

# Ah! The Drama! The Excitement! The Luck!

## *The Tour de France + French Tennis* *Spectacular Sport*

**F**OR the French, sport must be exciting, spectacular. At Longchamps, if the horses and the betting are not sufficiently exciting, they can always gaze at the gowns. At Le Mans the greatest of the great international race-car drivers must each year drive faster, with greater daring. In Paris, at their Stade Roland Garros, the Basques must bound in order to give their tennis the flair and what they call the *elan* that developed Borotra, Brugnon, Boussus, Cochet, Lacoste, and the incomparable Suzanne. Their greatest boxer was no crude slugger. "Gorgeous Georges" had the figure of an Adonis, the finesse of proper artistry.

One of the most spectacular of all their spectacular sporting events is the Tour de France, a bike race which once



"GORGEOUS GEORGES"  
All the ladies loved him

took 30 days and which now, over shorter courses, still takes 21 days.

The Tour de France is also one of the oldest national sports events in France. By 1900, it had time to degenerate into an affair of bitter rivalries and wholesale frauds. It had been a point-to-point road race, covering a fairly long distance, but nothing on the scale of the present grand tour.

Resuscitation was effected by M. Desgrange, who created Le Tour de France

as a thoroughly sound commercial proposition. The French like excitement, but it must pay for itself.

Desgrange caught the imagination of the public with the size of his idea. Inspired by original successes, Desgrange was bold enough to plan the itinerary to cover a circuit of the whole country. Over plains and downs the cyclists must race, over the Alps and the Pyrenees.

Day after day they had to ride, covering 5400 kilometres, or approximately 8000 miles. Stopping only for sleep, they raced for weeks on end, with cheering crowds to see them through each village, each town and every city in all the provinces, with Mayors to wave them by, with every newspaper in the country following every change of fortune, and, in recent years, with radio stations following them from shortwave transmitters in vans along the route. They claim, in fact, that the invention of the mobile broadcasting van came from M. Antoine, who applied his idea to reporting the Tour.

There has been some difficulty between the organiser and the entrants. While the one tried to make the race as hard as he could, the others tried to make it as easy as possible. Over long sections of the race they would loaf at their ease, with an agreement that none should set too fast a pace; over short sections they would occasionally, but not often enough, stage a burst of speed as it suited them.

M. Desgrange has tried all sorts of tricks to circumvent this happy understanding between the competitors. He has altered the route, he has started them separately so that none should know where the others were. The cyclists found ways of getting round all these obstacles. So he organised the event in teams representing different nationalities. Here he really had something. Rivalry developed, especially between French, Belgian, and Italian teams. The Germans found something at which they were not efficient; but the Luxemburgers, the Dutch, the Swiss, and the Spanish, all came out with strong entries.

Prize money is excellent. A single prize may amount to 100,000 francs, with all sorts of other prizes for different laps and different conditions offered by firms seeking publicity.

In spite of its scale, the race pays the organiser. The winner, from publicity and various sources after the race, has often netted 300,000 francs. All competitors pay their way, even the last. Anyone selected to race can be sure at least of making a profit out of the little café he will be able to open, trading on the prestige. The winners are sure of almost a fortune. Other prominent riders can make small fortunes out of

exhibition riding, engagements with speedway companies — until the next race changes the run of fortune.

Even with these inducements, the competitors have been slacking again. Not to be beaten, M. Desgranges has again changed the course. Previously the excitement had reached its pitch over the alpine sections. After that they completed the circuit at their leisure. So M. Desgranges has shortened the time to 21 days (saving a great deal of expense), and changed the route so that the riders must race straight for Paris as soon as they have finished the grueling mountain road.

No doubt this year they will all be riding on more important business.

## TENNIS STARS



**B**RUGNON (above), and Boussus (below), are memories of the great days when French tennis, and tennis throughout the world, was dominated by the figures of Borotra, Cochet, Lacoste. Brugnon won the doubles at Wimbledon in 1926 and 1928 with Cochet, and in 1932 and



1933 with Borotra. Boussus belongs to a younger generation.

Jean Borotra was one of the most astounding tennis players in the history of the game. He bounced, he bounded, he fell and recovered, he leaped about, he disconcerted every opponent, he won: Wimbledon singles in 1924 and 1926, Wimbledon doubles in 1925, 1932, 1933, Wimbledon mixed doubles in 1925 with Suzanne Lenglen. By 1930 he was a veteran, but in 1932, when Ellsworth Vines rocketed to fame, it was Borotra who took the sting out of his cannonball service by catching the ball on the rise and winning against the champion of whose hitting at Wimbledon that season Jack Crawford said: "I have never seen the equal."

Cochet, Borotra, and Lacoste between them held the Wimbledon singles title from 1924 to 1929. Tilden had held it in 1920-21, Patterson and Johnson followed, then came the long sequence of French successes, then it went back to Tilden, and since then has been divided among Wood, Vines, Crawford, Perry, Budge and Riggs.

The famous trio began their successful bombardment of the best that Wimbledon could offer just as an equally famous French player was going into the decline that all champions must anticipate. Suzanne Lenglen . . . won



her first Wimbledon singles in 1919 and held the title continuously until 1923, when it went to Miss K. McHone. In 1925 she caught up on it again, and in that year won the mixed doubles with Borotra.

While she played she became almost a legend of grace and speed. There is still something of the legend about her name. No other woman tennis player has ever held such a dominant position unchallenged for so long a period.

The French held the Davis Cup from 1927 to 1932. Australia (which included New Zealand until after the 1922 round) has held it for 16 years, U.S.A. for 12, Britain for 7.