



THE STARTING TEAMS AT THE 2012 QUÉBEC CITY AND MONTRÉAL GRANDS PRIX CYCLISTES

I- PROTEAMS (18)

AG2R–LA MONDIALE (FRANCE)

The team managed by Vincent Lavenu is the oldest France-based squad in the peloton. Though suffering from a chronic lack of victories, it has by and large succeeded in posting good results in the general classification of stage races. Ag2r will be without leaders Nicolas Roche and Jean-Christophe Péraud in Canada, but will be able to count on Swiss sprintmeister Martin Elmiger and some younger talents.

Founded in: 1992

2012 wins: 4 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Martin ELMIGER (Switzerland): Age 33, turned professional in 2001

Palmarès: 12 wins including 2010 Four Days of Dunkirk

This season: 3rd in the Swiss National Time Trial Championships

Ag2r–La Mondiale’s road captain (who’ll depart next season for newly minted Swiss team IAM Cycling) has often displayed his qualities as a finisher in the closing moments of the more selective races on the World Tour. He’ll be the most experienced of the riders the team is sending to Québec City and Montréal.

Romain BARDET (France): Age 21, turned professional in 2012

Palmarès: —

This season: 5th in the Tour of Turkey

One of the most promising French racers of his generation. In this, his first year as a pro, he's already become comfortable in the peloton and logged some impressive results. Look for him to hone his climbing skills even more in the future.

ASTANA (KAZAKHSTAN)

The Kazakhstan-based team was created by and for Alexandre Vinokourov, the country's star rider (and winner of the road race at the London Olympics only a few weeks ago). It bears the name of the nation's capital, is financed by an oil conglomerate, and has shone at the elite level of world cycling for five years now. After having made room for both Alberto Contador and Lance Armstrong in 2009, Astana now looks to the post-Vinokourov era (he'll move into a manager role), with Italian Vincenzo Nibali signed on for the next two seasons.

Founded in: 2007

2012 wins (as of August 14): 16

RIDERS TO WATCH

Janez BRAJKOVIC (Slovenia): Age 28, turned professional in 2005

Palmarès: 8 wins including 2010 Critérium du Dauphiné

This season: won Stage 3 of the Volta a Catalunya, won the Tour of Slovenia and finished 8th in the Tour de France

A versatile racer, the pint-sized Slovenian, who re-joined Astana this season, has built his reputation mostly on stage races with mountainous terrain. He's often among the top finishers, but rarely wins.

Maxim IGLINSKIY (Kazakhstan): Age 31, turned professional in 2004

Palmarès: 10 wins including Liège-Bastogne-Liège 2012

This season: won Liège-Bastogne-Liège, came 2nd in the Strade Bianche

An acclaimed *puncheur*, the Kazakh hit his career peak so far by winning Liège-Bastogne-Liège, *La Doyenne*, the oldest of the Classics, this past spring. It was a fine reward for this rider who specializes in one-day races.

BMC RACING TEAM (SWITZERLAND)

BMC is backed by a Swiss cycling brand and owned by Andy Rihs, a rich Swiss entrepreneur. With new arrivals Belgian Philippe Gilbert, who won last year in Québec City, and Norway's Thor Hushovd, expectations were high for the squad this season. But like Cadel Evans, who was unable to duplicate his success in the Tour de France, the members haven't lived up to their potential, and results have been slow in coming. BMC has something to prove in Québec City

and Montréal.

Founded in: 2007

2012 wins: 13 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Cadel EVANS (Australia): Age 35, turned professional in 2001

Palmarès: 30 wins including 2009 World Championships, 2011 Tour de France

This season: 3 wins including the Critérium International, 7th in the Tour de France

After a Tour de France in which he was never able to contend with eventual winner Bradley Wiggins and saw the podium recede from view little by little, the Australian comes to Canada looking to reboot his season, and will be one of the star attractions in this year's races. He'll be a legitimate podium threat and, with the World Championships just two weeks away, is eager for a test.

Greg VAN AVERMAET (Belgium): Age 27, turned professional in 2006

Palmarès: 13 wins including a Vuelta a España stage in 2009 and Paris-Tours 2011

This season: came 4th in the Tour of Flanders

Pedaling in the shadow of Tom Boonen and Philippe Gilbert, this Flemish rider is a true Classics specialist, equally at home on cobbles and hilly courses. His triumph last year in the Paris-Tours race thrust him a bit further into the spotlight; now he needs to affirm his status.

FDJ-BIGMAT (FRANCE)

The team managed by Marc Madiot, a two-time winner of Paris-Roubaix, made it back into the WorldTour ranks this season, where it has benefited from the emergence of a new generation of riders, led by Thibaut Pinot, who finished 10th in the Tour de France at age 22. After many years focused on the Classics, the French squad now enjoys success in all types of races.

Founded in: 1997

2012 wins: 21 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Sandy CASAR (France): Age 33, turned professional in 2000

Palmarès: 8 wins including three Tour de France stages (2007, 2009, 2010)

This season: came 4th in the Tour of Oman

This Parisian has been exceptionally loyal, having ridden exclusively in the clover-branded jersey since his first season as a pro, twelve years ago. Hyped as France's great hope, he's become known mostly for great moments, including in the Tour de France (3 stage wins). On a good day, he remains a ferocious attacker.

Pierrick FEDRIGO (France): Age 32, turned professional in 2000

Palmarès: 23 wins including four Tour de France stages (2006, 2009, 2010 and 2012)

This season: has 2 wins including Stage 15 of the Tour de France, came 2nd in the Critérium International

Sidelined for almost the entire 2011 season by a bout of Lyme disease, the Frenchman got back on track here in Canada, finishing second in the Montréal GP. Now totally recovered and re-energized, he put his qualities as a *puncheur* to superb use at Pau this past July, riding to a fourth career Tour de France stage win.

TEAM GARMIN-SHARP (UNITED STATES)

Built by Jonathan Vaughters, a former teammate of Lance Armstrong, Garmin got Bradley Wiggins noticed in the Tour de France with a fourth-place finish in 2009, but really came into its own when it carried Canada's Ryder Hesjedal to victory in this year's Giro d'Italia. It was the greatest victory yet in the seven-year history of the team, which also boasts Belgium's Sep Vanmarcke, a rising talent to watch in the Classics.

Founded in: 2005

2012 wins: 19 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Ryder HESJEDAL (Canada): Age 31, turned professional in 2003

Palmarès: 4 wins including the 2012 Giro d'Italia

This season: won the Giro d'Italia

The lanky climber from Victoria can look forward to a hero's welcome in Québec City as well as Montréal. The first Canadian to win a Grand Tour, Hesjedal created a massive sensation in Italy this past May and looked set to continue his winning ways in the Tour de France until a nasty crash put him out of the running.

Heinrich HAUSSLER (Australia): Age 28, turned professional in 2005

Palmarès: 19 wins including a Vuelta a España stage in 2005 and a Tour de France stage in 2009

This season: came 4th in the Omloop Het Nieuwsblad

Born in Australia but raised in Germany, Haussler eventually chose to ride for the country of his birth, and has worn its colours since 2010. He has tailed off somewhat from an extremely promising début that saw him do well in sprints and in the Classics, but can still crank out a lovely speed burst.

ORICA-GREENEDGE (AUSTRALIA)

Australia's very first international-level team came into being last winter, the culmination of a huge project shouldered by Shayne Bannan, a high-profile cycling coach, administrator and manager Down Under. The squad, a blend of best Australia's best road racers (that is, if you don't count Cadel Evans) and athletes from nine other countries, has been sponsored since May 2012 by Orica, a leading provider of explosives for the mining industry.

Founded in: 2012 2012 wins: 23 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Stuart O'GRADY (Australia): Age 39, turned professional in 1995

Palmarès: 33 wins including 2 Tour de France stages (1998 and 2004) and the Paris-Roubaix 2006

This season: came 6th at the London Summer Olympics

At nearly 40 years of age, O'Grady is one of the veterans of the peloton. Trained as a track cyclist, the Australian spent the first 10 years of his career with France-based teams before notching his greatest and most emotional victory, crossing the line first in the 2007 Paris-Roubaix in a Team CSC jersey. Soon after the GreenEDGE project was announced, this much-appreciated road captain decided to stay in the saddle for another season.

Simon GERRANS (Australia): Age 32, turned professional in 2003

Palmarès: 19 wins including one Tour de France stage (2008) and Milan–San Remo 2012

This season: has 3 wins including the Tour Down Under and Milan–San Remo

This Australian was the key man for his new team as it got its season off to a successful start: he finished first overall in the Tour Down Under before a home crowd, and then skilfully outpaced Fabian Cancellara in the final sprint at Milan–San Remo. An excellent *puncheur*, Gerrans has the distinction of having won a stage on each of the three Grand Tours.

KATUSHA TEAM (RUSSIA)

Enthusiastically backed by the Kremlin upon its inception, the Russian squad has the benefit of a huge budget, even if the majority of its successes have come thanks to Spanish riders. And indeed, they'll be counting mainly on sprint specialist Oscar Freire in these Canadian races.

Founded in: 2009 2012 wins: 22 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Oscar FREIRE (Spain): Age 36, turned professional in 1998

Palmarès: 74 wins including three World Championships (1999, 2001 and 2004)

This season: has 2 wins, came 4th in both Gent-Wevelgem and the Amstel Gold Race

This year, the Spanish speedster has chosen Canada to warm up for the World Championships in Valkenburg, Netherlands on September 23, where he'll be after a record fourth title. Although his top speed isn't what it once was, Freire remains a finisher to be reckoned with.

Luca PAOLINI (Italy): Age 35, turned professional in 2000

Palmarès: 18 wins including a Vuelta a España stage in 2006

This season: came 7th in the Ronde Van Vlaanderen, 9th at the Olympics

A former support rider to the great Paolo Bettini and the Bronze Medalist at the World Championships in 2004, the Milan-born Paolini's palmarès includes plenty of top-ten finishes in the Classics. Skilled, experienced and quick in a small group, he's still capable of surprising, even though he hasn't won a race in the past three years.

EUSKALTEL-EUSKADI (SPAIN)

One of the oldest ProTeams, Euskaltel-Euskadi has traditionally hired Spanish and French riders from the Basque regions. Logically enough, stars Samuel Sanchez and Igor Anton will be busy at the Tour of Spain (winding up on the same weekend as the Québec City and Montréal GPs), so the contingent will count on *puncheurs* like Mikel Nieve and Ion Izagirre. The team has announced a big budget, and big ambitions, for 2013.

Founded in: 1994

2012 wins: 7 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Mikel NIEVE (Spain): Age 28, turned professional in 2008

Palmarès: 2 wins including a Vuelta a España stage in 2010 and a Giro d'Italia stage in 2011

This season: 10th in the Giro d'Italia, 5th in the Tour of Switzerland

A superb climber who regularly shines on the Grand Tours, Nieve is also very much at ease on hilly one-day races, so he'll be a man to watch, especially in Québec City.

Ion IZAGIRRE (Spain): Age 23, turned professional in 2010

Palmarès: 2 wins including a Giro d'Italia stage in 2012

This season: 2 wins, 7th in the Tour of Poland

Ion Izagirre is one of the revelations of the Basque team, where he rides with his elder brother Gorka, who's also entered in the Canadian races. He's been very consistent this year, delivering strong performances all season—notably a memorable stage victory in the Dolomites during the Tour of Italy.

LAMPRE-ISD (ITALY)

Managed by former champion Giuseppe Saronni, this Italian team has depth and versatility with the likes of sprint specialist Alessandro Petacchi, *puncheur* Damiano Cunego and mountain man Michele Scarponi. While results have been hard to come by this season, young Diego Ulissi, who'll be racing in Canada, has shown promising talent.

Founded in: 1991 2012 wins: 6 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Grega BOLE (Slovenia): Age 27, turned professional in 2005
Palmarès: 12 wins including 2011 GP Ouest-France de Plouay
This season: 2nd in a Paris-Nice stage

After first attracting attention with a win in Stage 1 of the 2010 Critérium du Dauphiné, this Slovenian rider solidified his reputation the following year with a convincing victory in the GP de Plouay. But he hasn't been as sharp this season, and will have to ride hard to make headlines in Canada.

Daniele RIGHI (Italy): Age 36, turned professional in 2000
Palmarès: —
This season: 50th in the Tour of Slovenia

The Tuscany native is among the more appreciated lieutenants in the Italy-based team. Though he has no race wins to his credit, he has consistently been a reliable support rider for his team leaders, notably on the Grand Tours, where he's competed on a total of 14 occasions, including 5 times in the Tour de France.

LIQUIGAS-CANNONDALE (ITALY)

Currently running second to Sky Procycling in the WorldTour rankings, this Italian squad is one of the most exciting on the peloton, boasting a well-armed, all-terrain strike force that includes Vincenzo Nibali, who finished third in this year's Tour de France, as well as prodigy Peter Sagan—eagerly awaited on the Canadian courses, where he'll have a chance to add to his wins total.

Founded in: 2005

2012 wins: 34 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Peter SAGAN (Slovakia): Age 22, turned professional in 2009
Palmarès: 39 wins including three 2012 Tour de France stages
This season: 16 wins, green jersey in the 2012 Tour de France

His two stage wins in the 2010 running of Paris-Nice heralded the arrival of a phenomenon. Since then, the Slovak has largely confirmed that early promise, emerging as one of the stars of the peloton at just 22 years old. Winner of the green jersey (points classification) in his first Tour de France earlier this year, he has an uncommonly quick speed burst and is a threat on just about any type of terrain.

Moreno MOSER (Italy): Age 21, turned professional in 2012
Palmarès: 5 wins including 2012 Tour of Poland
This season: 5 wins, 3rd in the Italian National Road Race Championships

The nephew of Francesco Moser, winner of the 1984 Giro, this Italian is one of the rising stars of the peloton, having notched five wins in his first year as a pro, including the challenging Tour of Poland. He's a *puncheur* with a bright future.

LOTTO-BELISOL (BELGIQUE)

Boasting the longest-standing sponsor of all teams in the pro peloton, the squad managed by Marc Sergeant is an institution in Belgium. With OmegaPharma departing over the winter and Philippe Gilbert leaving for BMC Racing, the Belgian national lottery found a new co-sponsor and retooled its roster around André Greipel and Jurgen Van den Broeck (fourth overall in this year's Tour de France). In Canada, Lotto is pinning its hopes on Jürgen Roelandts, who finished fourth in Montréal last year.

Founded in: 1985

2012 wins: 21 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Jürgen ROELANDTS (Belgium): Age 27, turned professional in 2004
Palmarès: 6 wins including 2008 Belgian Road Race Championships
This season: 1 win (stage of the Tour du Luxembourg), 7th at the Olympic Games

When he became Belgium's National Road Race Champion at age 23, the spotlight was suddenly on Jürgen Roelandts. Since then, he hasn't quite lived up to that early potential, but remains a man to watch in one-day races: he came fourth in the 2011 Montréal GP and 5th in the World

Championships the same year. He's still looking for that first major title to add to his palmarès.

Jelle VANENDERT (Belgium): Age 27, turned professional in 2005

Palmarès: 2 wins including a 2011 Tour de France stage

This season: 2nd in the Amstel Gold Race, 4th in the Flèche Wallonne

Vanendert's career was off track for a long time due to the after-effects of a violent crash during the 2008 Critérium du Dauphiné Libéré. He finally bounced back in 2011, behind his team leader and friend Philippe Gilbert; among other impressive performances, he won a mountain stage of that year's Tour de France, in the Pyrénées. Earlier this year, he rode strongly in the Ardennes Classics.

MOVISTAR TEAM (SPAIN)

Movistar, which evolved out of Banesto, a 1990s team that included the great Miguel Indurain, is the biggest of the Spanish teams, and this year welcomed back Alejandro Valverde after a two-year suspension. Its ranks also include Portugal's Rui Costa, the winner of last year's Montréal GP (he'll be back to defend his title) and Italy's Giovanni Visconti.

Founded in: 1980

2012 wins: 24 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Rui COSTA (Portugal): Age 25, turned professional in 2008

Palmarès: 10 wins including 2011 GP de Montréal

This season: 2 wins including the Tour of Switzerland, 3rd in the Tour de Romandie

His victory in Montréal last year showed us he was truly an international-calibre road cyclist, and he's continued to prove it this season, winning the always-difficult Tour of Switzerland and turning in a solid 18th place in the Tour de France. As the seasons go by, it's becoming clear that Rui Costa can excel on any course profile.

Giovanni VISCONTI (Italy): Age 29, turned professional in 2005

Palmarès: 23 wins including 3 Italian Road Race Championships (2007, 2010, 2011)

This season: 2 wins including the Klasika Primavera

In August 2011, this Sicily native and three-time Italian national champion made the jump from the UCI Europe Tour to Spain's Movistar Team, where his temperament and qualities as an all-rounder immediately won him respect. He should find the two Canadian courses ideally suited to his profile.

OMEGA PHARMA–QUICK STEP (BELGIUM)

This team has won the most races since the start of the 2012 WorldTour season, propelled by performances like Tom Boonen's outstanding Spring Classics triple: Gent-Wevelgem, the Ronde Van Vlaanderen and Paris-Roubaix. For the Québec City and Montréal GPs, the squad managed by Patrick Lefèvre will be without the Belgian national champion, but will have plenty of talent on show including the likes of Sylvain Chavanel, Peter Velits, Dries Devenyns and Gerald Ciolek.

Founded in: 2003

2012 wins: 41 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Sylvain CHAVANEL (France): Age 33, turned professional in 2000

Palmarès: 32 wins including 3 Tour de France stages (2009, 2 in 2010)

This season: 3 wins including the French National Time Trial Championships

Along with Thomas Voeckler, he's the outstanding French rider of recent years. He was forced to abandon the Tour de France because of illness and was disappointed with his performance at the Olympics, but otherwise has been turning in some fine late-season rides, including a second-place finish in the Eneco Tour.

Peter VELITS (Slovakia): Age 27, turned professional in 2004

Palmarès: 9 wins including a 2010 Vuelta à España stage (2nd in the general classification)

This season: 2 wins including the Tour of Oman

Second overall in the 2010 Tour of Spain, the Slovak had high hopes for this year's Tour de France. He was ill throughout the early stages, however, and unable to ride to the best of his abilities, finishing 27th overall. He'll be looking to redeem himself in these late-season contests.

RABOBANK (NETHERLANDS)

The Dutch team has enjoyed the support of the same banking group as title sponsor for sixteen years now, and has been a fixture in the top flight of the UCI the entire time. Although climbers Robert Gesink (second in Québec City last year) and Bauke Mollema are currently busy riding in the Tour of Spain, the team is once again bringing a strong squad to Canada, notably featuring Spain's Luis Leon Sanchez and the latest homegrown sensation, Steven Kruijswijk.

Founded in: 1996

2012 wins: 20 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Luis Leon SANCHEZ (Spain): Age 28, turned professional in 2004

Palmarès: 30 wins including 4 Tour de France stages (2008, 2009, 2011, 2012) and 2 Clásica de San Sebastián stages (2010, 2012)

This season: 7 wins including 1 Paris-Nice stage, 1 Tour de France stage and the Clásica de San Sebastián

Sanchez is among the very best racers on the planet, but has yet to make the general classification in Grand Tours a priority. He's built his reputation by winning one-day races as well as stages, including in the Tour de France (where he has 4 stage wins). He comes to Québec City and Montréal as a clear favourite, having just won the Clásica de San Sebastián for the second time in his career.

Steven KRUIJSWIJK (Pays-Bas): Age 25, turned professional in 2006

Palmarès: 1 win (stage in 2011 Tour of Switzerland), 8th overall in 2011 Giro d'Italia. This season: 8th in the Tour of Switzerland

After Robert Gesink and Bauke Mollema, Kruijswijk is the third climbing specialist to emerge from the ranks of Rabobank's U23 team. He first came to prominence in the 2011 Tour of Italy, among other races, and competed in the Tour de France for the first time this past July. Though he was a support rider, he finished a respectable 33rd overall. A rider to watch in the future.

RADIOSHACK-NISSAN (LUXEMBOURG)

The merger of RadioShack with Luxembourg-based Leopard Trek was supposed to make this team—managed by Johan Bruyneel (Lance Armstrong's one-time mentor)—into the top armada of the 2012 peloton. But aside from Fabian Cancellara's eight days in yellow during the Tour de France, it's been extremely rough going for RadioShack-Nissan this season: Frank Schleck tested positive for a banned substance in July, and his brother Andy has had ongoing injury troubles.

Founded in: 2011

2012 wins: 12

RIDERS TO WATCH

Andy SCHLECK (Luxembourg): Age 27, turned professional in 2005

Palmarès: 11 wins including 2010 Tour de France

This season: —

It's been a rough season for the Luxembourgish star: he was hampered by illness and knee problems early on, and hasn't competed since a pelvic fracture sustained in a heavy crash during the Critérium du Dauphiné forced him to give up his Tour de France ambitions. He'll be trying to get his bearings in the two Canadian events (where he'll be competing for the first time), after which he'll make a decision about the rest of his season.

Chris HORNER (United States): Age 41, turned professional in 1995
Palmarès: 20 wins including 2011 Tour of California, 10th in 2010 Tour de France
This season: 2nd in the Tirreno-Adriatico, 13th in the Tour de France

Along with teammate Jens Voigt, Horner is one of the veterans of the peloton, and only seems to improve with age. After many years spent focussed on the North American racing calendar, he's been riding the élite European circuit for only a few seasons, but has really been at home there, showing great consistency.

SKY PROCYCLING (GREAT BRITAIN)

In just its third season, the British-based team has risen to number one in the world, after the fashion of its leader, Bradley Wiggins, this year's Tour de France champion. The Grande Boucle also put the spotlight on another Sky team member, Chris Froome, but he's currently riding the Tour of Spain (in which he finished second last year)—so Sky will be counting on a group led by Welshman Geraint Thomas, a member of Great Britain's Olympic Gold Medal Team Pursuit quartet.

Founded in: 2010 2012 wins: 41 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Geraint THOMAS (Great Britain): Age 26, turned professional in 2007
Palmarès: 3 wins including 2011 Tour of Bavaria, two-time Olympic Gold Medalist (2008 and 2012) and three-time World Champion, team pursuit (2007, 2008) This season: 1 win, Tour de Romandie prologue

This young prodigy's focus this year has mostly been the Olympic Games—and it paid off with his second consecutive Gold Medal in the Team Pursuit. In his first time riding the Tour de France in 2011, the Welshman cut a fine figure. He plans to devote himself full-time to road racing from now on.

Lars-Petter NORDHAUG (Norway): Age 28, turned professional in 2005
Palmarès: 4 wins including 2006 Norwegian National Road Racing Championships
This season: 1 win (Trofeo Deià), 6th in Vuelta Ciclista al País Vasco

This solid competitor is headed for Rabobank next season, where management is placing a lot of trust in him. A well-rounded cyclist who excels on hilly courses, he cranked things up a notch early this season, with strong attacks in the Ardennes Classics.

TEAM SAXO BANK–TINKOFF BANK (DENMARK)

The team managed by Bjarne Riis has finally turned the page now that Alberto Contador is back in the saddle after his two-year suspension, which cost him the first six months of the 2012 season. That's good news for the Danish boss, for without the Spaniard in the lead role, his squad has had a hard time. With Russian magnate Oleg Tinkoff now in the picture, this contingent will get a big budget boost next year.

Founded in: 1998

2012 wins: 4 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Nick NUYENS (Belgium): Age 32, turned professional in 2003
Palmarès: 20 wins including 2011 Ronde Van Vlaanderen
This season: 12th in the Eneco Tour

After a nasty fall kept him out of the 2012 Spring Classics—including the Tour of Flanders, which he had won so brilliantly the year before—the Belgian has regained his form in time for the second half of the season, and will be looking to improve his ranking.

Chris-Anker SØRENSEN (Denmark): Age 28, turned professional in 2005
Palmarès: 5 wins including a 2010 Giro d'Italia stage
This season: 14th in the Tour de France

This Dane won respect for his courage in this year's Tour de France: he was named the winner of super-combativity award after finishing 14th overall with several sutures on two fingers of his left hand. A fine climber, he first attracted attention in the 2008 Critérium du Dauphiné. Sørensen has been steadily rising through the ranks, and hopes to become a top-ten man in the Grand Tours.

II- INVITED CONTINENTAL PRO TEAMS (3)

COFIDIS (FRANCE)

Sixteen years of ups and downs for this team haven't discouraged Groupe Cofidis, which earlier this year extended its title sponsorship for a further three years. Disappointed by a lack of results, the team's directors decided to replace sports manager Eric Boyer just before the Tour de France, appointing Yvon Sanquer in his stead. They'll try to regroup next season with a mostly new ridership.

Founded in: 1996

2012 wins: 6 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Samuel DUMOULIN (France): Age 32, turned professional in 2002

Palmarès: 28 wins including a 2008 Tour de France stage

This season: 1 win (GP La Marseillaise)

A lightning-fast force to be reckoned with on uphill finishes, Dumoulin has some of the best career results among active French riders. Though he's one of the more compact men in the peloton at 1.58 m (5 ft 3 in), what he lacks in size he largely makes up for in mental fortitude. After five years with Cofidis, he's signed with Ag2r-La Mondiale for the next two seasons.

Rein TAARAMAE (Estonia): Age 25, turned professional in 2008

Palmarès: 7 wins including a 2011 Vuelta a España stage

This season: 2nd in the Vuelta a Andalucía

Sidelined by a bout with mononucleosis as well as a bad crash, the Estonian was unable to capitalize on the strong form he showed early this season. But at just 25 years of age, the 12th-place finisher in the 2011 Tour de France remains one of the most promising racers of his generation.

TEAM EUROPCAR (FRANCE)

Over the past two years, this bleu-blanc-rouge contingent managed by Jean-René Bernaudeau has given their compatriots plenty to cheer about during the Tour de France. After wearing the yellow jersey for a memorable ten days in 2011, Thomas Voeckler won two stages of this year's Grande Boucle and took the polka dot jersey as best climber, while teammate Pierre Rolland won Stage 11 at La Toussuire, in the Alps, on his way to an 8th place in the final standings. But the team has no intention of stopping there. . .

Founded in: 2000

2012 wins: 19 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Thomas VOECKLER (France): Age 33, turned professional in 2001

Palmarès: 37 wins including 4 Tour de France stages (2009, 2010, 2 in 2012), 2010 GP de Québec, 4th in 2011 Tour de France

This season: 4 wins including 2 Tour de France stages, 4th in Liège-Bastogne-Liège

In winning the first-ever running of the Québec City GP in 2010, France's top rider once again won acclaim for his superlative race smarts. This year, he's on record as saying that Québec City

and Montréal will be decisive steps on the road to the World Championships, where he has huge ambitions. Expect him to be a serious contender in both Canadian races.

Anthony CHARTEAU (France): Age 33, turned professional in 2001

Palmarès: 9 wins, King of the Mountains in 2010 Tour de France

This season: 1 win (La Tropicale Amissa Bongo)

A close ally of Thomas Voeckler, Charteau has also shown himself to be a model team rider for Europcar. So when he was kept off this year's Tour de France squad, it was a slap in the face—and particularly hard to take given that he'd won the polka dot jersey as the Tour's best climber in 2010. He hopes to put all that behind him and finish the season strongly.

SPIDERTECH POWERED BY C10 (CANADA)

The Canadian squad managed by Steve Bauer continues to make inroads, receiving more and more invitations from European race organizers—and its riders have been posting solid results, including Ryan Roth (who won this year's Tro-Bro Léon) and sprinter Guillaume Boivin. And its future seems secure with young hopefuls of the calibre of David Boily, who was second in the 2011 Tour de l'Avenir.

Founded in: 2008

2012 wins: 3 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Ryan ROTH (Canada): Age 29, turned professional in 2002

Palmarès: 4 wins including 2012 Canadian Road Race Championships

This season: 2 wins including the Tro-Bro Léon, 8th in the Tour de Beauce

With his triumph on the cobblestones and gravel of Brittany's Tro-Bro Léon, part of the French Road Cycling Cup, Roth created quite the sensation this past April. Two months later, he proved his superior physical condition by winning the Canadian championship. An excellent all-rounder, he's the key man on this Canadian team.

François PARISIEN (Canada): Age 30, turned professional in 2006

Palmarès: 3 wins including a 2010 Vuelta a Mexico stage

This season: 1 win (Tour of Elk Grove)

Another rider who has been part of Steve Bauer's adventure since the beginning, Parisien is a solid asset who this year tasted victory in the Tour of Elk Grove, a stage race on the USA Cycling National Racing Calendar. He won the 2005 Canadian National Road Race Championships while still an amateur racing with a French team (US Montauban), and is now one of SpiderTech's most experienced riders.

VACANSOLEIL-DCM (NETHERLANDS)

Early in its second season on the UCI World Tour, the Dutch contingent has posted some eye-opening results, thanks in part to Lieuwe Westra (second in Paris-Nice) and the revelation of the Tour of Italy, Thomas De Gendt (he won the queen stage and finished third overall). The team has been short on victories during the summer, though, and will be sending their Classics unit to Canada, looking to rebound.

Founded in: 2005

2012 wins: 12 (as of August 14)

RIDERS TO WATCH

Björn LEUKEMANS (Belgium): Age 35, turned professional in 2000

Palmarès: 9 including 2011 Tour du Limousin, 4th in 2007 Paris-Roubaix

This season: 14th in the Ronde Van Vlaanderen

This cobbled classics specialist has had his share of bad luck during his career, but a major victory always seems right around the corner. He's kept a lower profile this year after showing great consistency in the spring of 2011 (7th in the Tour of Flanders, 9th in Liège-Bastogne-Liège) as well as late in the season, when he finished 6th on the difficult Québec City course.

Johnny HOOGERLAND (Netherlands): Age 31, turned professional in 2000

Palmarès: 2 wins including a 2007 Okolo Slovenska stage

This season: 5th in the Tirreno-Adriatico

A tenacious competitor whose palmarès is a bit short on victories, the Dutchman unwillingly gained fame in the 2011 Tour de France: as he rode in a breakaway and appeared headed for a stage win, a TV car sideswiped the rider beside him, sending him flying into a barbed-wire fence. He received the combativity award for the day and finished the Tour, but his legs still bear the scars of that gruesome day.

II- INVITED NATIONAL TEAM (1) – Québec CITY ONLY

ÉQUIPE NATIONALE DU CANADA (CANADA)

The Canadian National Road Cycling team will make its second appearance at the Grand Prix Cyclistes de Québec in 2012, after sitting out 2011. The team led by Directeur Sportif Phil Cortes, Head Coach Gord Fraser and Team Leader Luc Arseneau will be a consortium of top Canadian riders from various continental teams, such as Garneau-Québecor, Optum-Kelly Benefits, Jelly-Belly Pro Cycling and Team H&R Block.

The Canadian National Road Cycling team is under the umbrella of Cycling Canada, the governing body for competitive cycling in Canada.

Founded in: 1882 2012 wins: N/A

RIDERS TO WATCH

Sebastien SALAS (Canada): Age 25, turned professional in 2012

Palmarès: Boasts six Top-10 results in his first season as a professional cyclist, including sixth places at Canadian Road Championships and 2012 Tour de Beauce.

This season: Won the King of the Mountain jersey at the Amgen Tour of California

Salas, in his first season as a professional cyclist, went on to deliver an exceptional performance at the Amgen Tour of California, winning the prestigious King of the Mountain Jersey. A late bloomer in cycling and up-hill runner, Salas has been turning heads all season long with notable performance at the 2012 Tour de Beauce, the 2012 Canadian Road Championships, and the 2012 Amgen Tour of California, where he delivered his break-through performance.

Remi PELLETIER-ROY (Canada): Age 22, not yet Professional cyclists

Palmarès: Last year, he won the Challenge Sprint Canada last year and moved up to the semis in the Challenge Sprint Pro. In 2011, he won the Time Trial race at the Québec Provincial Championships.

This season: Third in the U23 Canadian Road Championships time Trial and ninth overall, as well as fifth in the Road Race.

Rémi Pelletier-Roy started his career as a track cyclist, where he rode to the 2010 National title in the Team Pursuit. That same year, he was part of the team that broke the Canadian record in Team Pursuit at a UCI World Cup event in Cali, Colombia. Pelletier-Roy represented Canada in October of 2011 at the Pan-American championships in Guadalajara, Mexico, both on the track and in road events. The young up-and-coming cyclist studies Medicine at the Université Laval, in Québec city. He finished second in the Challenge Pro Sprint in 2010, and won in 2011 the Time trial race at the Quebec Provincial Championships.