on 19/06/1904.



The road event is disputed during a single day and by national teams.

All different styles of racing have their own events, including minority styles such as Artistic Cycling, Cycle Ball or Bike Trial.



Spain (1978). Pictorial rubber commemorative postmark advertising the Cyclo-cross World Championship.



Tomasselli, the winner in Vel d'Hiv in 1900.

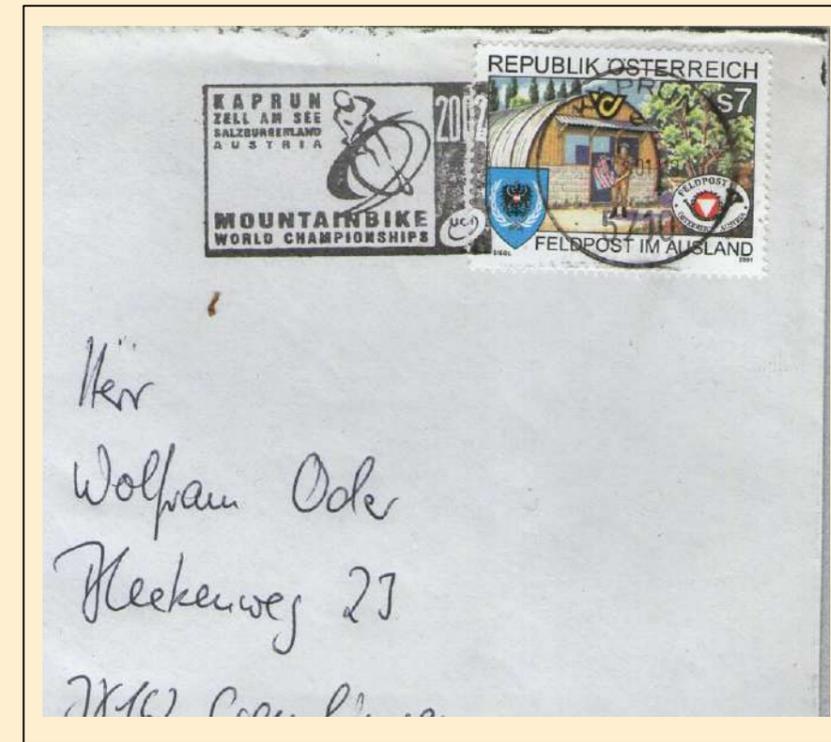
The Vel d'Hiv Raid (Rafle du Vélodrome d'Hiver) was a Nazi-directed raid and mass arrest of Jews in Paris on 16-17/07/1942. 13,152 Jews were arrested, including more than 4,000 children to be shipped to Auschwitz for their mass murder.



Commemorative stamp of Vel d'Hiv's Raid.



Italia (1962). Vertical pair of fake counterfeit stamps with a postmark showing its postal circulation, used on 18/11/1962.



In 1962 Italy hosted the Track and Road World Championships. Italian poste issued a set of three stamps with rate values of 30, 70 and 300 lire. The high value of the 300 L made it susceptible to be used as a fake postal for a long time despite inflation.



Italia. Registered and express letter used on 20/03/1981 with imperforated block of four fake counterfeit of 1962 300L stamps.

The winner is considered the World Cycling Champion and earns the honour of wearing the Rainbow Jersey for the full season at races or stage events. He also has the right to wear the rainbow on the sleeves and neck of his jerseys for the rest of his sporting life.

Rudi Altig with the jersey of his professional team, but keeping the distinction of World champion of 1966 on the sleeves and neck.

The first Road World Championship took place in 1927. Until 1974 they did not leave the European continent, showing the importance of competition cycling in Europe.

In the early days sometimes they took place in authordoms to take advantage of a circular path with good paving.



USA (1986). Advertisement postage meter, type Pitney Bowes "RT-4" and "2295", frameless design with large sitting eagle in center and with meter number, used on 30/07/1986.



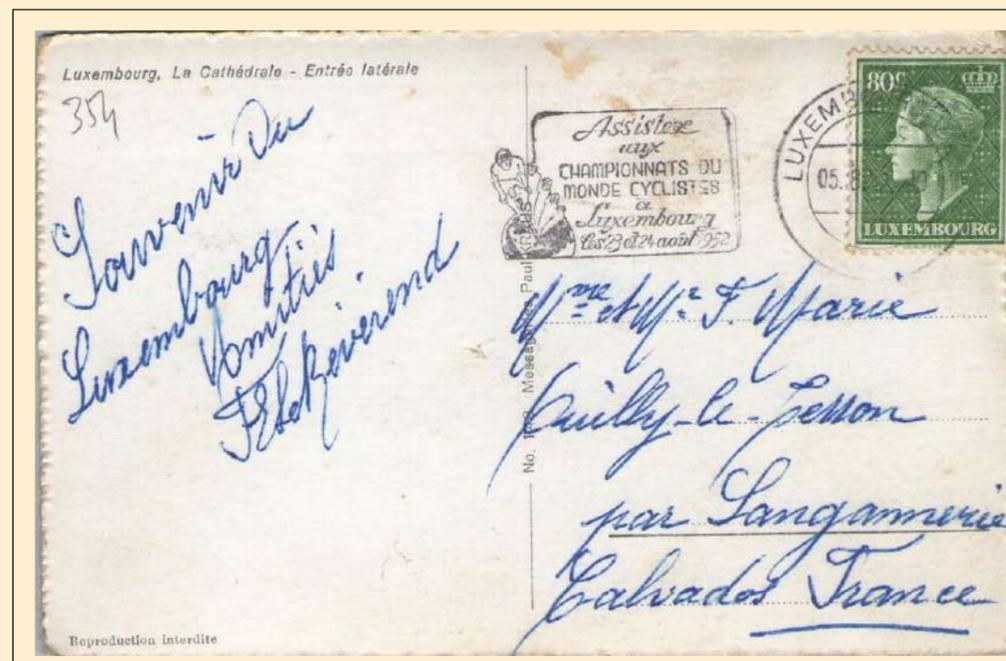
Germany (1954). Pictorial rubber commemorative postmark of 1954 World Championship held in Klingen circuit.



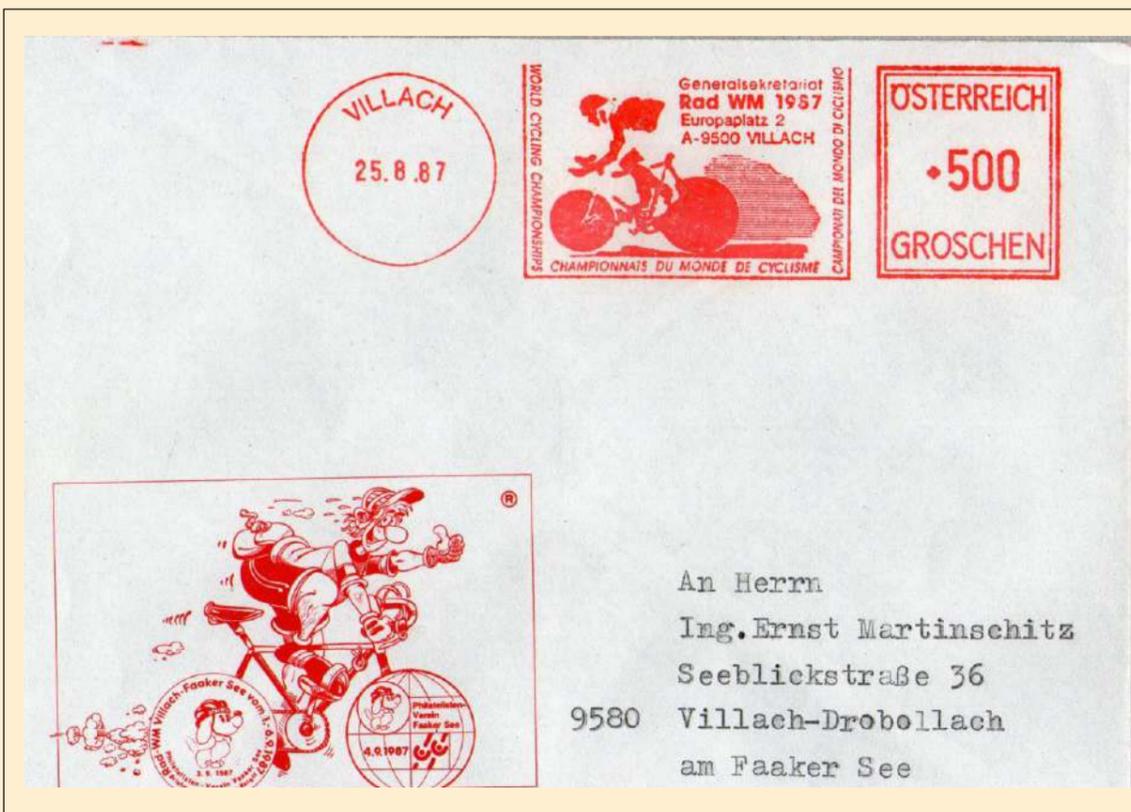
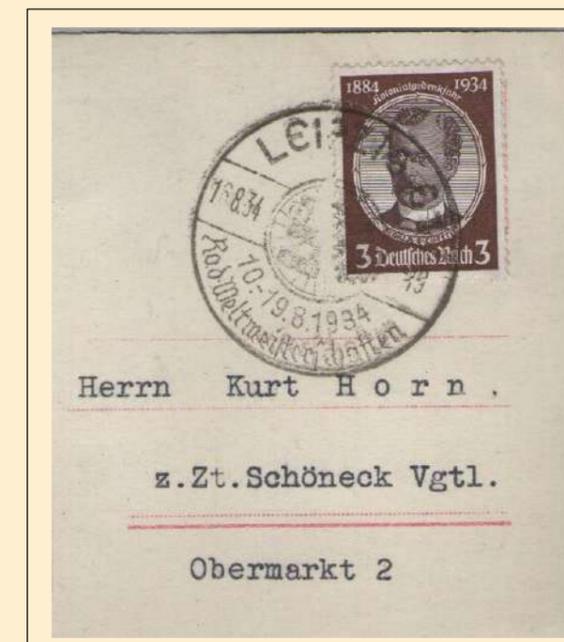
"Mihon" (Specimen) overprint in Black color.



Italian emission, enabled for the territory of Trieste with AMG-FTT overprint in red ink.



Reproduction interdite



An Herrn
Ing. Ernst Martinschitz
Seeblickstraße 36
9580 Villach-Drobollach
am Faaker See

Austria (1987). Machine cancellation type Francotyp "Cm 7000/10000" with slogan advertising the World Championship, used on 25/08/1987.



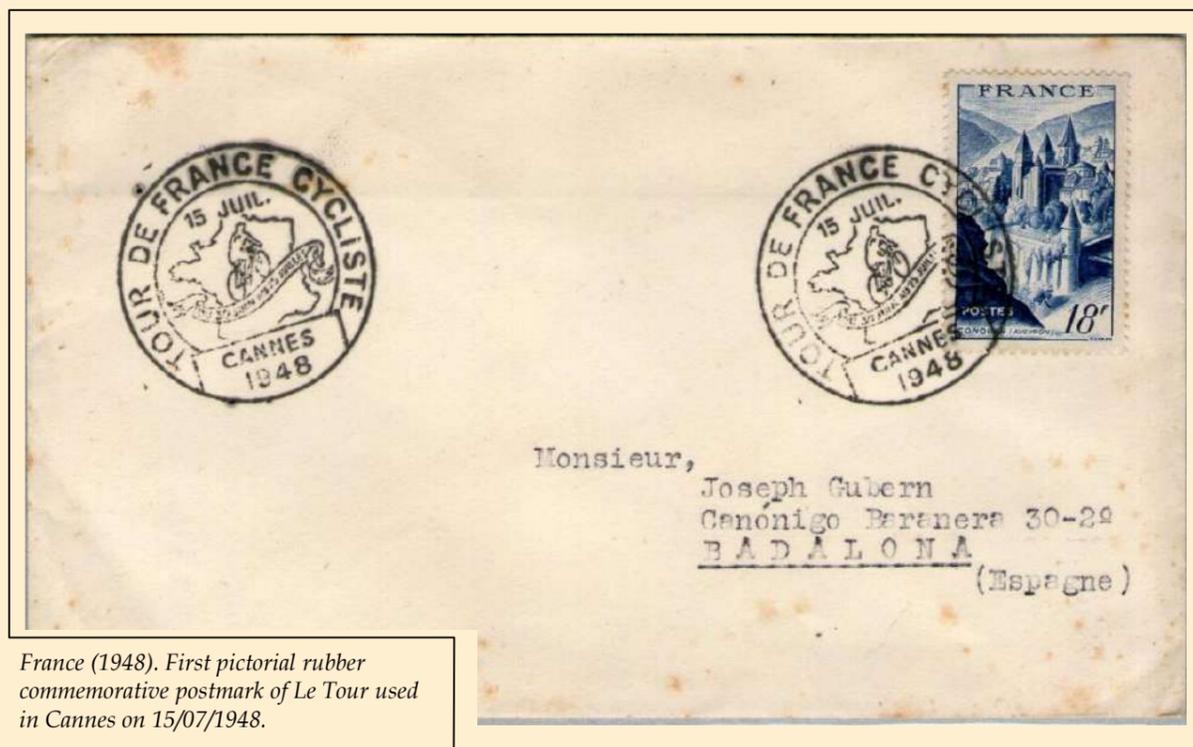
France (1989). Print Error with blue color shifted slightly, generating a three-dimensional appearance in the main legend.

issue stamp and First Day commemorative postmark.



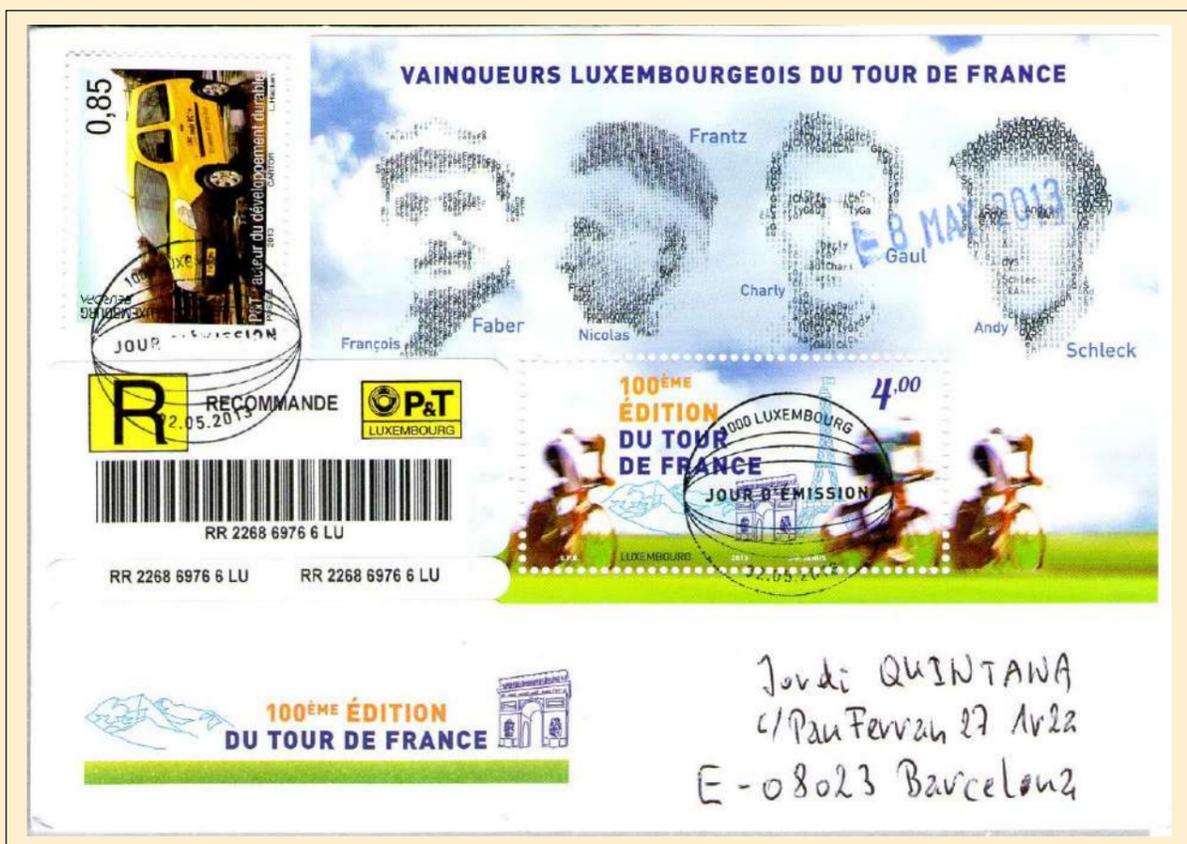
Le Tour de France, established in 1903 and staged for three weeks each July, is the World's most prestigious and most difficult bicycle race, and has been run every year except during the World Wars.

The race was first organized in 1903 to increase sales of the newspaper L'Auto. Maurice Garin was the first winner, with an average speed of 25 km/h he covered 2,400 Km in 6 stages, each with more than 400 Km daily.



France (1948). First pictorial rubber commemorative postmark of Le Tour used in Cannes on 15/07/1948.

WWI was also tragic for sport, where at least 50 riders of Le Tour died, among them three winners of Le Tour: François Faber, Octave Lapize and Lucien Petit-Breton.



Luxembourg (2013). Registered letter from Luxembourg to Spain, franked with minisheet devoted to winners of Le Tour from Luxembourg where François Faber is also depicted.



Imperfate trial color proof in Black, and issued stamp depicting Maurice Garin, first winner of Le Tour.



The signature of Henry Desgranges (seen on the lapel), is one of the symbols of Le Tour, still present on the current Yellow Jersey (detail on jersey sleeves).



Monument in homage to Henry Desgranges at the Col du Galibier (the Alps).



Itinerary of the first edition, in the Andorra's issue to commemorate the centenary of Le Tour.

In 1919, when the race was resumed after WWI, the yellow jersey was introduced. It is yellow because L'Auto was printed on Yellow pages.



Pictorial rubber commemorative postmark depicting Eugène Christoph, 1st Yellow Jersey.

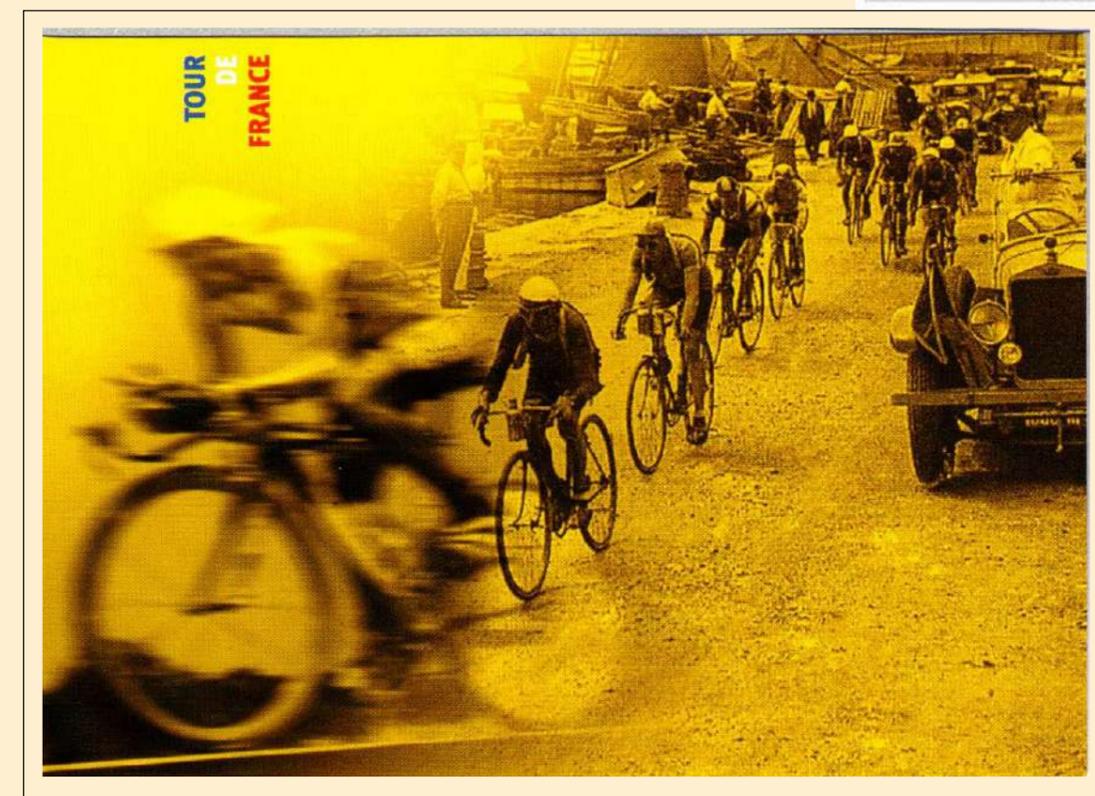


Luxembourg (2002). Specimen applied with no place and date round cancellation. Stamp depicting François Faber, died in the WWI.

The first years of the race are known as the "Heroic Ages", with long stages of cobbled roads and in poor condition. It is in these years when were introduced in Le Tour the Pyrenees (1910) and the Alps (1911) to provide more toughness and heroism during the race.



photocopy of the reverse



Switzerland (2000). Paid value imprint stationary postcard for UCI usage depicting early photography.

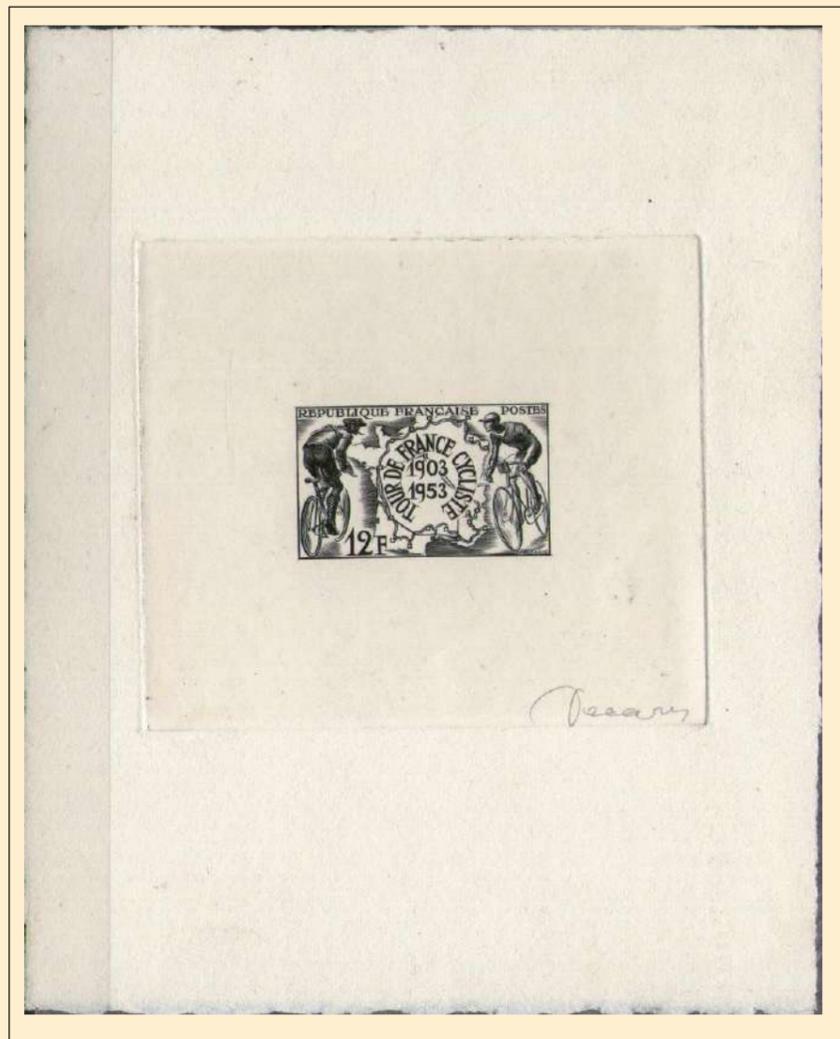
The commemorative editions of Le Tour de France are special both in sporting and philatelic terms.



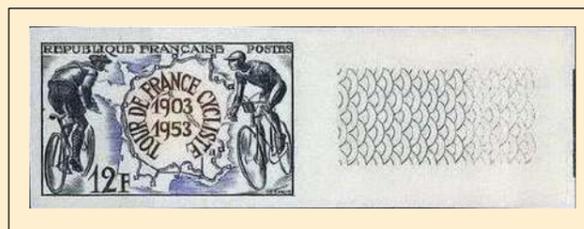
Trial color proof in Black, imperforate.

France (1953). Engraver's die proof, printed in Black solid color, signed by the engraver Jean Decaris.

Stamp issued to commemorate the 50th edition of Le Tour.



During the 1950s the scarce proofs were given by the French philatelic service to the authorities, although they quickly ended up in the hands of the philatelic merchants.



France (1953). Several imperforate color proofs and progressive color proofs with color control on margin of the commemorative stamp of the 50th anniversary of Le Tour. From the original engraving a black test was done to detect errors in the matrix and, later, various color tests, from the basic colors to different color combinations were done too.



France (1948). Pictorial rubber commemorative postmark of the 50th edition of Le Tour used in Beziers on 17/07/1953.



Commemorative rubber postmarks of Le Tour corresponding to the 75th and 100th editions.

From the early days, Le Tour usually visits other countries to expand to the maximum number of fans the "Big Show" of Cycling.



Il Giro d'Italia is the other of the great stage races. Its first edition left Milan in 1903 and 127 cyclists covered 2,500 km during 8 stages that were run every 2-3 days, because the newspaper La Gazzetta dello Sport had to narrate the exploits of the heroes of the race only 3 days a week, not daily.

Il Giro d'Italia is also centenary. The jubilees were also celebrated philatelically with several issues (50th, 75th and 100th edition).



Italy (1956). Letter with multiple cancellation corresponding to the 17th stage of Il Giro. Machine cancellation with advertising slogan and pictorial rubber commemorative postmark of the mobile postal office (autoambulante), both used on 07/06/1956.



Italy (1968). Rubber postmark corresponding to the Time-trial stage. Used on 06/06/1968.



Italy (2009). Commemorative stamp and postmark corresponding to the 100th edition of Il Giro used on delivery confirmation receipt for a registered letter (reduced photocopy of the reverse).



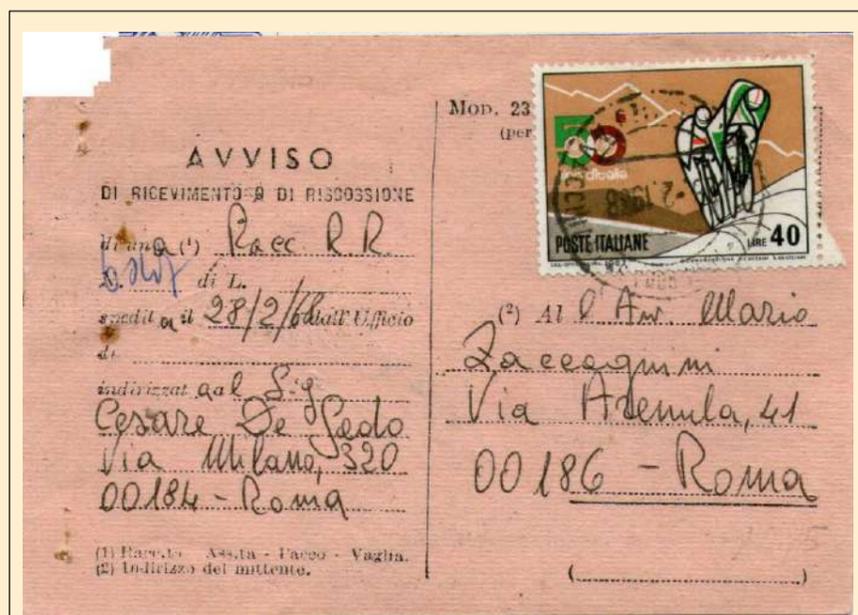
Commemorative issues of the 50th, 75th and 100th Giro.



The maglias (jerseys) of Il Giro d'Italia: Pink for the leader of the general classification, Green for the mountain classification and Cyclamen (Mallow) for the regularity classification.



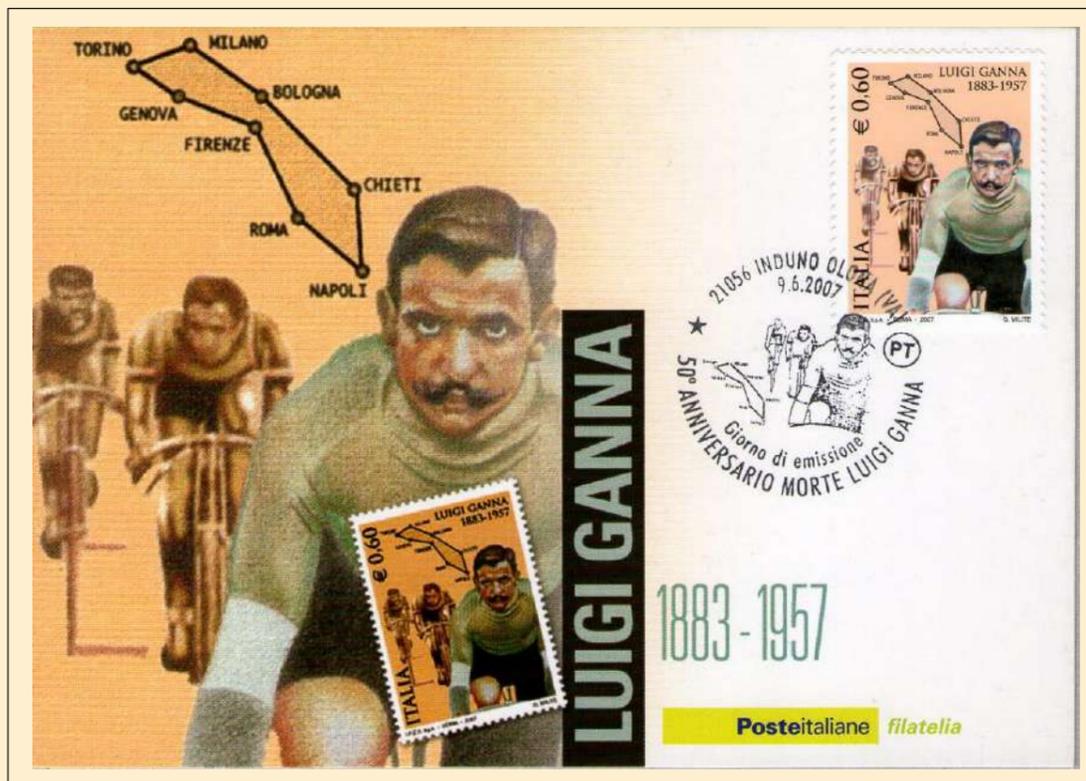
La Gazzetta dello Sport rushed to organize the first tour of Italy when it noticed that Il Corriere della Sella also intended to organize it. Since then it has been the manager of the race and the leader has the Maglia Rosa because the colour of the paper of La Gazzetta is Pink.



Italy (1968). Announcement of money transfer via the postal services, paid with 40 L stamp depicting the Green Jersey in a mountain landscape, used on 28/02/1968.



Luigi Ganna, the first winner of the race.



Alfredo Binda, Gino Bartali and Fausto Coppi, the three great names of Italian cycling.



Coppi with the Marmolada massif at the background, a classic stage in the Dolomites range.

The Tre Cime di Lavaredo, the magnificent landscape of the Dolomites.

The Alps and the Dolomites are the scenarios of the greatest exploits of the race, because it is on the mountain where the great raiders demonstrate their class.



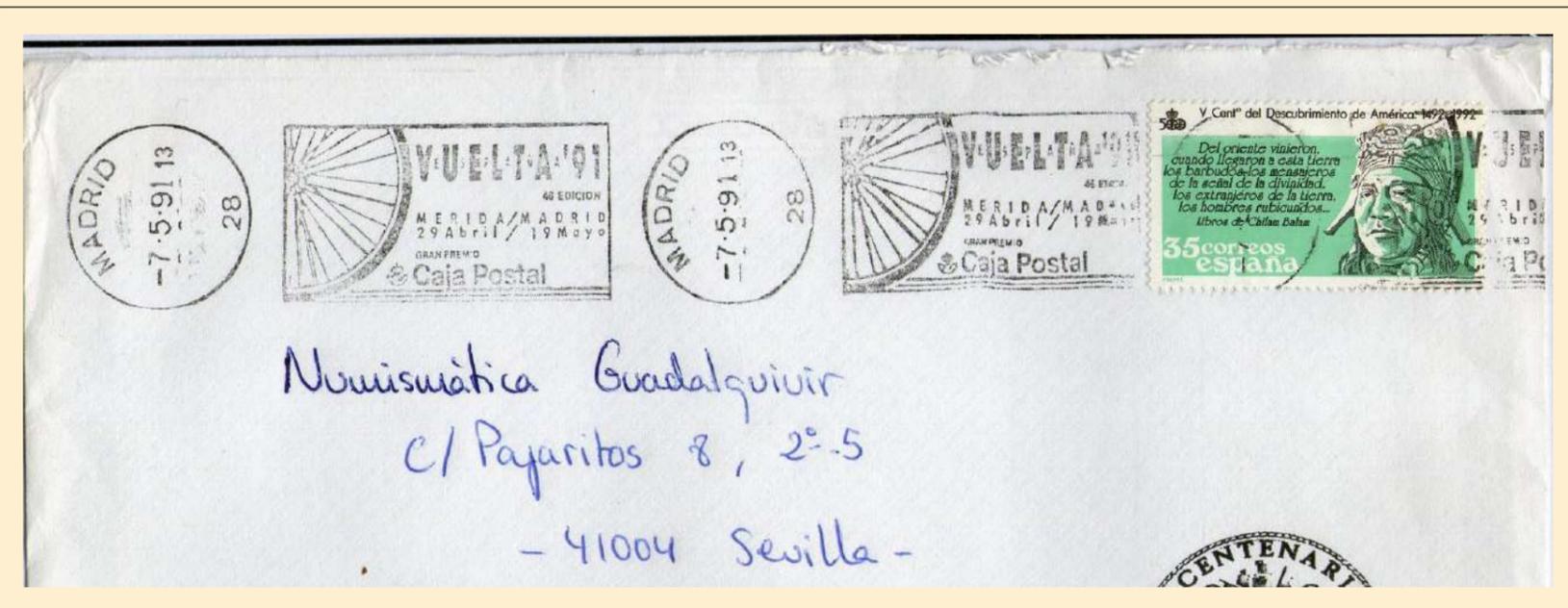
The classic end of Il Giro d'Italia is always the arrival of the last stage in Milan, like Le Tour does in Paris. First edition left Milan and each year ends there too, because it is the place where La Gazzetta dello Sport is edited. Prior to organizing Il Giro, La Gazzetta organized the Milan-San Remo and Il Giro di Lombardia (the Milan's region) too.



Il Giro also delight in the fans around Europe visiting other countries.



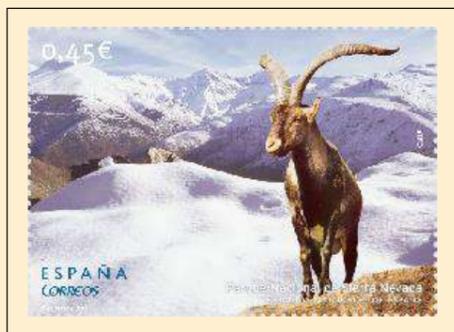
La Vuelta a España—the Tour of Spain or simply "La Vuelta"—is the last and youngest of the so-called "Great Races" of cycling with Le Tour de France and Il Giro d'Italia. Its first edition was not held until 1935. The economic and social difficulties, the Spanish Civil War and both World Wars, together with the international isolation of Spain after the World conflict, and the poverty of the country, did not allow it to become consolidated until 1955.



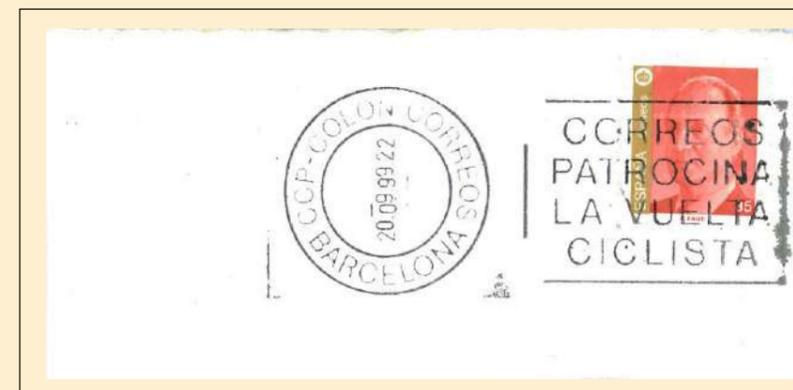
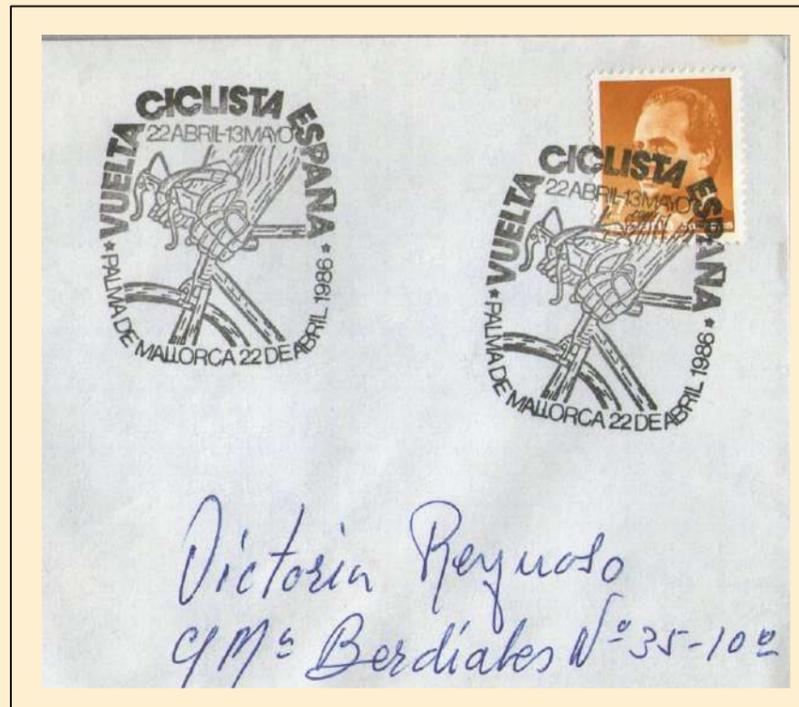
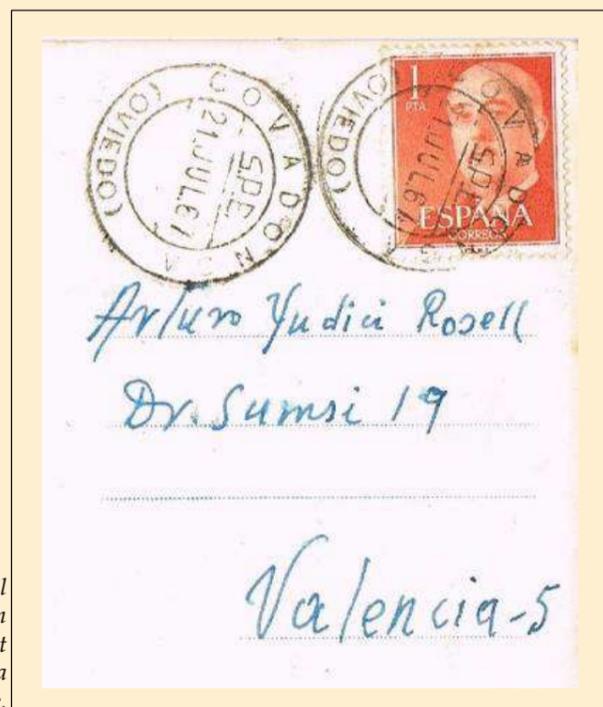
Spain (1991).
Pictorial roll cancellation.



The Pyrenees and the Picos de Europa, both in the North, and Sierra Nevada in the South, are the mountain ranges of La Vuelta. Like other "Great Races", the mountains are the scenario of epic wins and duels between the favourite riders.



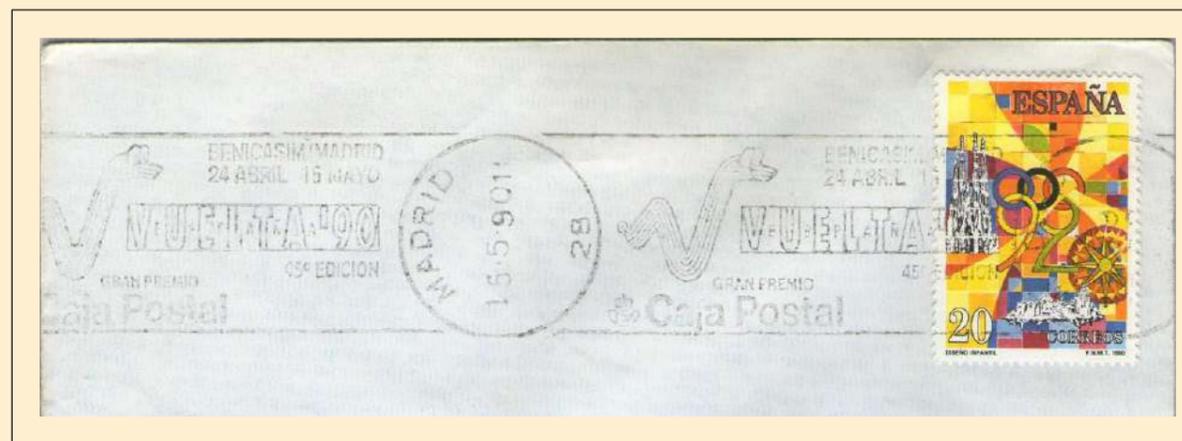
Spain (1967). Postmark S.P.E. (special postal services) of Covadonga Monastery, used on 21/07/1967. Covadonga Monastery is sited just below of legendary finish line in the Covadonga lakes, at the Picos de Europa range.



Spain (1999). Machine cancellations with slogan promoting the sponsorship of Correos in the race organization. Two meter machines were used:

- model CD 30 (above) with vertical date and text separated from the crown by vertical bar, used on normal period 20/09/1999.
- model FC 20 (below) with horizontal date and open box corresponding to Sabadell and used on 20/01/2000, beyond its usual use (2nd half 1999).

In 1963, Jacques Anquetil became the first cyclist to win Le Tour, Il Giro and La Vuelta in the same year. This win was the starting point of the international prestige of La Vuelta.



Correos, the Spanish Postal Administration, sponsored La Vuelta '99 with two postage meters in some cities, unrelated to the itinerary of the race and with the apparent objective of promoting this sponsorship. Beyond the usual 1-month period for postage meters, they were used during the second half of the year 1999. In some places, such as at Post Office No. 3 in Sabadell, it was used until 2002 as if it were a regular postmark.

"The Classics" are single-day races with a great history and emblematic itineraries, some of them with ancestral stretches of cobblestones. They are normally held in countries with a long cycling tradition (France, Belgium, The Netherlands and Italy) and which attracts a large number of spectators. They take place during the European spring for what they are usually called "Spring Classics".

The five most prestigious races, Milán-San Remo, Tour de Flandes, Paris-Roubaix, Liège-Bastogne-Liège and Giro de Lombardia are known as "The Monuments".

The Tour of Flanders –"De Ronde van Vlaanderen" in Dutch– is also centennial, with its well-known hills and cobblestones.



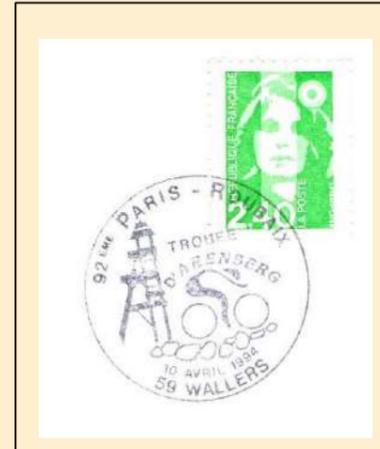
Belgium (1959). Pictorial rubber postmark with the place name "De Muur" on Publibel #1620.



De Muur –the wall, in Dutch–, is a very usual place name and are very small terrain elevations which becomes "geographical roughness" in flat countries like Belgium or The Netherlands.

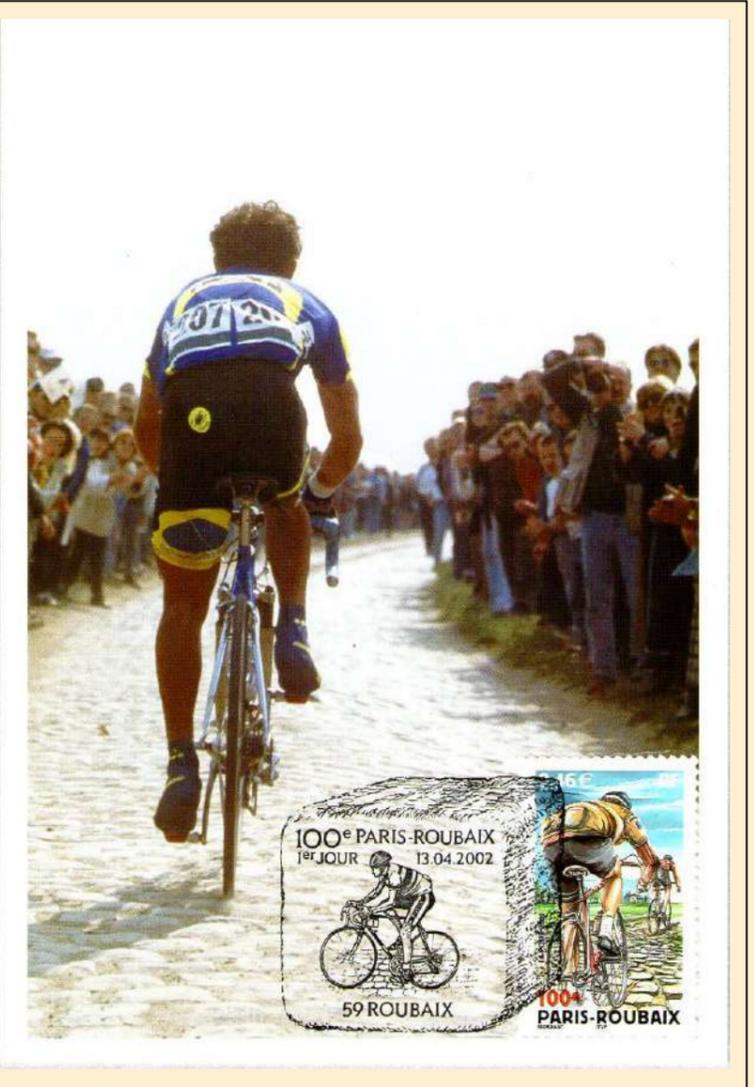
Le Mur de Huy –the Wall of Huy– is a place name that is written in capital letters in the history of Cycling. It is a slope of 130 m that usually decides the winner of La Flèche Wallonne.

Pictorial rubber postmark depicting a cobblestone, the great trophy of the Paris-Roubaix.



The race go across the mining area of Arenberg, a legendary place.

The Paris-Roubaix is nicknamed "The Hell of the North", with 250 km of route and almost 30 sections of cobblestones that sum 50 km.

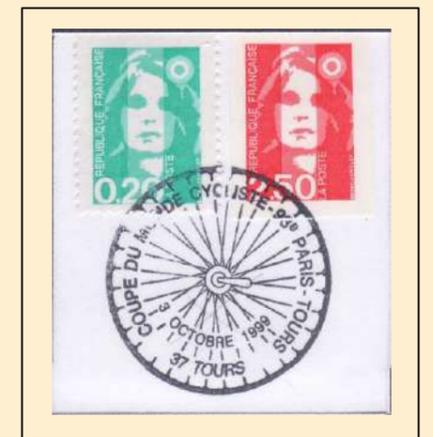


France (2002). Maximum card with concordance commemorating the 100th anniversary of Paris-Roubaix. The stamp, designed by T. Mordant, was printed polychrome.

The Amstel Gold Race (The Netherlands), Flèche Wallonne and Liège-Bastogne-Liège (Belgium) are known as "Ardennes Classics". They traverse the Ardennes hills, and go across some famous hills as Cauberg or Le Mur de Huy.

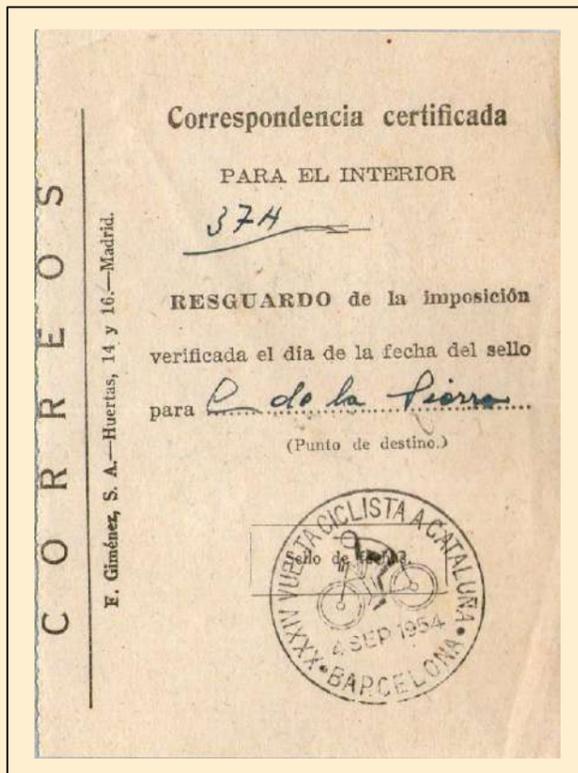


Belgium (2013). Personalized stamp issued by the race organization for its regular mailing.

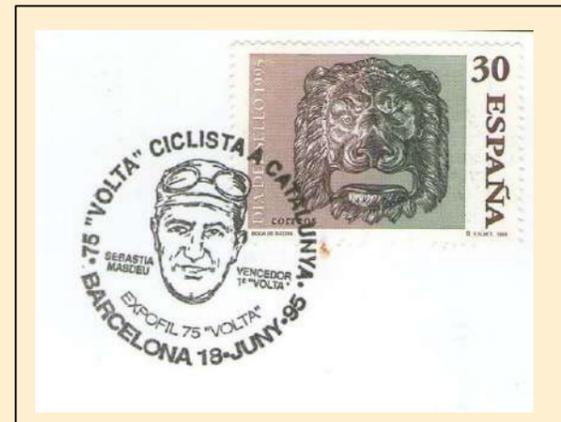


The cycling calendar includes several classic races throughout Europe, such as Gent-Wevelgem, Paris-Tours or Clásica Ciclista San Sebastián.

The Tour of Catalonia, La Volta, It is the oldest stage race (1911) after Le Tour and Il Giro. Its enormous international prestige comes from its extraordinary palmares, which includes the great legends of Cycling: Merckx, Anquetil, Hinault, Ocaña, Indurain...



Spain (1954). Registered letter receipt with first Spanish pictorial rubber stamp devoted to Cycling used as a dater (left) and its regular use on inland letter (up).

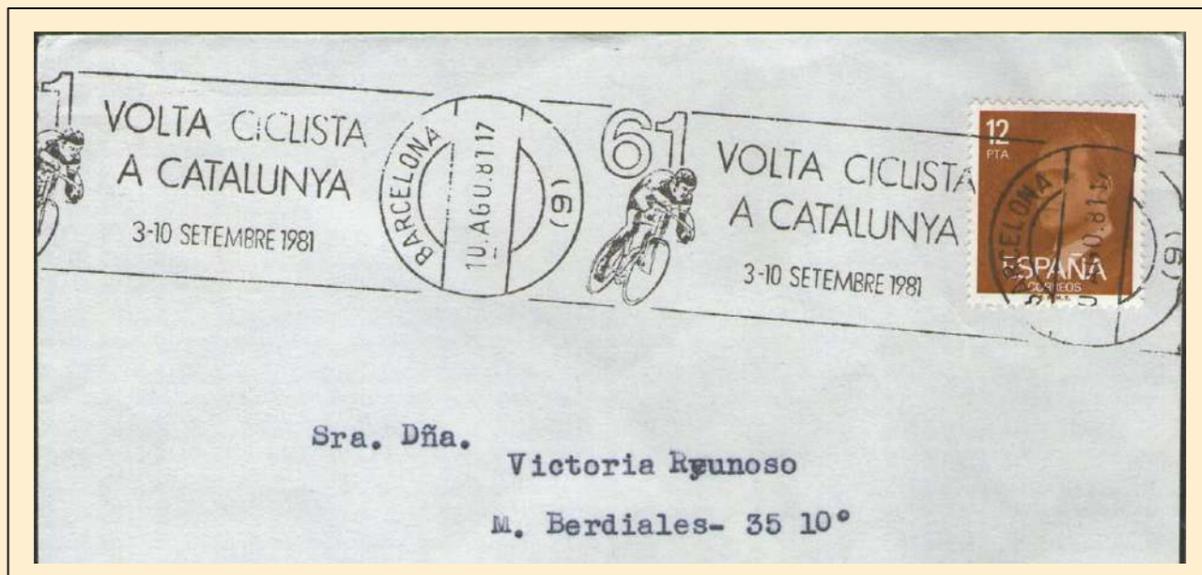


Spain (1995). Pictorial rubber postmark depicting Sebastià Masdeu, the first winner of the race (1911).

Sebastià Masdeu won the 1st edition of the race, and Mariano Cañardo is the cyclist who has won most editions (7 times in the period 1928-1939, before and after the Spanish Civil War).



It was during the years of Developmentalism in Spain that the best riders began to participate in La Volta, because the dates of the Catalan race were key in the preparation for the season calendar.



Spain (1981). Pictorial roll cancellation promoting the race on a letter franked for inland use and used on 10/08/1981.



It is remarkable that La Volta is well known among the cyclo-philately enthusiastic because it is the race with the most issued postmarks after Le Tour, Il Giro and The Peace Race.



The Peace Race or La Course de la Paix, also known as PWB (Prague-Warsaw-Berlin), Friedensfahrt (in Germany), Závod míru or Preteky mieru (in Czechoslovakia), Велогонка Мира (in Russia) or Wyścig Pokoju (in Poland), was an annual multiple stage bicycle race held in the Eastern Bloc states of Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Poland. First organized in 1948, it was originally created with the intent of relieving tensions existing between Central European countries following the interwar period and WWII.

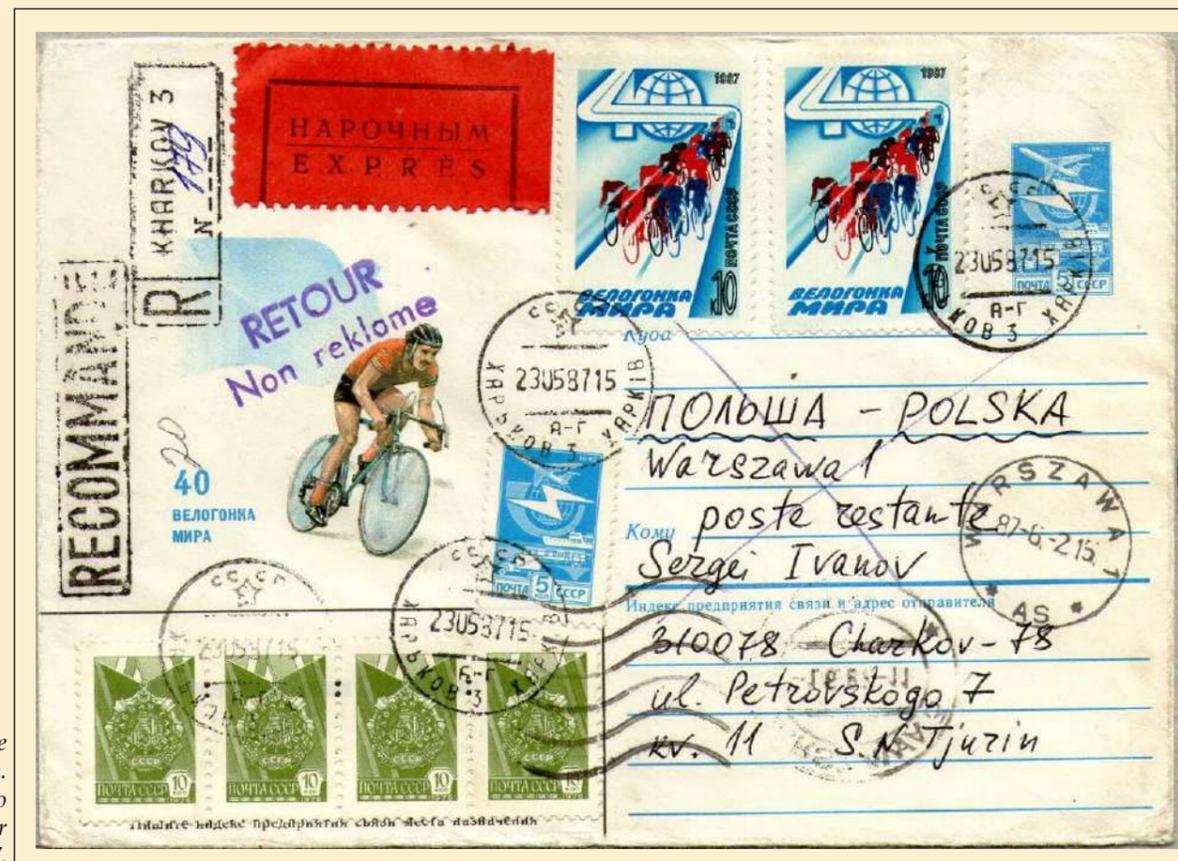


Poland (1948). Registered airmail letter from Poland to USA, franked with 4 stamps of Polish 1st issue of The Peace Race and additionally up-rated with 3 airmail stamps. Used on 25/05/1948.



The fall of communism in 1989 professionalized the race, but quickly succumbed to the difficulty of finding sponsors and be relevant in the European calendar of the UCI.

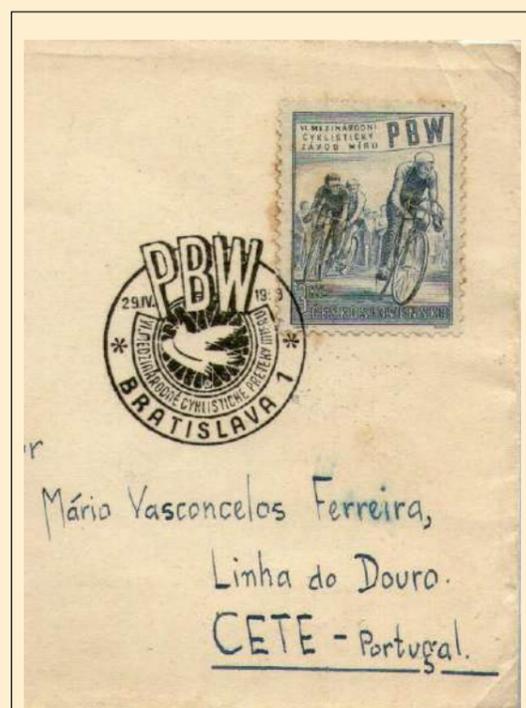
Russia (1987). 40th edition commemorative aerogram, uprated with issued stamp. Registered, express and airmail letter to Poland on 23/05/1987. Returned to sender from Warsaw on 02/06/1987.



In 01/06/1953, Czechoslovakia declared a surprise drastic currency reform as a response to the black market that devalued the current Koruna (Kc) by a factor of 50:1. New banknotes, printed in the Soviet Union, were issued that day. However, the postal system was not ready and had no new stamps under the new currency until 19th June. At the same time, postal rates were all adjusted and the face value postage rate was 1/5 of the previous rate (in practice, 10 times the previous face value during the transition period). For example, the rate for local mail before 1st June was 2 Kcs, between 1st-18th June was 40 helles (40 h, 2 1/5 Kcs, where 1 Kcs = 100 h) and after 19th June 20 new Kcs (equivalent to 50 times old Kcs). On 19th June new stamps were issued and old ones were not valid.



Czechoslovakia (1953). Letter used on 11/07/1953 during the transition period from the time the monetary reform was declared until the new stamps were issued. Non-local letter (circulated from Podborany to Liberec) up to 20g, with a rate of 3Kcs before the reform, but during the reform need to be franked with old 30Kcs, which was equivalent to 0.6Kcs (30:50 = 0.6). Right postage. RARE.

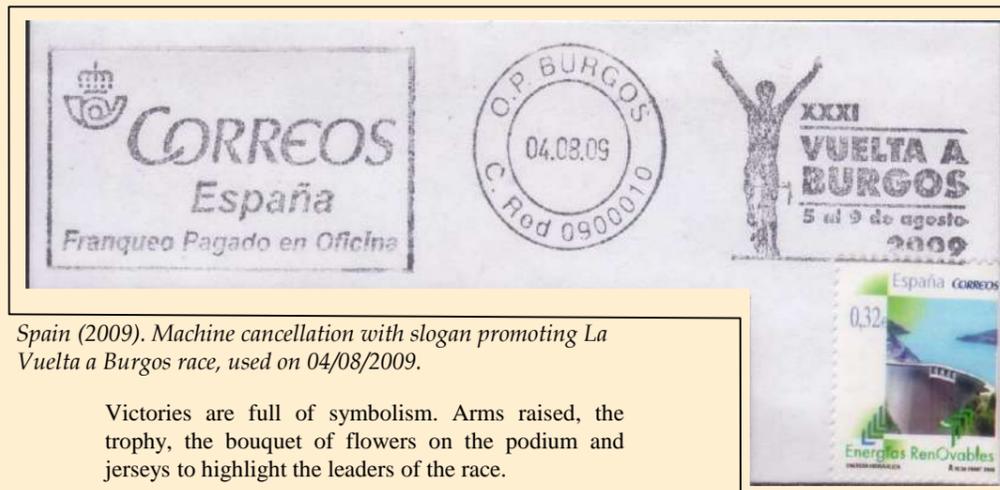


Czechoslovakia (1953). Letter to Portugal, used on 29/04/1953 before the monetary reform, with pictorial rubber commemorative postmark of the race. International postal rate (until 20g) were 3Kcs for postcards and 4 Kcs for letters. Wrong postage.



Czechoslovakia (1956). Set of 8 stationary cards, all devoted to the Peace Race. Sent to USA, 30h inland stationary card uprated to 45h. After the monetary reform the postal rate was 45h (0,45Kcs) for international mail. Right postage.

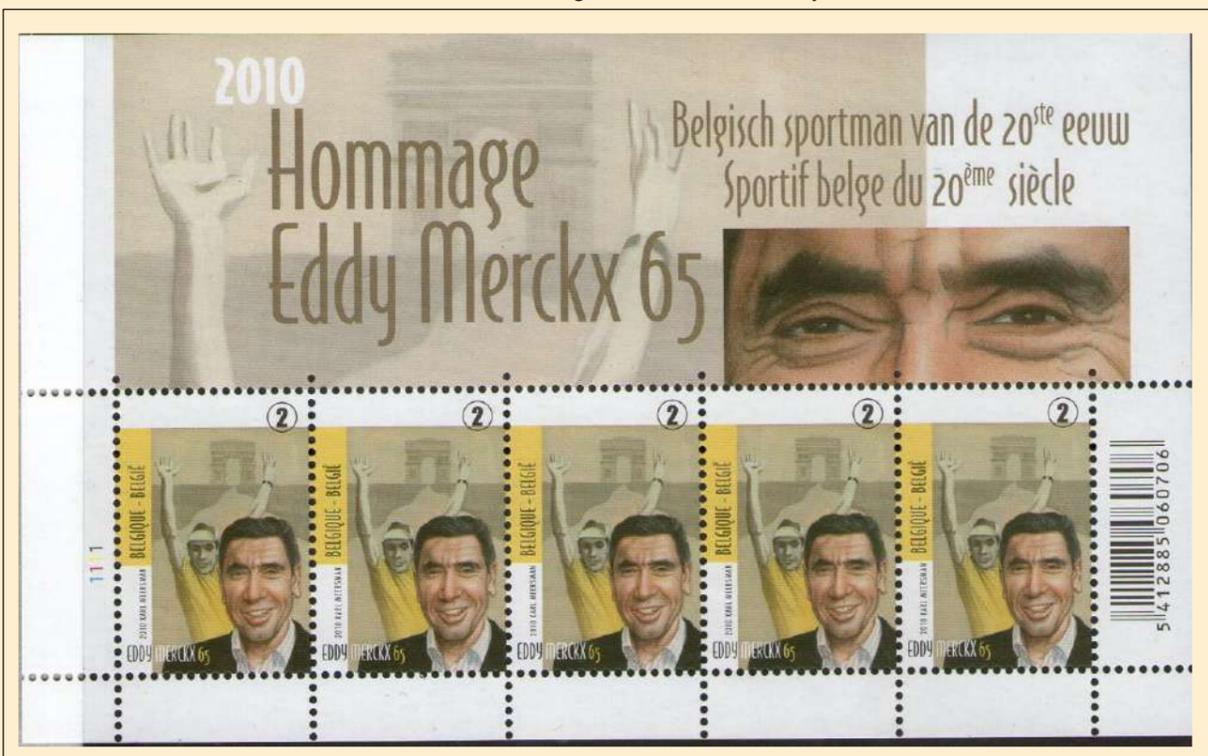
It's great champions, with their deeds, that make cycling a sport full of heroism. And the reward is the recognition of the World of Sport and of Society in general.



Spain (2009). Machine cancellation with slogan promoting La Vuelta a Burgos race, used on 04/08/2009.

Victories are full of symbolism. Arms raised, the trophy, the bouquet of flowers on the podium and jerseys to highlight the leaders of the race.

Among winners stands out Eddy Merckx. He is known as "The Cannibal".



Belgium (2010). Minisheet containing a strip of five stamps of Eddy Merckx with sheet margin commemorating his 65th birthday.

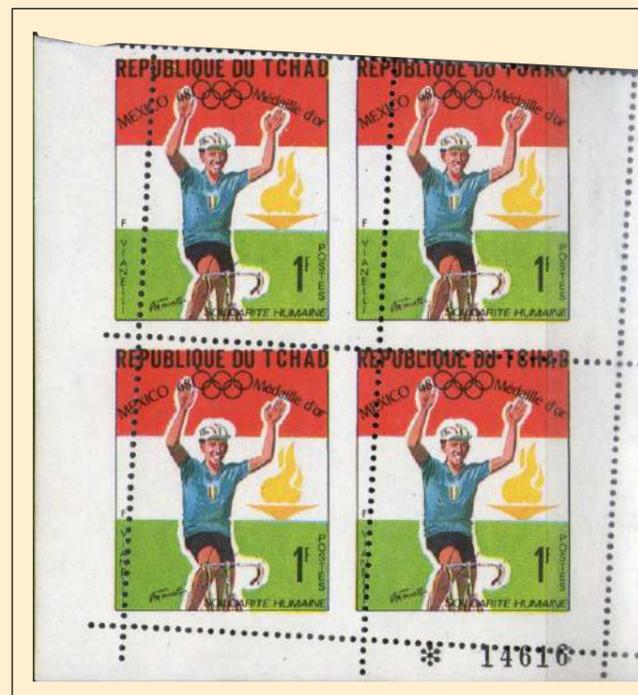
The four winners of 5 Tours, in the hall of fame of cyclists: Jacques Anquetil, Eddy Merckx, Bernard Hinault and Miguel Indurain.



Spain (2000) Round stamp depicting Miguel Indurain on minisheet margin and his signature on the stamp.



Bernard Hinault on margin.



Chad (1968). Perforation shift.



Ireland (1998). Strip of four stamps depicting the jerseys of Le Tour.

Fausto Coppi and Gino Bartali, the great rivals and Italian champions.



San Marino (2010). Se-tenant depicting Coppi and Bartali.

Despite the rivalry, this image sharing the bottle of water is one of the iconic images of the Cycling and Sportsmanship.

Coppi and Bartali were the cyclists of reference the middle of the 20th century. Their rivalry was a reflection of the division of Italian society in the turbulent years of fascism and partisanship: Bartali ultra catholic and conservative; Coppi young and progressive. His palmares are not comparable since the career of Bartali was cut short by the WWII.

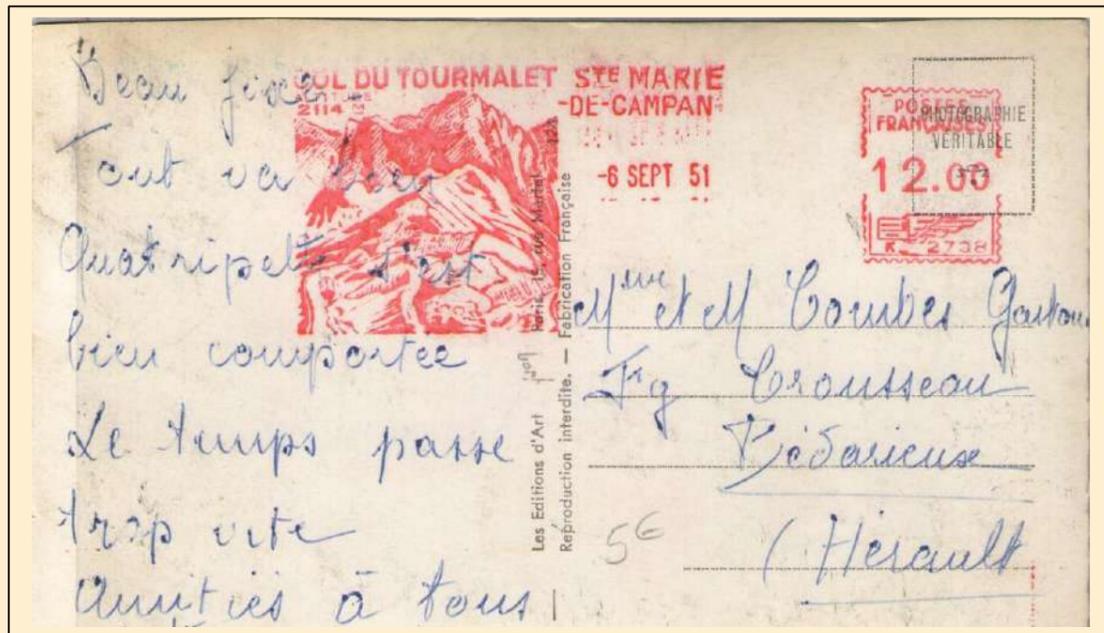
Each stage race has several jerseys in order to stand up the daily leaders of each disciplines.



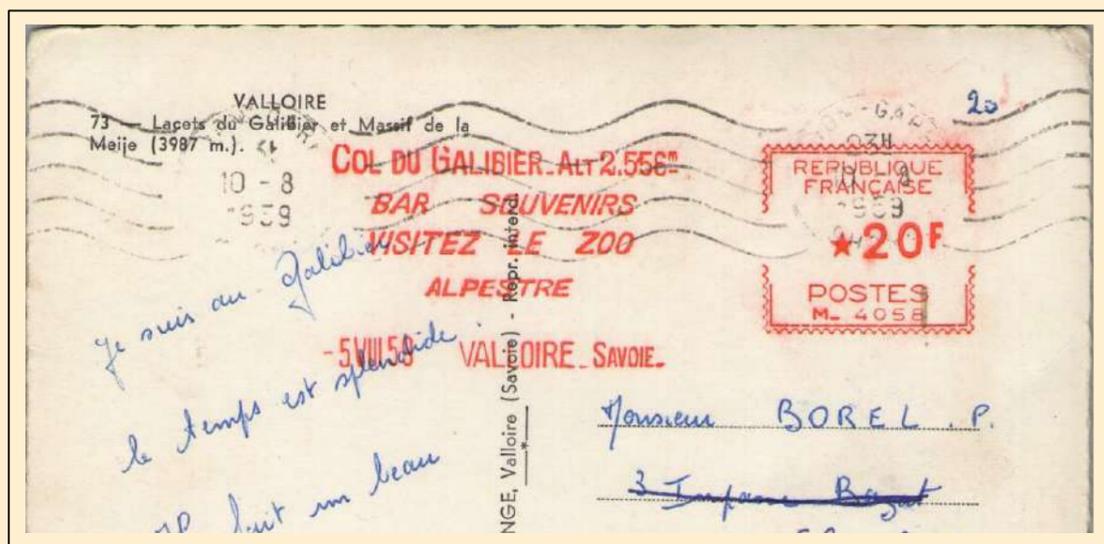
The jerseys of The Peace Race.

The jerseys of Le Tour. The polka dot jersey for the leader of the mountain, white jersey for best young rider, the green jersey for most regular and the yellow one for the race leader.

Le Tourmalet and Le Galibier, the two great giants of the Pyrenees and the Alps ranges, are the places where the great deeds of Cycling in Le Tour during last 100 years took place.



France (1951). Machine cancellation type Havas "K" showing Le Col du Tourmalet in the Pyrenées, used on 06/09/1951.

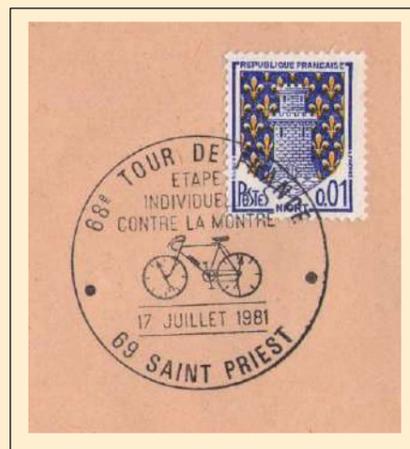


France (1959). Machine cancellation type Havas "M" showing Le Col du Galibier in the Alps, used on 05/08/1959.



The Massif Central is another of the classic stages of Le Tour. Usually is not a key stage, but it has a role exhausting the rivals before greater challenges.

Pictorial rubber commemorative postmark showing the Puy de Dôme in the Massif Central.



France (1981). Pictorial rubber commemorative postmark of Individual Time Trial stage.

The Alps and the Dolomites are the scenarios of Il Giro's mountain stages. The year's highest mountain pass is known as Cima Coppi.



Italia (2003). Pictorial rubber commemorative postmark showing "Cima Coppi".



Image of Coppi with the Marmolada in the background, one of the emblematic massifs of the Dolomites.

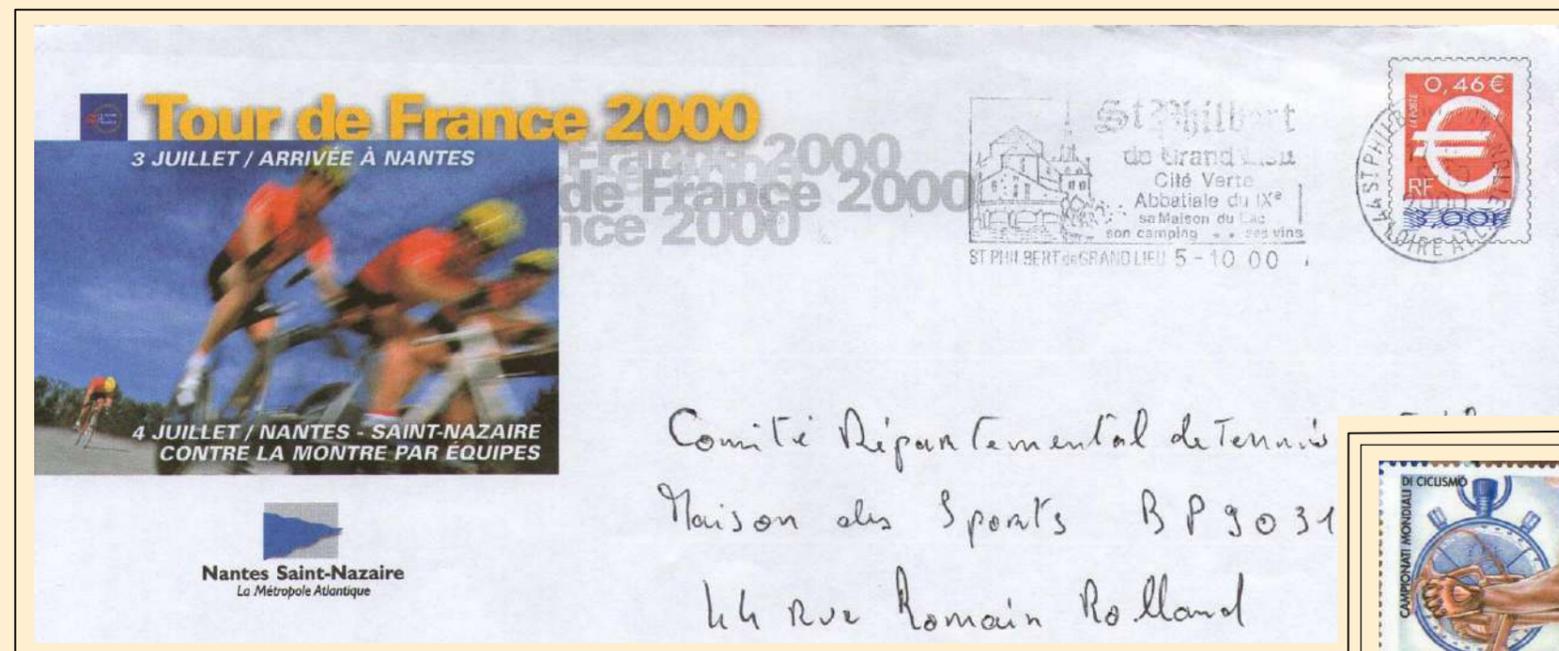


France (1985 and 1986). Both pictorial rubber postmarks shows consecutively the classic route of Le Tour in the Pyrenées mountain range.



The annual passage of Le Tour through the Pyrenees usually pass through Le Tourmalet and L'Aubisque, and all the passes that link them, from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic seas.

In La Vuelta too, the Pyrenées are usually decisive to determine the winner of the race.



France (2000). Pre-paid envelope advertising the Team Time Trial stage on Le Tour of 2000.

If the mountain is not decisive, the Time Trial events (prologue, individual, team or climbing time trials) are responsible for marking the small differences between the leaders. The time trial events usually generate great excitement.



Track Cycling is the oldest modality of Cycling and the most popular until 1950s, when it was easier to build a track than to have a paved road network in good condition. With the boom of combustion engines, the road network needed for Road Cycling was created. But in many countries it is still very popular. The first Track Cycling World Championship was in 1895, 32 years before the 1st Road World championship (1927).



URSS (1960). 4 Kop imprinted stationery envelope for inland mail, used on 27/11/1968, depicting a race on a velodrome.

Velodromes are known as the "Cycling Cathedrals". The first velodromes were built to accommodate the first enthusiasts of the Cycling as a sport.

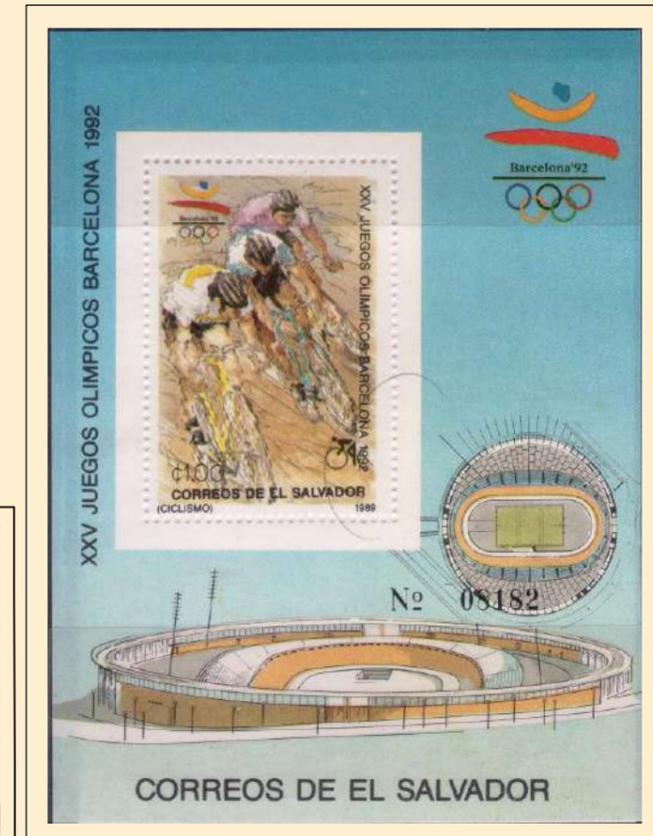
The first velodromes were flat, as shown on the back of the stationary of August Stukenbrok (bottom). But with the increase of speed, due to the technical improvements introduced to bicycles, it became necessary to camber the circuits.



Germany (1903). Commercial stationery of 10 pf of August Stukenbrok factory. Letter circulated from Einbeck (headquarter of the factory) on 18/05/1903 to Grunau (postmark of arrival 19/05/1903 on the reverse not shown in the image). Right rate.



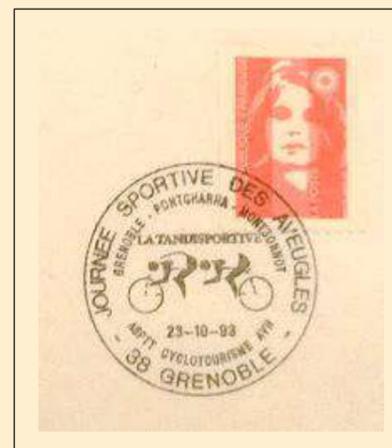
In the beginning the tracks were flat. Now they have cambered curves.



Track Cycling is characterized by a large number of modalities. They are divided into tests of speed and stamina. Many have disappeared from the Olympic program to give relevance to the women's races or to accommodate new disciplines such as BMX or BTT.



Pictorial rubber and machine cancellations promoting tandem races for blind riders.

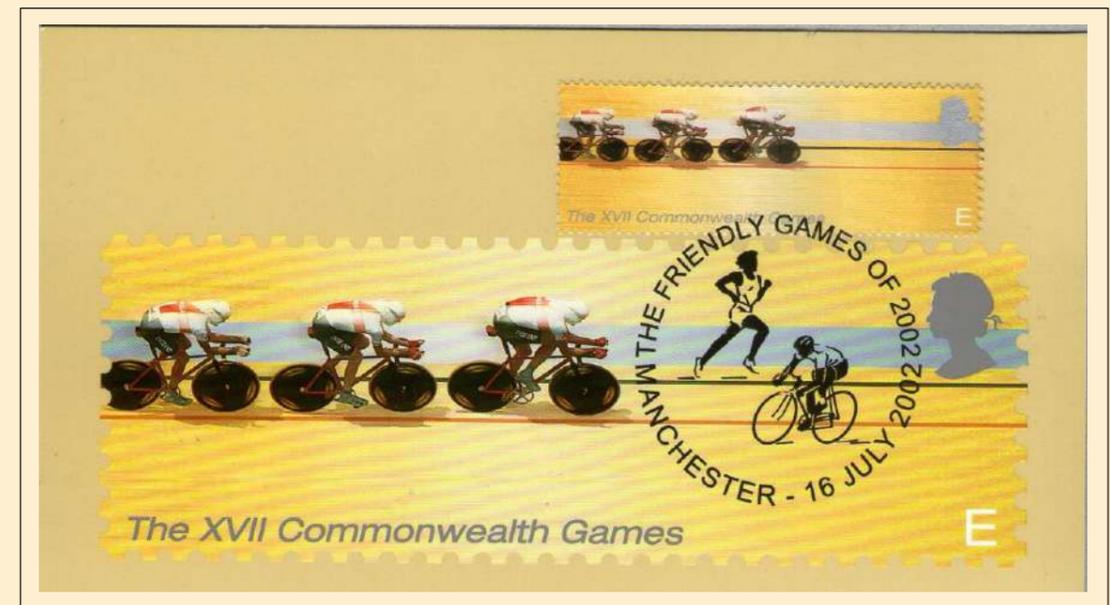


Tandem events were ended because they were the fastest races and became very dangerous because of numerous falls. However they remain in the Paralympics, where blind and guide riders form a team.

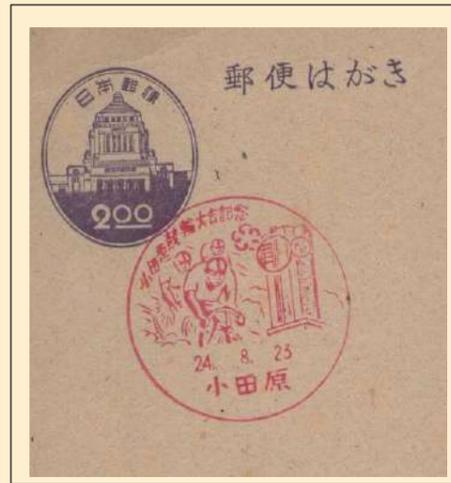
Early tandem riders.



In Motor-paced, the cyclist takes full advantage of the slipstream generated by the motorcycle to drive at maximum speed.

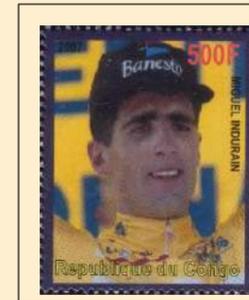
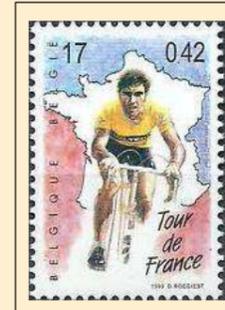


Speed events are disputed over very short distances where the explosiveness of the riders is the most important characteristic. They are individually disputed against the clock (Kilometer Counter-clock), between two or four rivals (Individual Speed) or against a rival on the opposite side of the track (Pursuit). Team modalities also exists of four for both type of events (Persecution and Speed per Team).



Japan (1949). Pictorial rubber postmark announcing a Keirin race in Odawara.

Endurance events (Points race, Keirin, Scratch, Omnium and Pursuit) combine long distance fatigue with intense sprints at specific times of the race. They are events with lots of cyclists on the track, and can be raced individually or in pairs.



Only a few great professional cycling road champions have taken on the Hour Record, such as Merckx, Anquetil, Indurain or Boardman.



The relay in the Madison test, with a push to the teammate, is another iconic image of Track Cycling. The members of the duo are relieved every few laps and it is only the one that goes ahead that marks the position of the team in the race.



The Netherlands (1998). Advertisement postage meter, type Frama "F70/F100" with machine number, used on 03/3/1998. Motor-paced event.

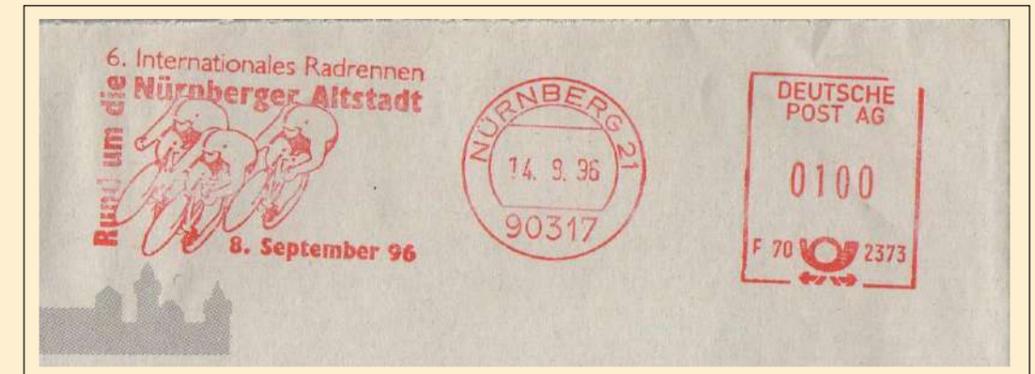


Germany (1961). Pictorial roll cancellation, depicting Six Days race in Essen, used on 16/01/1961.

In order to decrease the hardness of this type of events, the mode of couples with free relays was introduced in 1899, with races only from 6 pm to 2 am, when the large attendance of spectators made the night a "Cycling party".

Six Day races are one of the most extraordinary shows you can see in the world of Cycling. They are very popular in USA, France, Germany, Belgium and Japan.

At the beginning they were inhuman endurance races of 6 uninterrupted days. The first race was held at Madison Square Garden in NY in 1893 and the winner completed 2,575 Km, riding 18 hours per day. The big prizes money gave raise to the first cases of doping.

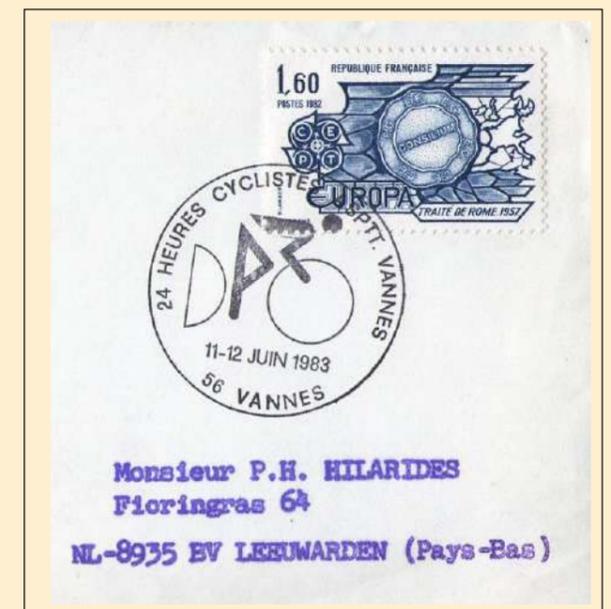


Germany (1996). Advertisement postage meter, type Francotyp-Postalia "MS5".

There are also other ultra-endurance events, such as 24 hours.

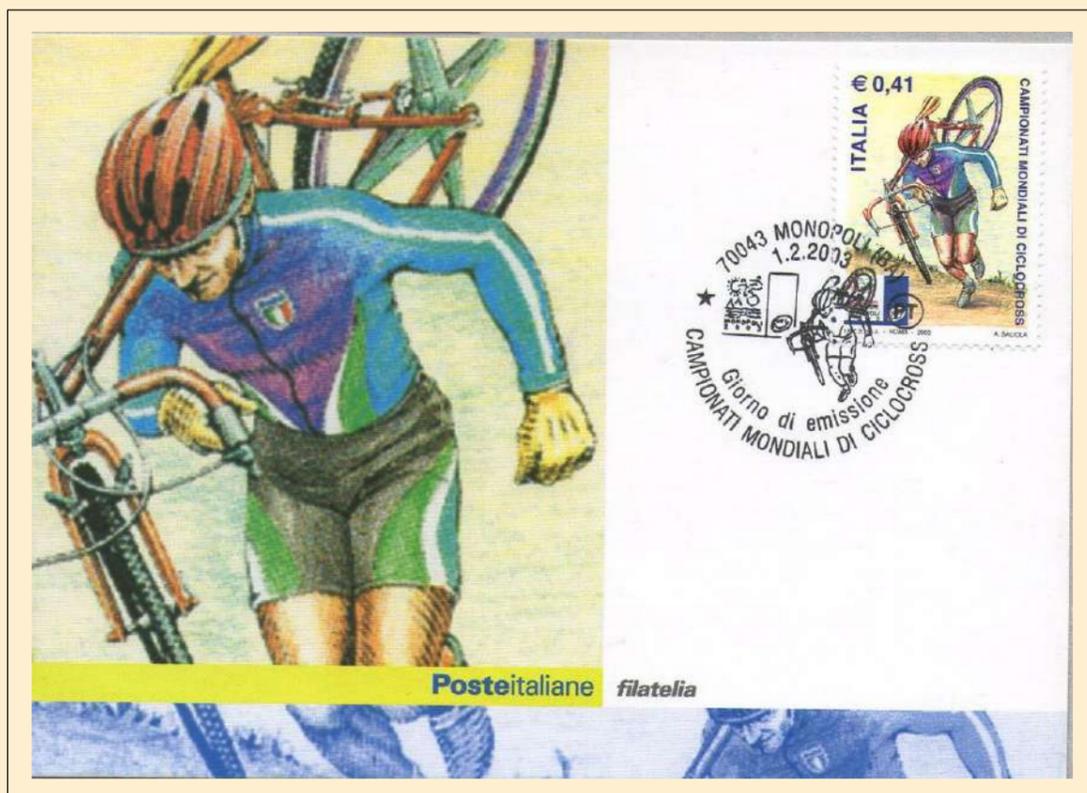


Germany (1958). Advertisement postage meter, type Francotyp "C".



Cyclo-cross is a cycling discipline born at the beginning of the 20th century that consist of many laps of a short track featuring pavement, wooded trails, grass, steep hills and obstacles, requiring the rider to quickly dismount, carry the bike while overcoming the obstruction, and remount.

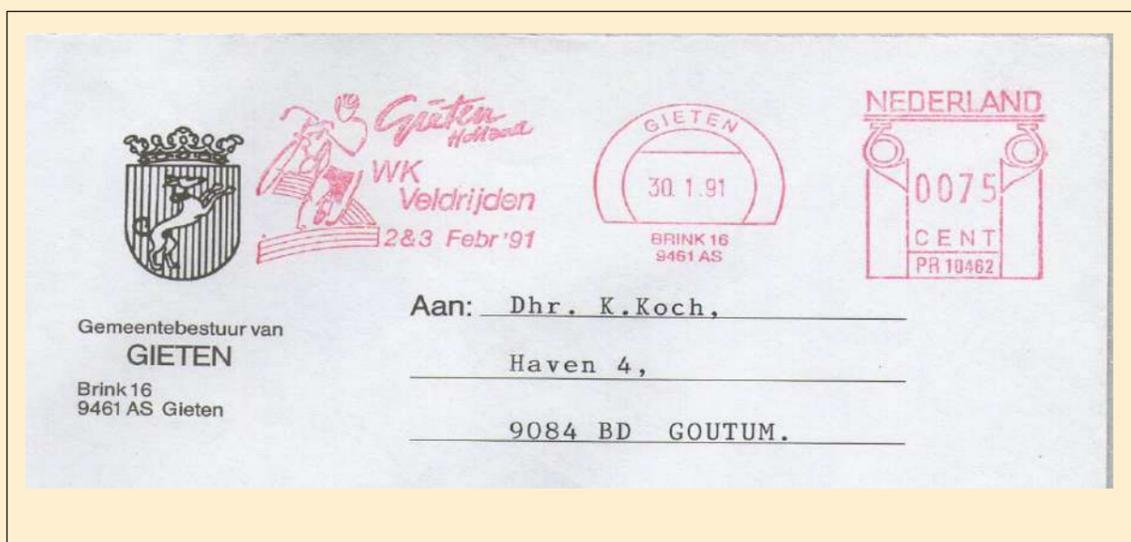
Cyclo-cross was born in France towards the 1900 when road riders did not interrupted their preparation with the arrival of the autumn rains and the winter's cold and snow.



Spain (1990).
Specimen applied with line cancellation.



Cyclo-cross bicycles are similar to road racing bicycles: lightweight, with somewhat narrow tires and drop handlebars. They are typically differentiated by their greater tire clearances, lower gearing, stronger frames, cantilever or disc brakes and more upright riding position.

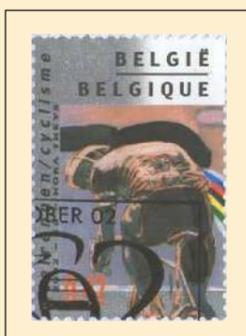


The Netherlands (1991). Advertisement postage meter, type Postalia "PS4", used on 30/01/1991, promoting the Cyclo-cross World Championship.

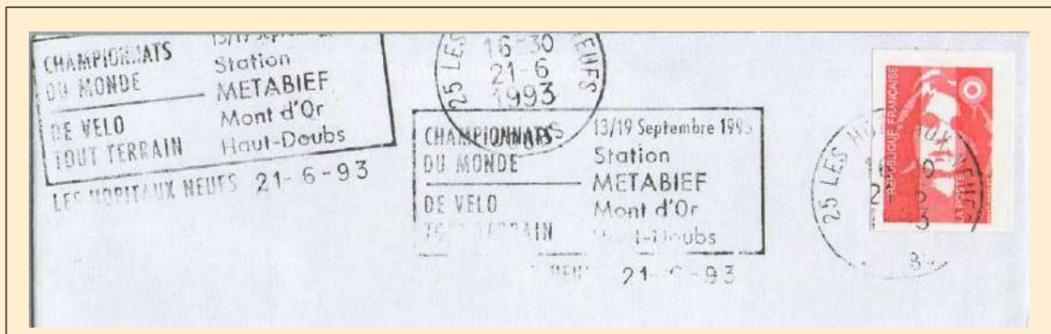


Races typically take place in the autumn and winter, as the dates of postmarks state.

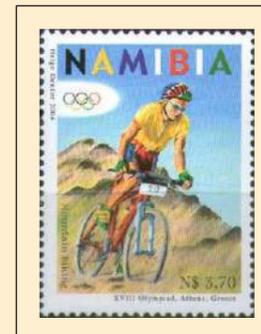
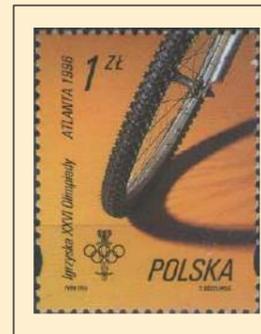
Mud, another of the great protagonists of Cyclo-cross.



A mountain bicycle (MTB) (VTT in French) is designed for off-road cycling. Mountain bikes share similarities with other bicycles, but incorporate features designed to enhance durability and performance on rough terrain. These typically include a front or full suspension, large knobby tires, more durable wheels, more powerful brakes, straight handlebars, and lower gear ratios for climbing steep gradients.



France (1993). Ink smear on machine cancellation.



Cruiser-type bicycles are an icon of American Culture.



In the mid-70s, in California, some crazy guys like Gary Fischer or Mike Sinyard began to compete downhill with their bikes along the firewalls of the mountains. Damage to the bicycles was common, so they began to modify them until they reached the current models. These same guys created the first factories, some of them very successful, such as Specialized brand.

Decathlon, the "supermarket" of popular sport, also for biking.



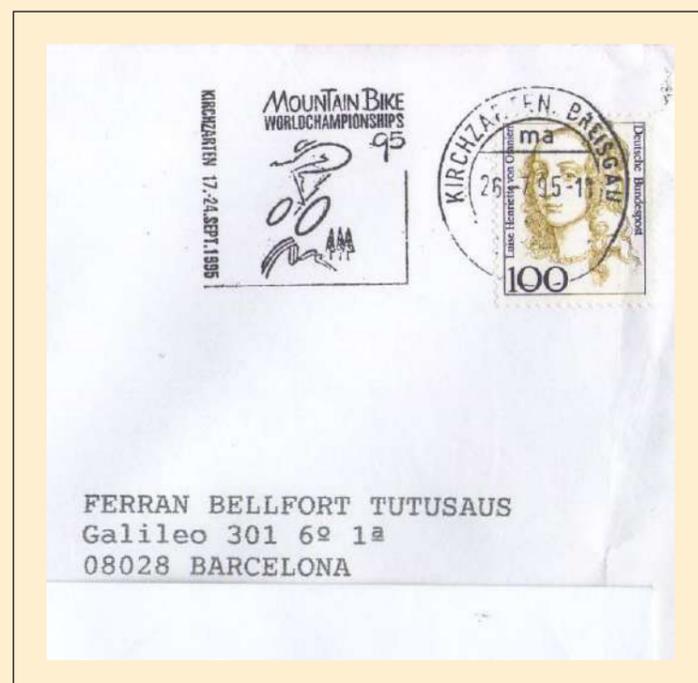
France (1989). Advertisement postage meter of Decathlon, type Satas "SG".

At the end of 1970s and early 1980s, the former mountain bikes used for freewheeling down mountain trails were modified heavy Cruiser-type bicycles.

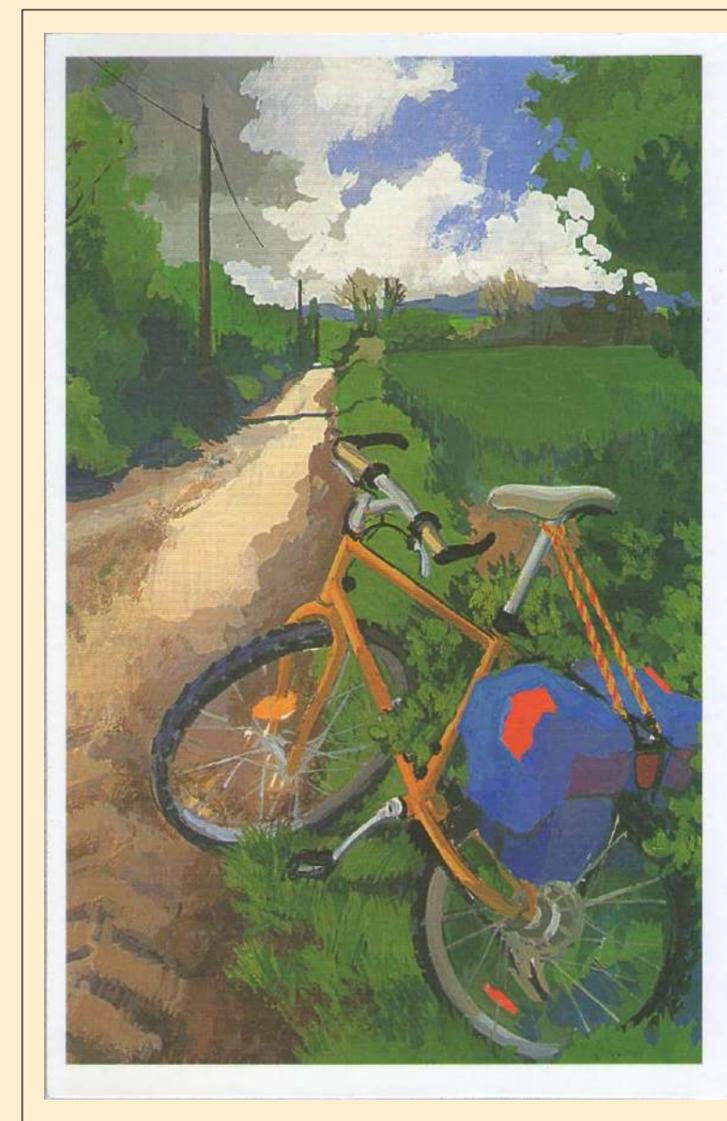
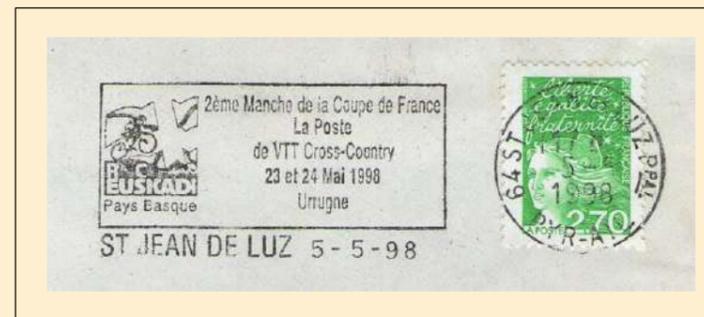


There are several different styles of Mountain Biking, usually defined by the terrain, and therefore the type of bike employed. Styles of bicycles riding and mountain bikes have evolved rapidly in recent years.

Freeride, Cross Country or Downhill are some of these styles.



The heavy-duty construction made this style of bicycle very popular. Global industrial relocation in Southeast Asia made the mountain bike a cheap product accessible to everyone. Big store chains, like Decathlon, sold this type of bicycle massively, making them a new world standard.



France (2002). 0.46 € imprinted stationary postcard for inland mail, designed by Daphné Lisse.

BMX is the abbreviation of Bicycle Motocross and was born in California in 1969 when Scott Breithaupt decide to use a bike on a Motocross track, to mimic the skills of his idols of this sport.

A BMX modality is Free Style, where the cyclist performs all kinds of tricks in urban environments, similar to skateboarding.



Bike Trial, also known as Trials or Trialsín, is a discipline of biking in which the rider attempts to pass through an obstacle course without setting foot to ground. Derived from Motorcycle Trials, it was originated in Catalonia (Europe).

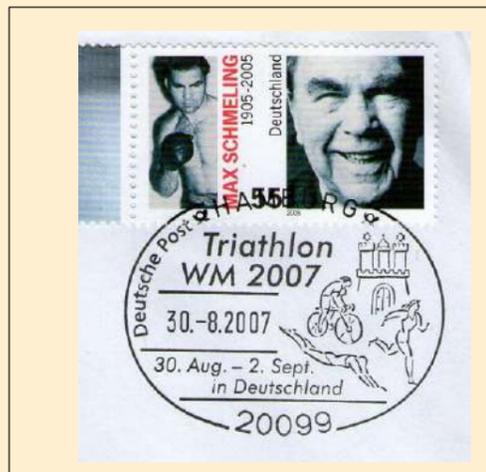
Following the footsteps of the big brands of Motorcycle Trials that were manufactured in Catalonia, the best rider in this discipline with a Montesa motorbike developed a bike for his son Ot Pi when he was 10 years old in order that he could imitate their senior idols of the Motorcycle Trials.



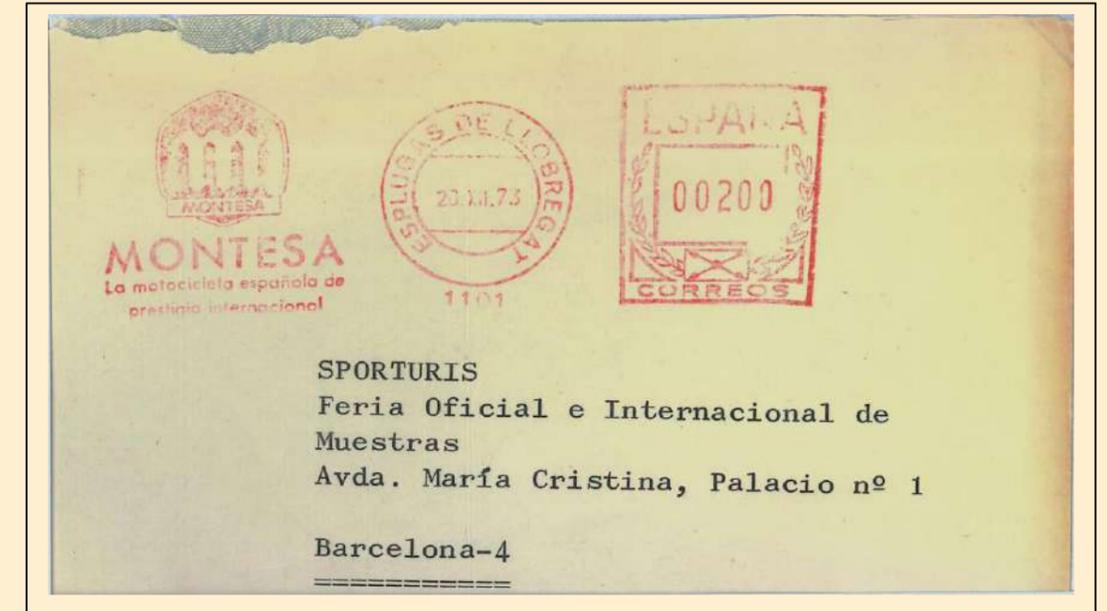
BMX was became an Olympic sport in the year 2008, making its debut in the Olympics of Beijing 2008, with the modalities of Time Trial and Race.



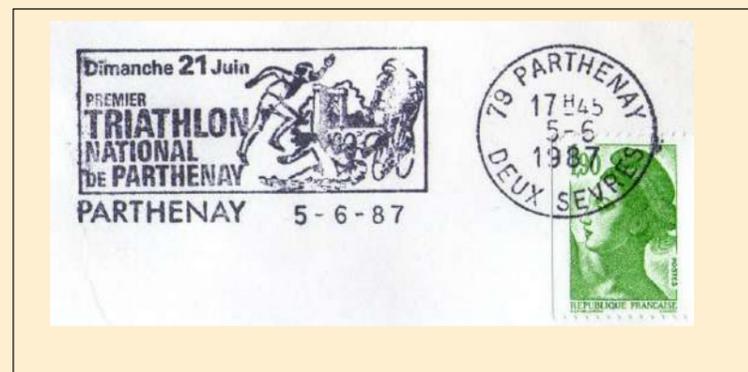
BMX is a sport that is practiced on small bikes, that allow the cyclist to gain more manageability than with a normal bike to do all kinds of jumps and tricks.



Triathlon is an Olympic endurance sport consisting of 3 sports disciplines –1,500 m Swimming, 40 Km Cycling and 10 Km Running respectively– which are carried out consecutively.

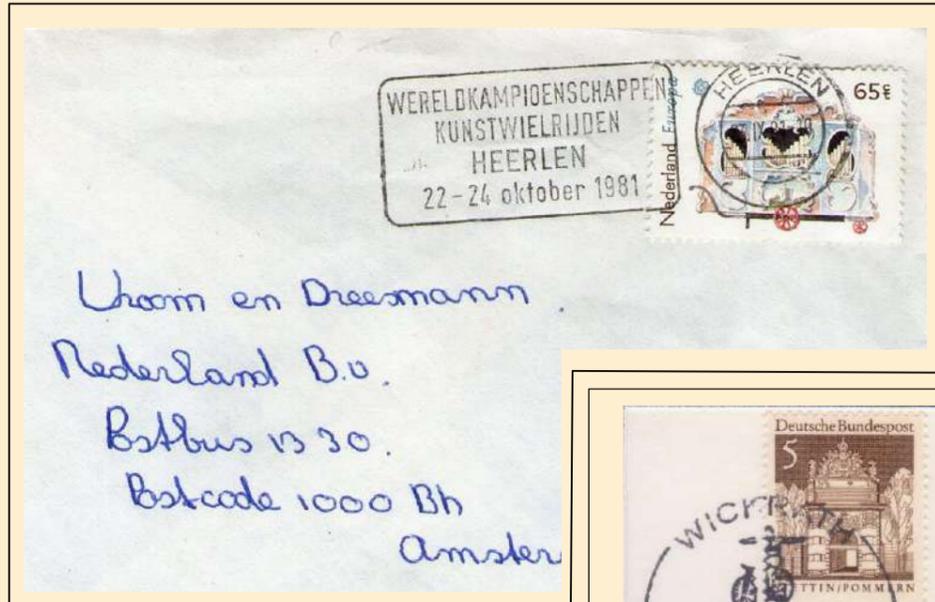


Spain (1973). Advertisement postage meter, type Frama "M/E bzw.100" of Montesa motorcycle factory, used on 26/08/1973.



The Pi family was key in the Montesa brand factory in the '70s, the golden years for Spanish motorbike brands, and in this factory the first Trials' bikes –the "Montesita" (the little Montesa)– were created. Later they would establish Monty, the reference brand for Bike Trials.

Artistic Cycling is a form of competitive indoor cycling in which athletes perform tricks (called exercises) for points on specialized fixed-gear bikes in a format similar to ballet or gymnastics and requires dexterity, balance, concentration and courage.



The exercises –by singles, pairs, four- or six-man teams– are carried out with musical accompaniment for five minutes, while a jury judges the quality of the show.

Artistic Cycling has been practiced since at least 1890. The 1st World Championship of Artistic Cycling was held in 1956. It is recognized by the UCI and is very popular in Germany, where there are no less than 10,000 licenses.



Cycle Polo, or Bike Polo, was invented in Ireland in 1891 and quickly spread over the British Empire. It was an exhibition sport in the Olympics of London 1908. Today the two great countries where it is played are India and USA.



Cycle Polo is a team sport, similar to traditional polo, except that bicycles are used instead of horses. There are two versions of the sport: grass and hardcourt Bike Polo. The game saw a sharp spike in interest in the 1st decade of the 21st century around the World. Competitors from two teams should hit a ball using a stick to turn goals into an arc, traditionally on a grass field.



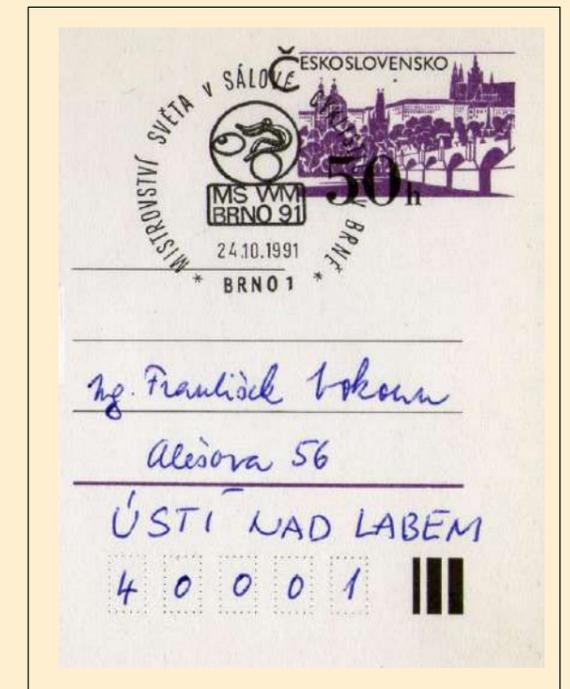
Gibraltar (2003). Sheet margin showing GB princes practicing Cycle polo

Cycle-ball, also known as "Radball" (from German), is a sport similar to Soccer but played on bicycles. Two people on each team ride a fixed gear bicycle with no brakes or freewheel. The ball is controlled by the bike and the head, except when defending the goal.

It was created in 1893 and has UCI's recognition. It is very popular in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic and Japan.



The bicycle is characterized by its high handlebars to facilitate precision maneuvers and the saddle behind the rear wheel axle to easily raise the front wheel.





Drug design has been one of the great breakthroughs. However, its misuse to gain advantages in competition in front to other rivals, spectators, sponsors and society is an unfair form of help know as doping.



Chromatography is an analytical technique that allows the separation and identification of individual compounds in mixtures. Its many fields of application include biomedicine and analytical chemistry. Both specialties converge in the battle against doping.



The first cases of modern doping involved horses in horse races. In the Hellenic period stimulating substances at the quadrigues races were already used.



In the 1960s UCI and FIFA incorporated doping controls at their world championships. The IOC created its Medical Commission and edited the first list of banned substances. Anti-doping controls were introduced for the first time in Mexico '68 Olympics.



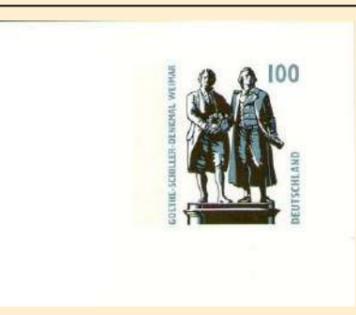
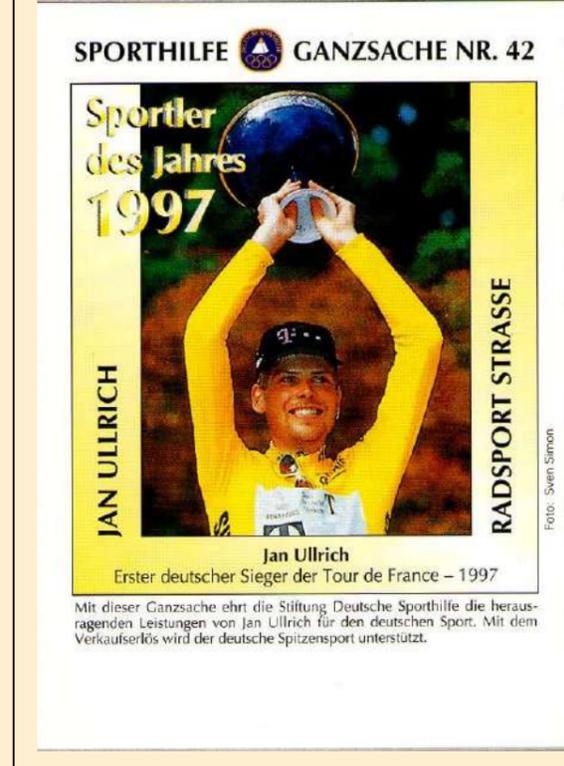
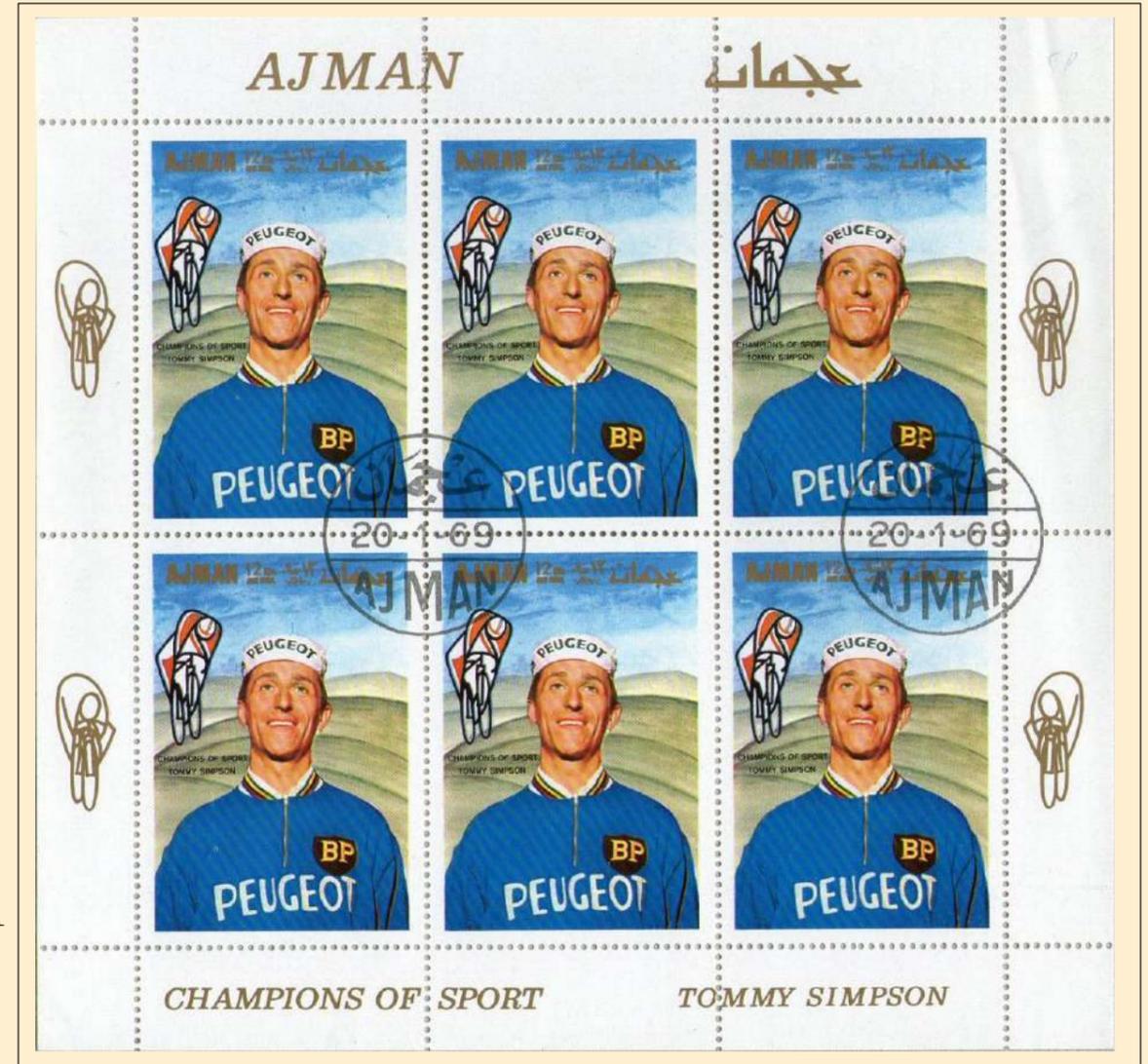
The anti-doping struggle had some issues between 1970s-80s due to suspicions of doping practices sponsored by the Government of some countries, such as DDR.



The "Festina Case" was an anti-doping operation carried out in 1998 in France where some Elite Cycling teams were involved. A large network led by Festina professional team managed illicit drugs: EPO (then undetectable), growth hormone and testosterone. R. Virenque and A. Zülle were the most emblematic of the riders involved.

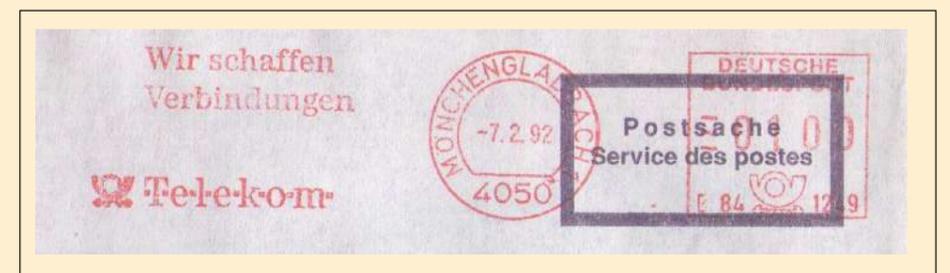


Definitive concern about doping arised because the death of the cyclist Tom Simpson during the climb of the Mont Ventoux in Le Tour of France of 1967.



Postkarte

From the end of the Indurain era (1995) to the end of the Armstrong scandal (2012) it was a period of time with great doubts over most of the best cyclists. Whole teams, like the Telekom of Jan Ulrich or Jan Riis and even champions like Ivan Baso, Marco Pantani or A. Contador among others.

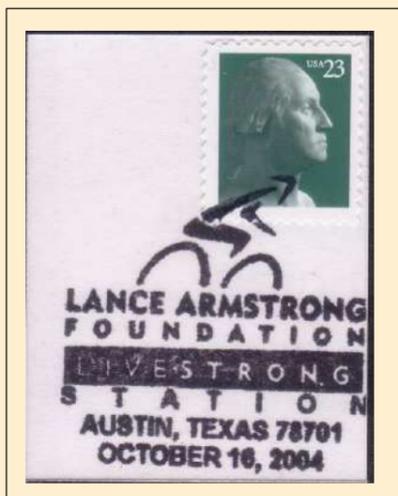


THE GREAT LIE

Without doubt the great fraud of Sport, and of Cycling in particular, has been Lance Armstrong. It was an example of improvement for sport and society when he got to win 7 Tours of France after overcoming cancer. However years later it was recognized that everything was a great lie orchestrated thanks to the use of doping substances.



His foundation and his "Livestrong" campaign mobilized millions of people in the World.



USA (2000). Postal stationery commemorating the 2nd Tour of Lance Armstrong. Standardised two-pound single rate of the U.S. Postal Administration for priority delivery of documents within the national territory.

The U.S. Postal was the main sponsor of Armstrong's team in his most glorious years.

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