

Pogačar shows unrivaled audacity to win fourth Tour de France title

BY JEROME PUGMIRE
ASSOCIATED PRESS

PARIS — The roads were dangerously slippery after heavy rain. A fourth Tour de France title was all but won anyway, so finishing safely in the pack would do fine for Tadej Pogacar. Especially considering Sunday's final stage had already been neutralized for safety reasons and he just had to complete the race.

Surely there was no need to launch a seemingly pointless attack and risk crashing?

But holding back or being cautious rarely appeals to Pogacar, the 26-year-old cycling star from Slovenia. He clinched his fourth Tour title in inimitably daring style on Sunday and further cemented his place among cycling's greats.

Even though he really did not need to, and risked falling on oil slick-wet roads, Pogacar simply could not help himself. Against all logical opinion, he tried winning Sunday's 21st and final stage with trademark uphill attacks, only to fall short of the stage win itself.

"In the end I found myself in the front, even though I didn't have the energy," said Pogacar, who won the Tour last year and in 2020 and 2021.

"Just speechless to win the Tour de France, this one feels especially amazing," Pogacar added. "Just super proud that I can wear this yellow jersey."

Two-time Tour champion Jonas Vingegaard finished the overall race 4 minutes, 24 seconds behind Pogacar in second place and Florian Lipowitz was 11 minutes adrift in third.

Belgian rider Wout van Aert won the 21st and last stage, which broke with tradition and featured three climbs of Montmartre hill.

Because of heavy rain and the risk of crashes, organizers had earlier neutralized the times 50 kilometers (31 miles) from the end, effectively giving Pogacar the victory — providing he crossed the finish line.

He did the opposite of what almost every rider would do with victory a near certainty.

As the rain teemed down, he set a tremendous pace in the Montmartre climbs as fans cheered all along the cobbled Rue Lepic, with flags and fans hanging out of windows.

Only five riders were left



AP Photo/Thibault Camus

Tour de France winner Tadej Pogacar of Slovenia crosses the finish line of the twenty-first stage of the Tour de France cycling race Sunday over 132.3 kilometers (82.1 miles) with start in Mantes-la-Ville and finish on the Champs-Élysées in Paris, France.

with Pogacar on the third ascension of the 1.1-kilometer Montmartre hill.

After fending off American Matteo Jorgenson, he was caught cold near the top as Van Aert launched a stunning attack to drop — yes, drop! — Pogacar, the world's best climber, on the steepest section.

"Hats off to Wout, he was incredibly strong," Pogacar said.

Van Aert rolled back down for a prestigious stage win on the famed Champs-Élysées. Pogacar looked weary as he crossed the line in fourth place, 19 seconds behind.

‘PEACE AND SOME NICE WEATHER’

But then it was time to celebrate title No. 4. Although don't expect Pogacar to make any headlines on that front.

"Everyone celebrates in their own way, I just want peace and some nice weather, not like here today," Pogacar said. "Just to enjoy some quiet days at home."

Only four riders have won the showcase race five times: Belgian Eddy Merckx, Spaniard Miguel Induráin and Frenchmen Jacques Anquetil and Bernard Hinault.

Pogacar won four stages this year to take his Tour tally to 21 and 30 at major races, including six at the Giro d'Italia and three at the Spanish Vuelta.

The UAE Team Emirates leader praised his teammates.

"I think the second week was the decisive moment," Pogacar said. "We took more

advantage."

Lipowitz, meanwhile, secured his first career podium at a Grand Tour, the alternative name given to the three major races.

His performance, following his third-placed finish last month at the Critérium du Dauphiné, suggests the 24-year-old German rider could challenge in the near future.

BREAKING WITH TRADITION

Traditionally, the last stage is largely processional with riders doing laps around Paris. The Tour broke with tradition after the success of the Paris Olympics road race, which also took in Montmartre, famous for its Sacré-Coeur basilica.

FIVE IN A ROW

It was the fifth straight year where Pogacar and Vingegaard finished 1-2 at the Tour.

Vingegaard was second in 2021, before beating Pogacar the next two years with the Slovenian second.

When Pogacar reclaimed his title last year, Vingegaard was runner-up.

"We've raised the level of each other much higher and we push each other to the limit," Pogacar said. "I must say to him, big, big respect."

FIVE MAJOR TITLES

Pogacar has also won the Giro d'Italia, doing so last year to become the first cyclist to secure the Giro and Tour double in the same season since the late Marco Pantani in 1998.

But Pogacar has not yet won the Spanish Vuelta, whereas Anquetil, Hinault and Merckx won all three major races.

A CENTURY OF SUCCESS

When Pogacar won the hilly fourth stage of this year's race, it was the 100th professional victory of his stellar career, all events combined.

Pogacar is also the world road race champion.

His dominant victory at the Critérium continued his excellent form the spring classics.

After winning stage 4 of the Tour, Pogacar added three more stage wins, including an emphatic uphill time trial.

WHAT'S LEFT TO WIN?

He would love to win the Paris-Roubaix classic and Milan San-Remo.

The 259.2-kilometer (161-mile) Roubaix race is called "The Hell of the North" because of its dangerous cobblestone sections.

Pogacar debut appearance at the one-day classic this year saw him seeking to become the first Tour champion to win it since Hinault in 1981. But powerful Dutch rider Mathieu van der Poel won it for the third straight year.

Pogacar has also yet to win Milan-San Remo, with Van der Poel also beating him there this year.

Expect a fired-up Pogacar next year at Roubaix and Milan-San Remo.

But it's unsure whether he'll tackle the Vuelta.



AP Photo/Jayne Kamin-Oncea

Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Shohei Ohtani throws against the Minnesota Twins during the third inning July 21 in Los Angeles.

Dodgers 2-way star Ohtani to start on mound Wednesday

Team goes to 6-man rotation

BY KEN POWTAK
ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOSTON — Los Angeles Dodgers two-way star Shohei Ohtani is expected to start on the mound Wednesday as he continues his buildup from elbow surgery that kept him from pitching all last season.

Manager Dave Roberts said Sunday before the Dodgers faced the Boston Red Sox in the finale of their three-game series that the plan is for Ohtani to work four innings at Cincinnati, with an off day to recover before hitting in a game.

With the Japanese superstar working his way back along with left-hander Blake Snell, who pitched 4 2/3 innings on Saturday in his fourth rehab start for Triple-A Oklahoma City, the Dodgers will be using a six-man rotation.

They currently have Clayton Kershaw, Tyler Glasnow, Dustin May, Yoshinobu Yamamoto and Emmet Sheehan in the rotation.

"Shohei is going to go on Wednesday and then he'll probably pitch the following Wednesday, so that probably lends itself to the six-man," Roberts said.

In Ohtani's last start, he allowed one run and four hits in three innings against Minnesota on July 22. He struck out three and walked one, throwing 46 pitches, 30 for strikes.

Roberts feels like this season is sort of a rehab year in the big leagues and doesn't foresee the team

extending Ohtani's workload deep into games for a while.

"I think this whole year on the pitching side is sort of rehab, maintenance," he said. "We're not going to have the reins off where we're going to say: 'Hey you can go 110 pitches.' I don't see that happening for quite some time. I think that staying at four (innings) for a bit, then build up to five and we'll see where we can go from there."

Also Sunday, the club activated right-handed reliever Blake Treinen from the injured list and recalled left-hander Justin Wrobleksi.

The 37-year-old Treinen was a big part of last season's run to the World Series title, picking up two victories in the Series against the New York Yankees.

He has been sidelined since April 19 because of forearm tightness.

"I think the only thing I'm going to be mindful of is the up-down," Roberts said on Treinen's usage. "To come into an inning of leverage, I have no problem."

Wrobleksi, 25, is with the Dodgers for the fourth time this season. He's a starter now, but Roberts said he'll work out of the bullpen.

"Just trying to get a quality arm, get some length, potentially using him in two-inning stints, three-inning stints is going to be helpful for our 'pen," Roberts said. "The goal is to get the best pitchers on your roster in whatever role."

To make room on the roster, LA optioned right-handers Will Klein and Edgardo Henriquez.

MEMBERS

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He said that one of the most important lessons he learned was, "winning for our team is better than winning for yourself."

The next honoree was Dave "the Cobra" Parker, who came into the majors in 1973 and made himself known by swinging a sledgehammer in the on-deck circle instead of the bats weighted with a donut that most players used. It was two years before he earned the everyday right field spot of the Pittsburgh Pirates, when he hit over .300 with 25 home runs. He continued to shine the next year winning the batting crown, his second Gold Glove, and the National League Most Valuable Player award. In 1979, he was on top of the baseball world leading the "We Are Family" Pirates to a World Series championship.

Parker's exploits earned him one of the first ever million dollar per year contracts in MLB, and helped Pittsburgh fans to move on from Roberto Clemente — star right fielder who preceded Parker, and who acted as a mentor to the younger Parker. He next returned to his hometown Cincinnati playing for the Reds. As Parker's stats and productivity began to sag he signed on with several teams, winning a World Series with the Oakland Athletics in 1989.

Parker died earlier this year from complications from Parkinson's Disease, and speaking on his behalf was his son Dave Parker, II. The younger Parker described his father's baseball journey as a

movement from anger in his Pittsburgh days to elegance in his hometown in Cincinnati. He recalled how he was not the only person to call his dad "Pops." Lots of players did. He also told his son to think of fans as friends.

Parker's award was followed by Dick "Crash" Allen. After confronting racial bias in the minor leagues in the early 1960s, he recorded one of the great rookie years for the Philadelphia Phillies in 1964. He led the league in several categories — runs, extra base hits, and triples — and was in the top five in others — batting average and doubles — and was named National League Rookie of the Year. In the next several years Allen continued to hit at a torrid pace, and earned spots on several All Star teams.

After brief stints in St. Louis and Los Angeles, Allen was acquired by the Chicago White Sox where his hitting blossomed again. In his inaugural year in the Windy City, he led the league in home runs, RBIs, and walks; eventually being named American League Most Valuable Player. Later, he became the first player in the modern era to hit two inside the park home runs in the same game.

In 2020, Allen died after a long battle with cancer. His award was accepted by his widow, Willa. She acknowledged that her husband had dealt with racial pressures with the fans early in his career. However, as the years passed the fan reactions changed, and when Allen returned to Philadelphia later in his career he was welcomed with a standing ovation. She told the audience that her husband was a man of quiet gratitude and kindness. She also

quipped that her husband often said he loved the game and would play baseball for nothing. She then wryly added that considering the salaries of his era he practically did.

The next ballplayer to be honored was CC Sabathia, the third left-hander in MLB history to reach the 3,000 strikeout milestone. Sabathia's 19 year career was spent mostly with the Cleveland Indians and the New York Yankees. He won the AL Cy Young Award with the Indians in 2007, which included a league leading 241 innings pitched.

Sabathia is one of the great workhorses in modern pitching, having appeared in well over 500 games and compiling a 251-161 record. The southpaw hurled 12 shoutouts, and completed a whopping 38 games.

In 2009, after a brief and successful stint with Milwaukee, Sabathia signed with the New York Yankees and achieved great things. In his first year in pinstripes, he anchored the pitching staff with a 19-8 record, started each round of the post season, and helped win the World Series.

When he retired in 2019, he was leading all active pitchers in strikeouts, career wins, and career innings pitched.

In his acceptance speech he spoke eloquently about his time in Cleveland, Milwaukee, and New York, expressing his gratitude to each of those cities and organizations.

His most heartfelt thanks, however, went to the women in his life. He told the huge crowd that, "I was raised by a village of women who raised me and saved me." After referencing his path to

sobriety, he urged the crowd to take time and thank the important women in their lives.

The final speaker received the largest and most affectionate response.

Ichiro Suzuki, like Sabathia, a first ballot hall of famer missed unanimous selection by only one vote. An absolute hitting machine, Suzuki's career stats are made even more impressive when considering that he did not begin his MLB career until the age of 27, years later than most rookie seasons.

He rose to stardom in the Japan Pacific League, leading in hits in seven consecutive years. He jumped from pro ball in Asia to the Seattle Mariners in 2001. In his first season as a Mariner he was named both Rookie of the Year and Most Valuable Player, only the second player in MLB history to win both accolades in the same season.

He owns the record for most hits in a season (262) and became only the 30th player in MLB history to reach 3,000 hits. He topped 200 hits in 10 different seasons and won 10 Gold Gloves, cementing his status as one of the greatest all around players of the modern era.

Suzuki spent some time with both the New York Yankees and the Miami Marlins, but finished his career in 2019 with the Mariners.

Suzuki addressed the crowd in English even though he often addresses the press and the public in Japanese through a translator. His speech was easily the most humorous of the afternoon as he pointed gentle jabs at other ball players and members of the media. Yet his message was clear and powerful. He told the crowd that

there is a difference between dreams and goals.

He explained that dreams are fun, but goals require hard work and dedication. Preparation and consistency can be difficult to master as one pursues their dream. Still, a person can make their dreams into achievable goals, and he expressed his gratitude to many as he was able to achieve the dream of Cooperstown through the goals he accomplished on the baseball diamond.

On Saturday, the Hall of Fame honored two other baseball stalwarts.

Thomas Boswell, retired writer for the Washington Post, received the Baseball Writers Association's Excellence Award, and Tom Hamilton, radio voice of the Cleveland Guardians, won the Ford C. Frick Award.

Boswell's over 50 years of baseball coverage included several books, years of coverage of the Baltimore Orioles, coverage of over 40 World Series, and an appearance on Ken Burns documentary "Baseball."

Hamilton has broadcast Cleveland baseball for 35 years, and earned a reputation for honesty and excitement. He arrived in Cleveland just as the then Indians were emerging from decades of doldrums, calling the team's first post-season appearance in 41 years. He has gone on to call three World Series and becomes the third Cleveland voice to win the Fricke Award.

Both new inductees highlighted the emotional bonds that baseball has created in their lives, and of their families, and of the lives of baseball fans everywhere.