



# ILS TRAVERSENT L'ATLANTIQUE

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PROFILES OF THE TEAMS AND KEY RIDERS | FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

## WORLDTEAMS

### **AG2R LA MONDIALE (FRA)**

In the top flight for the past 23 years, the French squad continues to be a frontrunner, now building on a talented new generation. Despite not enjoying the same success as at last year's Tour de France, where Jean-Christophe Peraud finished third overall, the team made things happen for most of the race this year, with stage wins by Vuillermoz and Bardet, who have all the right stuff to shine on the Québec City and Montréal Grand Prix Cyclistes courses. Founded in: 1992. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 17

#### **RIDERS TO WATCH**

**Romain Bardet (FRA):** Age 23, turned pro in 2012. Palmarès: 4 wins including Tour de l'Ain 2013, Stage 5 Critérium du Dauphiné plus Stage 18 Tour de France, 2015. This season: 2 wins; 6th in the Critérium du Dauphiné, 9th in the Tour de France. At just 23, the man from the Auvergne is already one of the heavyweights of the pro peloton. After showing steady improvement since he got his start as a pro in 2012, Bardet has added to his prize list this season with, among other successes, a win in one of the late stages of the Tour de France. Fifth in the Montréal Grand Prix Cycliste (GP) last year, he enjoys courses requiring stamina, and has made the Québec races his end-of-season objective.

**Alexis Vuillermoz (FRA):** Age 27, turned pro in 2013. Palmarès: 4 wins including GP de Plumelec, Stage 8 Tour de France, Aquece Rio (pre-Olympics race), 2015. This season: 3 wins; 6th in the Flèche Wallonne. A latecomer to road racing after enjoying a fine career as a mountain biker, Jura-born Vuillermoz has fulfilled promises this season. His Tour de France stage victory at Mûr-de-Bretagne proved that he's one of the most powerful *puncheurs* out there, and his mid-August win in Rio de Janeiro, on the course that will be used for the Olympics next year, was another big confidence booster.

**Hugo Houle (CAN):** Age 24, turned pro in 2011. Palmarès: 2 wins including Canadian National Time Trials, 2015. This season: 2 wins; 11th in the Three Days of West Flanders. In the three years since he joined the French team, Québec's own Hugo Houle has made steady progress, which included completing his first Grand Tour this past spring (he finished 113th in the Giro d'Italia general classification). He followed that up with a Canadian National Time Trial Championship in June, and then went on to claim the Gold Medal in the same event at the Pan-Am Games in Toronto.

### **ASTANA PRO TEAM (KAZ)**

The Kazakh team's season so far has yet to match the glory of last year, when Italy's Vincenzo Nibali won the Tour de France. After finishing just off the Grande Boucle podium this past July, Nibali was even persuaded to ride the Vuelta a España alongside Aru and Landa, the 2nd- and 3rd-place finishers in this year's Giro. But in Québec, the team managed by Alexandre Vinokourov will hardly be also-rans: they'll be featuring Estonia's Rein Taaramae, one of fittest riders in the peloton at the moment. Founded in: 2006. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 24

#### **RIDERS TO WATCH**

**Jakob Fuglsang (DAN):** Age 30, turned pro in 2006. Palmarès: 12 wins including Tour of Denmark 2008, 2009 and 2010, Tour of Austria 2012. This season: 7th, Paris-Nice. After strong showings in the Ardennes Classics (8th in the Flèche Wallonne, 9th in Liège-Bastogne-Liège), the Dane was once again a valuable team rider in the Tour de France—and, had it not been for a crash caused by a motorcycle driver, might well have won Stage 18 to Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne. A sure-fire veteran competing for the third time in the Canadian races.

**Rein Taaramae (EST):** Age 28, turned pro in 2008. Palmarès: 13 wins including Tour de l'Ain 2009 and Stage 14, Vuelta a España 2011. This season: 3 wins including Tour de Burgos and Arctic Race of Norway. Once hailed as a future star (he finished 11th overall in the Tour de France at age 24), this Estonian has bounced back this season in the colours of Astana. Back in good health after surgery to his larynx, he's shown consistent form, with peaks in August, when he won the Tour de Burgos and the Arctic Race of Norway. Taaramae recently announced he wouldn't be returning with Astana in 2016.

## BMC RACING TEAM (USA)

Boasting a deep, cosmopolitan lineup, this U.S.-registered team is among the most impressive machines in the international peloton. They're the reigning Team Time Trial World Champions, and have made that discipline a specialty, with all-rounders of the calibre of Rohan Dennis. Although Tejay Van Garderen failed in his bid to reach the podium in the Tour de France, BMC riders won three stages there, and in Canada they'll be pinning their hopes on the Belgian duo of Gilbert and Van Avermaet, who are tough customers in one-day races. Founded in: 2007. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 31

### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Philippe Gilbert (BEL):** Age 33, turned pro in 2003. Palmarès: 65 wins including Paris-Tours 2008 and 2009, Tour of Lombardy 2009 and 2010, Amstel Gold Race 2010, 2011 and 2014, Liège-Bastogne-Liège 2011, Québec City GP 2011 and World Championships 2012. This season: 4 wins including Stage 12 and Stage 18, Giro d'Italia; 2nd in Clásica de San Sebastián. Belgium's Philippe Gilbert has one of the finest career records in one-day races of all active racers. His grand slam in the Ardennes Classics in 2011 remains unforgettable, and later that year he won the Québec City GP, sewing up first place in the UCI World Tour points classification in the process. The former World Champion returns to Québec looking for similar glory.

**Greg Van Avermaet (BEL):** Age 30, turned pro in 2006. Palmarès: 24 wins including Stage 9, Vuelta a España 2008, Paris-Tours 2011. This season: 4 wins including Tour of Belgium and Stage 13, Tour de France; 2nd in Eneco Tour, 3rd in Tour of Flanders, 3rd in Paris-Roubaix. Despite being one of the most frequent—and most successful—competitors in Canada's GPs, he has yet to make it to the top step of the podium here. The runner-up in Québec City in 2012 and third-place finisher there in 2013, he followed that up with fourth in Montréal in 2013 and fifth in Québec City last year. Those statistics parallel those of his career; he's often flirted with big wins. At age 30, though, this new dad seems to be enjoying his best years...

## ETIXX – QUICK STEP (BEL)

This Belgian squad has notched the most WorldTour wins in recent years. They have a deep talent pool, with sprinters, all-rounders and *baroudeurs*, and their only real shortcoming is the general classification in mountainous stage races. Managed by Patrick Lefèvre, they arrive in Québec with four powerful leaders, determined to win the only two titles so far missing from their trophy case. Founded in: 2003. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 44

### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Michal Kwiatkowski (POL):** Age 25, turned pro in 2010. Palmarès: 13 wins including 2014 Road World Championships. This season: 2 wins including Amstel Gold Race; 2nd in Paris-Nice. The reigning Road World Champion, crowned last September in Ponferrada, Spain, will be competing in his final two races of the season in the trademark rainbow jersey. That should provide special motivation for this *puncheur*, who won his first Classic (the Amstel Gold Race) in the spring, but has had a difficult time of it since (among other things, he dropped out of the Tour de France).

**Tom Boonen (BEL):** Age 34, turned pro in 2002. Palmarès: 117 wins including Tour of Flanders 2005, 2006 and 2012, Paris-Roubaix 2005, 2008, 2009 and 2012, Road World Championships 2005. This season: 3 stage wins including Stage 3, Eneco Tour; Stage 3, Omloop Het Nieuwsblad. A high-calibre sprinter with eight Tour de France stage wins to his credit, a Cobbled Classics specialist and joint holder of the record for most wins at Paris-Roubaix, Belgium's Boonen was a shining star in the first decade of the 2000s. After some difficult seasons marred by crashes and injuries, Tornado Tom may be in the twilight of his outstanding career, but he still knows how to win.

**Tony Martin (GER):** Age 30, turned pro in 2006. Palmarès: 59 wins including World Time Trial Championships 2011, 2012 and 2013, Paris-Nice 2011. This season: 4 wins including Stage 4, Tour de France. The best all-rounder on the planet (despite seeing his string of World TT titles broken by Bradley Wiggins last year), Germany's Martin is quite simply a powerhouse. An unlucky hero of this year's Tour de France—after two and a half days in the yellow jersey, he had to abandon with a fractured collarbone—he is a regular time-trial winner and can orchestrate memorable solo breaks.

**Julian Alaphilippe (FRA):** Age 23, turned pro in 2013. Palmarès: 5 wins including Stage 7, Tour of California 2015. This season: 1 win; 2nd in Flèche Wallonne, 2nd in Liège-Bastogne-Liège; 2nd in Tour of California. This young Frenchman turned heads in the spring, in two Ardennes Classics, where he was beaten only by Alejandro Valverde. With talent, nerve and a chance to grow on a team filled with champions, Alaphilippe has his future laid out for him. While he was originally to start the Vuelta a España, his managers convinced him to make the trip to Québec (he made his début here in 2014), where he could well make a statement.

## FDJ (FRA)

Having had to deal with the departure of sprinter Nacer Bouhanni, the French team led by Marc Madiot has seen its wins total dwindle this year. Sticking to its young-talent policy, FDJ is betting its future on Thibaut Pinot, who won the stage to Alpe d'Huez

in this year's Tour de France, and Arnaud Démare, who specializes in sprints and the Northern Classics. For the Canadian races, they've traditionally relied on *puncheur* Arthur Vichot. Founded in: 1997. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 12

#### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Arthur Vichot (FRA):** Age 25, turned pro in 2010. Palmarès: 7 wins including Stage 5, Critérium du Dauphiné 2012, French National Championship 2013, 7th in Paris-Nice 2014. This season: 8th in Circuit de la Sarthe. His 2014 season ended abruptly with a bad crash just metres from the line in Québec City, which resulted in a quadruple collarbone fracture (the former French national champion had finished 2nd in that race two years earlier). He hasn't fared any better this year, felled by a virus. This circuit course specialist has been rebuilding since, and can only hope that his string of bad luck has ended.

**Arnaud Démare (FRA):** Age 24, turned pro in 2012. Palmarès: 32 wins including Vattenfall Cycloclassics 2012, Four Days of Dunkerque 2013 and 2014, French National Championship 2014. This season: Stage 2 and Stage 3, Tour of Belgium. The former World Under-23 Champion is riding the Québec City and Montréal GPs for the first time. After a season focussed on the Northern Classics (Tour of Flanders, Paris-Roubaix), where things didn't quite go as planned, he seems to have lost some of his speed burst. As a result, the wins have been slow in coming, but he still has a bright future ahead.

#### IAM CYCLING (SUI)

Founded two years ago by Michel Thétaz, owner of portfolio management firm IAM, this Swiss team joined the WorldTour ranks at the start of this season. It has already gained attention with Sylvain Chavanel's win at the 2014 GP de Plouay, the hour record held for a time by Austria's Matthias Brändle, and an 8th-place finish by Switzerland's Matthias Frank in this year's Tour de France. The team, managed by Belgian Rik Verbrugghe, is sure to get a facelift over the winter, with Frenchmen Chavanel and Pineau, among others, set to leave. Founded in: 2013. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug.23): 13

#### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Matthias Brändle (AUT):** Age 26, turned pro in 2008. Palmarès: 11 wins including Stage 5 and Stage 6, Tour of Britain 2014. This season: 2 wins including prologue, Tour of Belgium. People really took notice of this solid all-rounder on October 30, 2014, when he set a new hour record of 51.852 km, a mark that stood until February 8, 2015, when it was surpassed by Rohan Dennis of Australia. But Brändle hasn't neglected his road performance, and has carved out a niche by specializing in prologues, the short time-trial events that serve to kick off stage races.

**Matthias Frank (SUI):** Age 28, turned pro in 2008. Palmarès: 6 wins including Stage 3, Critérium International 2014. This season: 8th in Tour de France. Frank is the Swiss squad's leader in stage races. After coming second in the 2014 Tour of Switzerland, he proved his endurance fitness and climbing skills by finishing this year's Tour de France in 8th place. He tends to be less visible in one-day races, but the Québec City and Montréal courses, which he first rode in 2012, are a good match for his style.

#### LAMPRE-MERIDA (ITA)

With four Giro d'Italia stage victories in 2015 and no less than 23 wins, the Italian team is having one of the best seasons in its long history. Most important, 13 of its 28 riders have raised their arms at finish lines since January, a clear sign of a great group dynamic. As the season winds down, the transalpine squad is again looking to Portugal's Rui Costa, ever-ambitious on the Canadian courses. Founded in: 1991. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 23

#### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Rui Alberto Costa (POR):** Age 28, turned pro in 2008. Palmarès: 20 wins including Montréal GP 2011, Tour of Switzerland 2012, 2013 and 2014, Road World Championships 2013. This season: Stage 3, Critérium du Dauphiné (3rd in GC), Stage 4, Paris-Nice, Stage 4, Amstel Gold Race, Stage 4, Liège-Bastogne-Liège. Costa's first big win was at the 2011 Montréal GP, and since then he's never missed the chance to race in *La Belle Province*. Showing great consistency, the former world champ put up great results this year until the Critérium du Dauphiné, making him a favourite for the Tour de France, but his Grande Boucle proved a terrible disappointment (he abandoned because of illness during Stage 11). Bested in Montréal last year only by the untouchable Simon Gerrans, Costa will be looking to lift his spirits.

**Diego Ulissi (ITA):** Age 26, turned pro in 2010. Palmarès: 18 wins including 4 Giro d'Italia stages. This season: Stage 7, Giro d'Italia, Stage 6, Tour of Poland. With a stage win in this year's Giro, the speedy Tuscan shrugged off months of controversy following a failed drug test during the 2014 edition of the race. After serving a reduced ban for "simple negligence," he now has his promising career back on track. As a quality finisher on uphill finishes, he seems destined for a bright future.

## LOTTO SOUDAL (BEL)

Funded since the 1980s by Belgium's national lottery, the team managed by Marc Sergeant has risen through the ranks over the past few seasons to become one of the very best. They owe part of that success to their sprint specialist, Germany's André Greipel, who claimed four stage wins in the 2015 Tour de France, and to stalwart all-rounders like France's Tony Gallopin and the revelation of the season, Flemish rider Tiesj Benoot. Founded in: 2012. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 34

### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Tony Gallopin (FRA):** Age 27, turned pro in 2008. Palmarès: 7 wins including Clásica de San Sebastián 2013, Stage 11 Tour de France 2014. This season: 2 wins including Stage 6, Paris-Nice (6th in GC), 2nd in French National Championships. A formidable *puncheur*, quick in small groups and not a bad climber, France's Gallopin (who's the nephew of Alain Gallopin, directeur sportif of Trek Factory Racing) is continuing his steady ascension. Though his dream is to win a week-long stage race like Paris-Nice, the man who was 3rd in the Montréal GP and then 6th at the Worlds in 2014 remains a one-day specialist.

**Tim Wellens (BEL):** Age 23, turned pro in 2012. Palmarès: 4 wins including Eneco Tour 2014 and 2015. This season: 2 wins, 10th in Paris-Nice. Born at the foot of the famous Mur de Huy, Wellens is one of the bright hopes of Belgian cycling. He's made the Eneco Tour his specialty; the UCI WorldTour stage race is run every year in August between the Netherlands and Belgium, and he's won it the past two years in a row. But Wellens is also a natural fit for some of the classic races on the calendar (witness his 4th-place showing in the 2014 Tour of Lombardy).

## MOVISTAR TEAM (ESP)

Founded 35 years ago, the Spanish team boasts one of the most imposing armadas in the pro peloton, with riders like Alejandro Valverde and Colombia's Nairo Quintana, runners-up behind Chris Froome at this year's Tour de France. With those leaders currently competing in the Vuelta a España—and logically so—Movistar will rely on less well known but nonetheless talented cyclists in Québec City and Montréal. Founded in: 1980. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 29

### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Ion Izagirre (ESP):** Age 26, turned pro in 2010. Palmarès: 4 wins including Stage 16, Giro d'Italia 2012, Spain National Championships 2014, Tour of Poland 2015. This season: 1 win, 3rd in the Tour of the Basque Country. The Basque rider made the move to Movistar along with his brother Gorka after the 2013 demise of the Euskaltel team, where both had made their pro débuts. Since then, this discreet rider, who's a quality climber and all-rounder, has continued to progress in the company of the world's best. That consistency allowed him to beat a strong field and win the Tour of Poland in August.

**Jesus Herrada (ESP):** Age 25, turned pro in 2011. Palmarès: 7 wins including Spanish National Championships 2013. This season: 2 wins including Stage 2, Tour du Limousin (2nd in GC). A true veteran of the Québec City and Montréal GPs, in which he's competed every year since turning pro in 2011, the younger of the Herrada brothers (José, five years his senior, also races for Movistar) is a powerful finisher and at ease on all types of terrain. He finished 13th in Québec City and 14th in Montréal last year, and hopes to do even better on these courses that he's come to know and love.

## ORICA-GREENEDGE (AUS)

In fewer than five seasons, the first-ever Australian team in the history of cycling has emerged as one of the most powerful on the WorldTour. And though Simon Gerrans, who ruled both Québec City and Montréal last year, has elected to ride the Vuelta a España in a bid to reboot a disappointing season marred by crashes, the squad from Down Under will still be a force to be reckoned with, what with the Yates twins and mighty Michael Matthews. Founded in: 2011. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 22

### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Adam Yates (GBR):** Age 23, turned pro in 2014. Palmarès: 4 wins including Clásica San Sebastián 2015. This season: 1 win, 9th in Tirreno-Adriatico. Of the Yates twins (brother Simon will also race here), he had the least impressive prize list as an amateur, but he's certainly made up for it since. After first gaining attention last year by winning the Tour of Turkey and putting up a strong 6th-place showing in the Critérium du Dauphiné, he confirmed his potential this season by claiming his first WorldTour win, the Clásica San Sebastián, in early August.

**Michael Matthews (AUS):** Age 24, turned pro in 2009. Palmarès: 24 wins including 3 Vuelta a España stages and 2 Giro d'Italia stages. This season: 4 wins including Stage 3, Giro d'Italia, Stage 3, Milan-San Remo, Stage 3, Amstel Gold Race. This talented young Australian has already joined the ranks of the world's best sprinters. Respected for his speed burst, he is also that rare finisher who can impress on hilly courses, and is a masterful uphill finisher. He also won respect for a gutsy performance in this year's Tour de France, which he completed despite a terrible crash during Stage 3.

## TEAM KATUSHA (RUS)

Funded by the government and the gas companies, this Russian team has one of the biggest budgets of any WorldTeam, and riders for every type of event. No one has more wins this season than Katusha's sprint specialist, Norwegian Alexander Kristoff (19 victories). He's become the leader of a squad that's seen young Ilnur Zakarin come into his own at the very highest level, and Spain's Joaquim Rodriguez hang on to a spot in the Top 10. Founded in: 2009. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 38

### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Alexander Kristoff (NOR):** Age 28, turned pro in 2006. Palmarès: 45 wins including Milan-San Remo 2014, Tour of Flanders 2015. This season: 19 wins; 2nd in Milan-San Remo. The Norwegian was a beast in the early part of the season, using his speed burst as well as his classics-racer temperament to win the prestigious Tour of Flanders. He was less prominent in the Tour de France, but found renewed success in front of a home crowd in Norway in August, and arrives in Canada for the final stretch of the season, which he hopes to cap off with a Worlds title.

**Simon Spilak (SLO):** Age 29, turned pro in 2005. Palmarès: 11 wins including Tour of Romandy 2010 and Tour of Switzerland 2015. This season: 1 win, 2nd in Tour of Romandy, 3rd in Paris-Nice. A discreet sort of rider, the Slovenian still manages to enrich his palmarès every year. He's particularly fond of Switzerland; after finishing 2nd in the Tour of Romandy this year, he won the Tour of Switzerland, exploiting his talents as a *rouleur* in the final stage. On a good day, he can be unbeatable.

## TEAM CANNONDALE-GARMIN (USA)

Created this year with the merger of Garmin and Cannondale, this U.S.-registered team is going through a transitional year, which has mostly been about watching young talents improve. Fortunately, in the big races, they've been able to count on the experienced Canadian, Ryder Hesjedal, who is back in top form and will be looking to prove it in front of the home crowd with a big result. Founded in: 2005. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 8

### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Ryder Hesjedal (CAN):** Age 34, turned pro in 2003. Palmarès: 5 wins including Giro d'Italia 2012. This season: 5th in Giro d'Italia. Earlier this year, Canada's biggest cycling star was a major player in the final week of the Giro, giving audiences in Italy a reminder of his epic win there in 2013. He was on the attack in the Tour de France as well, notably on the slopes of the Alpe d'Huez. Hesjedal is wrapping up one of his best seasons ever, and he'd like nothing more than to put a stamp on it with a win on Canadian soil, where he's no stranger to the podium (3rd in Montréal in 2010, and again in 2013). Ryder Hesjedal recently announced that he will be joining Trek Factory Racing next season.

**Tom-Jelte Slagter (NED):** Age 26, turned pro in 2010. Palmarès: 5 wins including Tour Down Under 2013. This season: 9th in Flèche Wallonne. Though he's had a complicated season, the Dutchman can always count on his abilities as a *puncheur* to be in the mix in challenging finishes. He's proven that abundantly in the Québec City GP, where he finished 5th in 2012, 7th in 2013, and 11th in 2014. Slagter has the right profile to win; it's just a matter of putting everything together for one race in the waning weeks of this WorldTour season.

## TEAM SKY (GBR)

With three wins in the past four years, Britain's Team Sky has made the Tour de France its private hunting ground. Leader Chris Froome, back in the saddle after a 2014 campaign spoiled by crashes, is currently in Spain, vying for a rare Grand Tour double: Tour de France plus Vuelta a España in the same year. But Sky also got a boost from the early-season form of Australia's Richie Porte (who's leaving to join BMC Racing Team next season) and the steadily improving Welshman Geraint Thomas. In Canada, they'll look to the experience of Norwegian Lars-Petter Nordhaug for a result. Founded in: 2010. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 35

### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Lars-Petter Nordhaug (NOR):** Age 31, turned pro in 2005. Palmarès: 9 wins including Montréal GP 2012. This season: 2 wins including Tour de Yorkshire; 10th in Tour of Norway. A win in Montréal three years ago remains the only WorldTour victory for this solid Norwegian, who's appreciated as a team rider and tends to show great season-long consistency. And the former national champion also knows how to seize those rare opportunities when, in the absence of Team Sky's leaders, he can play his own cards just right—as he showed this year in the inaugural Tour du Yorkshire.

**David Lopez (ESP):** Age 34, turned pro in 2003. Palmarès: 3 wins including Stage 9, Vuelta a España 2010. This season: 4th in Tour of Norway. After getting the call for the Tour de France in both 2013 and 2014, the Spaniard wasn't selected as one of Chris Froome's lieutenants this year, either in July or for the Vuelta. Which gives this veteran, a climber, the perfect chance to show that he can be more than just a team rider.

## TEAM LOTTO NL – JUMBO (NED)

At the end of last season, the Dutch national lottery came to the rescue of this team, long known under the banner Rabobank, and more recently Belkin. Oddly enough, the name change seems to have affected their performance this year, though they can still count on quality individual riders like Gesink and Kelderman, who'll be leading the troops into battle in Québec City and Montréal. Founded in: 1996. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 5

### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Robert Gesink (NED):** Age 29, turned pro in 2005. Palmarès: 16 wins including Montréal GP 2010, Tour of California 2012 and Québec City GP 2013. This season: 5th in Tour of California, 6th in Tour de France. The tall Dutchman gained fame as the first man to win the Montréal GP, and then crossed the line first in Québec City three years later; that remains his most recent win, however. Cardiac surgery interrupted his career in 2014, but he's back at full strength this season, as he showed with a brilliant 6th-place performance in the Tour de France.

**Wilco Kelderman (NED):** Age 24, turned pro in 2010. Palmarès: 7 wins including Tour of Denmark 2013. This season: Dutch National TT Champion, 3rd in Eneco Tour. A very auspicious 2014 season (7th in the Giro d'Italia, 4th in the Critérium du Dauphiné) put him on top of the list of up-and-comers to watch. The Dutch climber struggled to live up to those burdensome expectations during this year's Tour de France (79th in Paris after a nasty fall the first week), but should use the end of the season to show us the full range of his talent.

## TEAM GIANT-ALPECIN (GER)

This Dutch squad owes its reputation to a dynamic duo of German sprinters: Marcel Kittel and John Degenkolb. A nasty virus has kept the former from performing up to par this year; but the latter, who's currently riding the Vuelta a España, notched a rare double by winning both Milan-San Remo and Paris-Roubaix. But the team, managed by Iwan Spekenbrink, is also seeing other riders come into their own, like France's Warren Barguil. Founded in: 2005. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 13

### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Simon Geschke (GER):** Age 29, turned pro in 2009. Palmarès: 3 wins including Stage 17, Tour de France 2015. This season: 1 win, 18th in Tour Down Under. Paradoxically, it was in his weakest season to date that this sleek German *baroudeur* notched the biggest win of his career, taking the stage to Pra Loup in the 2015 Tour de France. A well-deserved reward for this model team rider, whose palmarès includes several honourable mentions on some of the most prestigious classics races on the calendar.

**Warren Barguil (FRA):** Age 23, turned pro in 2013. Palmarès: 2 wins, Stage 13 and Stage 16, Vuelta a España 2013. This season: 14th in Tour de France. This climber from Brittany isn't afraid of anything or anyone, as he showed during this year's Tour de France, hanging tough as one of the youngest aspirants to the GC before eventually finishing 14th in Paris. This one-time winner of the Tour de l'Avenir, who also attracted attention with two stage wins in the 2013 Vuelta and is more of a stage-race specialist, is riding the Québec City and Montréal GPs for the first time this year.

## TINKOFF-SAXO (RUS)

Owned by Oleg Tinkoff, the billionaire magnate and cycling aficionado who's fond of controversial statements, this Russian team faces the prospect of winding up their season without leader Alberto Contador. After winning the Giro d'Italia but falling short of the podium in the Tour de France (he came 5th), the Spaniard prematurely ended his season in late July. His exit leaves room for the teammates who normally ride as his lieutenants to seize opportunities. Founded in: 2001. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 25

### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Michael Rogers (AUS):** Age 35, turned pro in 2001. Palmarès: 21 wins including World TT Championships 2003, 2004 and 2005, Tour Down Under 2002, Tour of California 2010. This season: 7th in Eneco Tour. Nearing 36 years of age and about to complete his 15th season in the pro peloton, the three-time winner of the World Time-Trial Championship remains a respected road captain. Once again this season, he was at Alberto Contador's side, for the Spaniard's Giro win as well as his Tour de France bid. The indomitable Australian then assumed the mantle of late-season leader, turning in a top-10 finish in the Eneco Tour.

**Roman Kreuziger (CZE):** Age 29, turned pro in 2006. Palmarès: 11 wins including Tour of Switzerland 2008, Tour of Romandy 2009, Amstel Gold Race 2013. This season: 1 win, Stage 6 in Tour du Colorado; 5th in Liège-Bastogne-Liège. After winning the World Under-19 Championships, Kreuziger got his pro career off to the perfect start by becoming the first Czech cyclist to win the Tour of Switzerland and the Tour of Romandy. He's since become a sort of "deluxe lieutenant" with Astana and then Tinkoff, but can still perform at the highest level, as seen in his 5th-place showing in the 2013 Tour de France.

## TREK FACTORY RACING (USA)

This U.S. team, financed by the bikemaker, has had its share of bad luck this year, what with Fabian Cancellara suffering a rib injury in the spring and then crashing out of the Tour de France. But with young Luxembourg rider Bob Jungels living up to his promise and a great Tour de France by Dutch recruit Bauke Mollema (7th place), they have something to smile about. Founded in: 2011. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 13

### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Bauke Mollema (NED):** Age 28, turned pro in 2007. Palmarès: 7 wins including Stage 17, Vuelta a España 2013. This season: 2nd in Tirreno-Adriatico, 7th in Tour de France. After leaving Belkin, this Dutch rider quickly found his bearings. He may be a discreet leader in terms of his character, but not when it comes to consistency of results. With his qualities as a climber, he's a GC threat in the most prestigious stage races, but is also at ease on hilly one-day courses. After a month-long break, he's kicking off the home stretch of the season at the Canadian races.

**Fabio Felling (ITA):** Age 25, turned pro in 2010. Palmarès: 10 wins including Circuit de Lorraine 2010. This season: 2 wins including Stage 2, Tour of the Basque Country, 2nd in Drôme Classic, 3rd in Critérium International. This all-rounder from Turin racked up an impressive string of top-10 finishes at the start of this season before winning the individual TT at the Critérium International. He's quick, his only weakness is in high-mountain stages, and he's back in good form this summer (5th in the Eneco Tour). In Québec, where he hasn't raced since the inaugural GPs, he'll be on courses that suit his style.

## WILD-CARD TEAMS

### BORA – ARGON 18 (GBR)

Created this year following the partnership between the former NetApp team, now Bora, and Montréal-based bike manufacturer Argon 18, this German-registered squad secured an invite to this year's Tour de France, among other exploits. Their fairly comprehensive roster includes Irish speedster Sam Bennett, who's put up the majority of their wins. Founded in: 2010. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 7

### RIDERS TO WATCH.

**Sam Bennett (IRL):** Age 24, turned pro in 2011. Palmarès: 11 wins including Clásica de Almería 2014. This season: 4 wins including Stage 6 Tour du Qatar; 2nd in Vélothon Berlin. After a quiet début in the pro ranks following an amateur career that included a spell in France, this Irishman is gradually coming into his own among the top sprinters. He recently held off Alexander Kristoff to win Stage 2 of the Arctic Race of Norway, exemplifying his constant progress.

**Jan Barta (CZE):** Age 30, turned pro in 2005. Palmarès: 10 wins including International Week of Coppi and Bartali 2012. This season: 1 win; 2nd in Czech Cycling Tour. This versatile rider, a four-time Czech Republic Time Trial Champion, was confined to the third tier of international pro cycling for years, but is in the midst of a career renaissance. He was third in the final TT of the 2014 Tour de France, and was once again a key factor in the Grande Boucle this past July.

### DRAPAC PRO CYCLING (AUS)

A fixture on the North American circuit, where the bulk of their racing calendar is concentrated, Drapac—only the second Australian team in the world pro ranks—is dedicated to grooming young talents as well as giving less successful veterans an opportunity to reboot their career. Invited to the Québec City and Montréal GPs for the first time, they'll be looking for results from Dutchman Wouter Wippert. Founded in: 2004. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 8

### RIDERS TO WATCH

**William Clarke (AUS):** Age 30, turned pro in 2008. Palmarès: 6 wins including Stage 2, Tour Down Under 2012. This season: 1 win, Sun Tour prologue. A solid *rouleur* specialized in prologues, this Australian rode with European teams before heading back home in 2014 to join a team that is benefiting from his experience.

**Wouter Wippert (NED):** Age 25, turned pro in 2013. Palmarès: 13 wins including Stage 6 Tour Down Under 2015. This season: 5 wins including 2 stages of the Tour of Korea. Dutchman Wippert is the only member of the Drapac team to notch a WorldTour-level win this year, and he did it on Australian soil in the Tour Down Under (which kicks off the season every January). This talented sprinter is moving up to the élite level next season, to a spot with Cannondale-Garmin.

## TEAM EUROPCAR (FRA)

One can't think of this French team, which includes Québec-born Antoine Duchesne (busy this year riding the Vuelta, his first Grand Tour), without thinking of figurehead Thomas Voeckler. Unfortunately, manager Jean-René Bernaudeau is still looking for a rescue sponsor to step in for vehicle-rental giant Europcar in time for 2016. And while high-profile racers like Rolland and Gautier have secured saddles elsewhere for next season, the rest of the team is anxiously waiting for news. Founded in: 2000. Wins in 2015 (as of Aug. 23): 9

### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Thomas Voeckler (FRA):** Age 36, turned pro in 2001. Palmarès: 46 wins including French National Championships 2004 and 2010, GP de Plouay 2007 and Québec City GP 2010. This season: 3rd in Tour du Yorkshire. Though he's been without a win for a full two years now, the man from Alsace continues to battle it out at the highest level. Famous for having worn yellow for ten days in the 2004 and 2011 Tours de France, Voeckler was also the very first winner of the Québec City GP in 2010. Despite suffering two collarbone breaks last year, he says he's not the least bit fatigued, and still wants to be part of the pro peloton in 2016.

**Bryan Coquard (FRA):** Age 23, turned pro in 2013. Palmarès: 15 wins including Châteauroux Classic 2013, Paris-Camembert 2014. This season: 4 wins including 2 stages of the Route du Sud; 2nd in 4 Days of Dunkerque. After turning heads with a Silver Medal in the Omnium at the 2012 Olympic Games, this speedster from Nantes has lived up to his potential. The winner of the 2013 Challenge Sprint Pro in Québec City already has 15 victories in just three years with the pros. And he's had a banner season this year, with a Track World Championships title and a 2nd-place finish on the Champs-Élysées to conclude the Tour de France.

## TEAM CANADA

Managed this year by Kevin Field, the Canadian National Team, featuring riders recruited from teams on the Continental circuit (the third tier of international pro cycling), boasts its share of assets. The country is steadily raising its profile on the world stage, and for the first time in decades will be sending a six-man team to the upcoming Road World Championships.

### RIDERS TO WATCH

**Guillaume Boivin:** Age 26, turned pro in 2010. Palmarès: 6 wins including Canadian Championships 2015. This season: 2 wins; 3rd in GP de Saguenay. After two seasons in the top flight with Cannondale, the Montrealer hooked up with U.S. squad Optum at the beginning of this year, and enjoyed a very good early-season run, culminating in a national championship. After some time off in July, he got back in the saddle for the Tour of Colorado.

**Michael Woods:** Age 28, turned pro in 2013. Palmarès: 3 wins including Stage 5, Tour of Utah 2015. This season: 3 wins; 2nd in Philadelphia Classic, 2nd in Tour of Utah. This Ottawa-born climber was so brilliant this season, especially in the Tour of Utah, that he convinced the Cannondale-Garmin braintrust to offer him a two-year contract. Before he joins the ranks of the élite, he'll race in front of the home crowd, where he could well put on a show.

### ABOUT THE GRANDS PRIX CYCLISTES DE QUÉBEC DE MONTRÉAL

The **Grands Prix Cyclistes de Québec et de Montréal**, the only two spots on the UCI WorldTour in America, contribute to fulfilling one of the primary objectives of the UCI WorldTour: the globalization of élite cycling. These tour stops join the list of existing, officially sanctioned events in Europe, Oceania and Asia. Since 2010, the organization has been responsible for the planning and the conduct of the GPCQM and counts on the invaluable support of public and private partners to maintain its standards: the government of Canada, the government of Québec, the city of Québec, the city of Montréal, the National Battlefields Commission, the Québec Tourism Bureau, Montréal Tourism, Québecor, Air Transat, and TVA Sports (official GPCQM broadcaster).

### ABOUT THE UCI

The International Cycling Union (UCI) is the international federation of cycling, recognized by the International Olympic Committee (ICO). The UCI oversees the worldwide management and promotion of the eight disciplines of cycling.

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**SOURCE:** Grands Prix Cyclistes de Québec et de Montréal

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