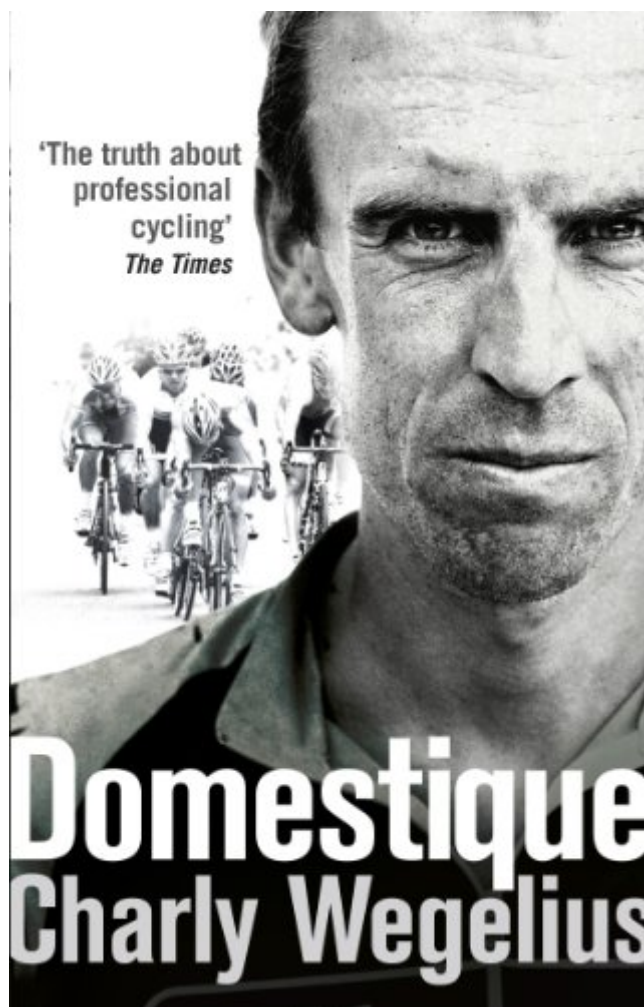


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# Domestique: The Real-life Ups And Downs Of A Tour Pro



## Synopsis

**\*\*Winner - Sweetspot Cycling Book of the Year\*\*** For 11 years I was a professional cyclist, competing in the hardest and greatest races on Earth. I was in demand from the world's best teams, a well-paid elite athlete. But I never won a race. I was the hired help. When my mum dropped me off in a small French town aged 17, I was full of determination to be a professional cyclist, but I was completely green. I went from mowing the team manager's lawn to winning every amateur race I entered. Then I turned pro and realised I hated the responsibility and pressure of chasing victory. And that's when I became a domestique. I learned to take that hurt and give it everything I had to give, all for someone else's win. When the order came in to ride I pushed out with the hardest rhythm I could, dragging the group faster and faster, until my whole body screamed with pain. There were times I rode myself to a standstill, clutching the barrier metres from the line, as the lead group shot past. But that's what made me so good at my job. As my career took off, I started looking at the fans lining the route, cheering us like heroes. The passion for cycling oozed off them, but they couldn't know what it was really like. They didn't see the terrible hotels, the crazy egos or all the shit that goes with great expectations. Well, this is how it is |

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Charly Wegelius can be very very funny when he writes, but this book gives a serious view of life as a professional cyclist. There is a lot of information about how racing is done at the professional level, which is kind of unnecessary when you know about cycling, but very informative for those less knowledgeable. The main thing is that the reader can see how very difficult life is in the professional ranks, both on and off the bike. For this man to have succeeded without any "enhancements" is beautiful. He may never have actually won a race, but he is a giant winner when you consider he rode in the era of doping but did so clean - a bigger winner than any of those cheaters who may have crossed the finish line first.

I think there is a kind of irony in the fact that the Brits are now so dominant in stage racing. They will have to abandon the outsider role that they have had for so many years in the world of pro cycling. It is this outsider status that makes Wegelius' story so compelling and his book a must read. He shows up at a French dominated team as a teenage outsider, and works his way to valued pro the hard way. He learned the hard way largely because the continentals did not take him seriously. The British on the other hand had no real clue how continental racing actually worked. Witness the incident at the World Championship when Wegelius agreed to work for a foreigner largely because his own British squad was a hopeless case for competing. He, of course, was a "criminal" for engaging in the kind of horse trading that is and has been integral to continental racing. Besides these ironies Wegelius lends useful insights for the reader who wants to get the feel of a grand tour from the inside. His description of the Vuelta since it has been scheduled in the fall is constantly with me, when I make plans to watch this year's version: a virtual afterthought on the pro calendar - full of the injured, the test cases, the has-beens and the still-standing. His description of the place of the Giro in Italian life is worth the read in itself. I ordered this book with hopes of insights on the real workhorse of the peloton can provide and I was not disappointed.

Great book! A little depressing at times, but goes a long way to show that the life of a professional athlete has as many trials and tribulations as anyone else. Especially if you're in the "second tier." I also found this very well written, which isn't always the case for sports books. A little short, though.

Most cycling fans have read the books (fictional and biographical) about Armstrong, Merx, Millar, Cavendish, Hamilton and Lemond, and they provide a view from the lofty heights of the sport. But what about the other 99% of the guys that give a race its shape and substance? Charley Wegelius

tells that story with insight and humanity. He tells it like it is and doesn't glamorize the game at all. He's honest about his own shortcomings and mistakes which one must imagine are common to many in the great army of cycling pros. He writes well and this tome is a nice complement to the books by the stars. A recommended read.

I still wonder whether a youngster who dreams of becoming a bicycle champion should read this book or not, as this memoir offers a crude and merciless vision of the reality behind the bicycling sport. Whatever, this is an entertaining and interesting read, even for non athletic cyclists [like me :-)], and offers a unique insight to the human and psychological aspects and challenges of what seems to be one of the most endeavoring sport disciplines on the planet.

This book exposes the grim, sometimes chaotic havoc behind the shiny Grand Tour races and star teams and athletes, really separating it from typical race/athlete memoirs - it's emotional and a real inside perspective to being an outsider trying to break into the peloton culture, yet without bitterness or winging. It was refreshing to read about life in the peloton from the domestique perspective - someone who selflessly races for someone else's win for the professionalism of their job and is way more than the person who fetches bottle waters from the team car that you see on TV. Read this book while following the Tour de France and seeing the commercialism, unbridled enthusiasm and strange examples of humanity surrounding the event first hand. You appreciate what those riders do day in and out so much more - they get back on their bike, even after a nasty crash, not just because they're tough, but because they have no choice. The fact that Charly succeeded on several well-known teams and clean during a time when that wasn't the norm, makes him a winner in my book. Thanks for not writing a book about doping and giving a fresh perspective to a sport we respect and are proud to be a part of. Team Charly. Highly recommend!

Great book, about life of a pro cyclist, ups and downs, hard work, pain and joy... Great explanation about what happens behind closed door of pro cycling....

An exceptional story of a high quality rider who becomes a professional but whose role is a Domestique, the guy that helps the other guys win. He really does a great job of showing the complete life of a rider: how he started, the low levels where he initially rode, acceptance on pro teams and the differences between the teams and finally, riding at the highest levels including the Tour de France. Additionally he covers life off the bike or more specifically, how he changed from

obsessed with cycling to a life off the bike and the effect this had on his career. I've read many other cycling books but I would put this at the top of the list. Really quite good that I could recommend highly for those interested in learning more about the sport in a very compelling way.

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