

Abstract

FIALA, L. (2020): *Tour de France: The effects of the geographical features of the race and stages on the results of the best cyclists and their change over time*. Diploma thesis, Prague: Charles University, Faculty of Science, 152 pp.

The diploma thesis deals with Tour de France, a three-week bicycle race whose first edition was in 1903. The work's goal is to analyse the evolution of the most important cycling race in the world after the World War II in terms of its geographical features, which affect the performance of racers, and so to differentiate successful cyclists based on their qualities on one hand and identify those parts of the race (stages) that are crucial to success, on the other hand. Another goal of the thesis is to find out how the influence of geographical conditions on performance changes over time and whether and how the categories (types) of cyclist change in this context. The work is consisted into two parts: the theoretical-methodological part and the analysis of the subject of interest.

The theoretical and methodological part is based on the approaches and knowledge of sport geography, while it is almost impossible to rely on real research publications devoting to cycling and stage races. The relevant literature dealing with stage races, the Grand Tour and especially the Tour de France, has a predominantly journalistic character. This is one of the reasons why the second part focuses on the characteristics of the long stage races on the example of the most famous one, the Tour de France. Within the framework of this thesis, it deals with the classification and typology of stages, development of the structure of classes over time and doping. The methodology, based on information from the official Tour website and other Internet sources, uses data of the stages and their results (length, elevation, time differences, etc.). These are then processed into various analysis tables and used in the comparative and regression analysis to evaluate and explain the changes in the Tour in terms of race structure by stage type, development of time differences between best cyclists, disposition of winners and in particular the stages the biggest differences and why.

The results of the work confirmed the assumption that the overall victory is decided during the mountain stages and individual time trials. While in the case of the two best cyclists the share of mountain stages and time trials in time losses is almost comparable, in the case of TOP 10 racers mountain stages have a significantly higher effect on the overall ranking than time trials. It can be concluded that the first two cyclists in the ranking must be all-rounders, while overall the TOP 10 are dominated by climbers.

Keywords: sport, geography of sport, cycling, Tour de France, France, space patterns, stages characters and profiles, analysis of racers and countries' victories and performance