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The End of the Road: The Festina Affair and the Tour that Almost Wrecked Cycling

Alasdair Fotheringham

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The Tour de France is always one of the most spectacular and dramatic events in sports. But the 1998 Tour provided drama like no other. As the opening stages in Ireland unfolded, the Festina team's soigneur, Willy Voet, was arrested at the French-Belgian border with a carload of drugs. Raid upon police raid followed, with arrest after arrest hammering the Tour. In protest, there were riders' strikes and go-slows, with several squads withdrawing en masse and one expelled. By the time the Tour reached Paris, just 96 of the 189 starters remained, and of those 189 starters, more than a quarter were later reported to have doped. The 1998 ” “Tour de Farce's” status as one of the most scandal-struck sporting events in history was confirmed.

Voet's arrest was just the beginning of cycling's biggest mass doping controversy--what became known as the Festina affair. It all but destroyed professional cycling as the credibility of the entire sport was called into question, and the cycling family began to split apart even as, ironically, the 1998 Tour was also one of the best races in years.

The End of the Road is the first book in English to provide in-depth analysis and a colorful evocation of the tumultuous events of the 1998 Tour. Alasdair Fotheringham uncovers how the world's biggest bike race sank into such scandal. He explores its long-term consequences and what, if any, lessons were learned.

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