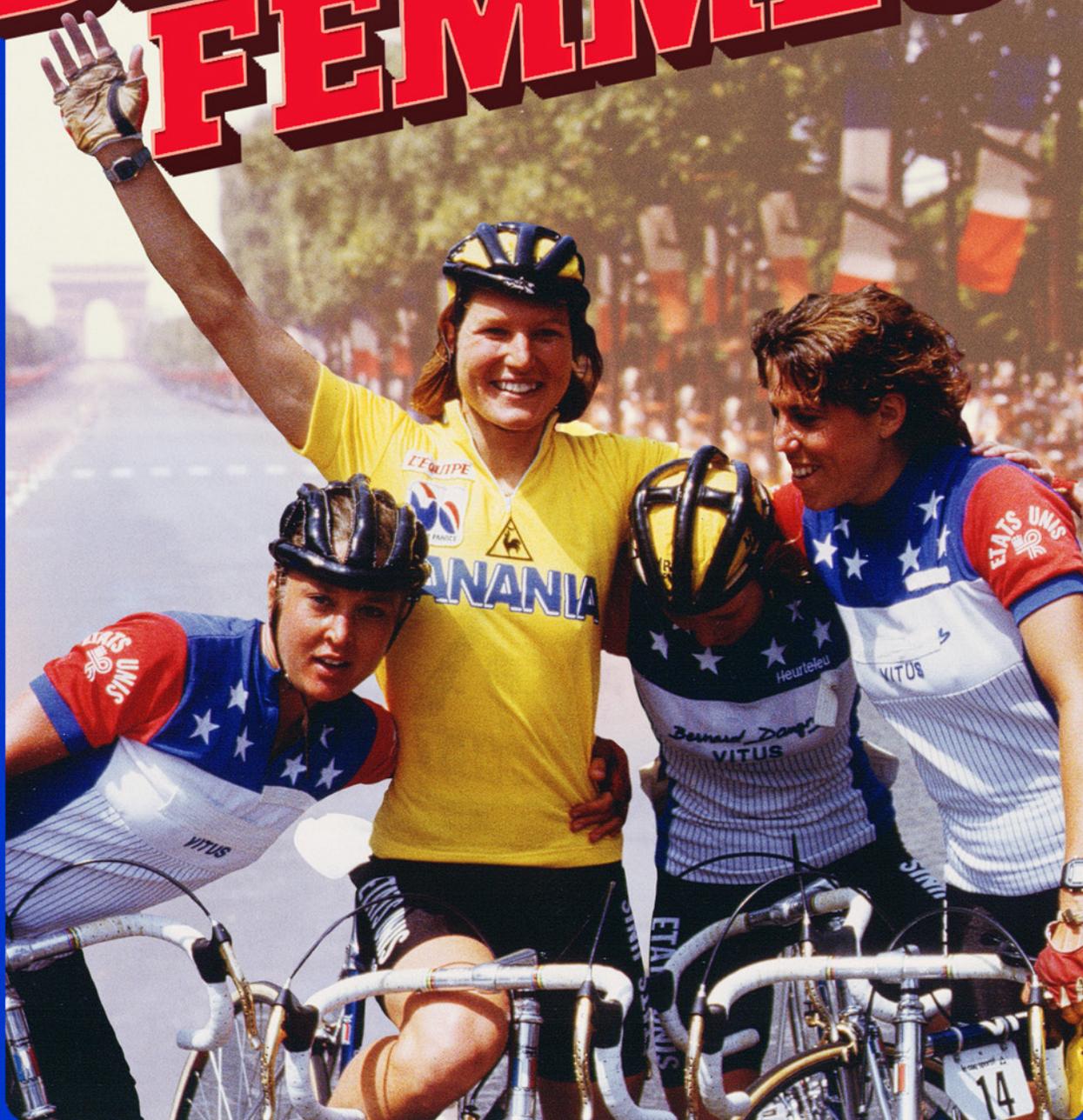


**THE WOMEN WHO CONQUERED
THE TOUR DE FRANCE**

Breakaway FEMMIES



Treatment

Written by Eleanor Sharpe

Format: Documentary Feature (90 mins) + TV cutdown (52 mins)

Distributor, film company and investor logos appear full screen. Underneath we hear atmos audio: The noise of a big outdoor crowd. A siren in the distance. An indistinct announcement over a loudspeaker in French. Distorted music with heavy bass thumping in the distance. Voices are heard chanting, *"Allez! Allez! Allez!"*

The film opens on contemporary footage of the Tour de France on Paris's world-famous boulevard, the Champs Elysée. A television helicopter flies low overhead. Support crews assemble barricades and erect signage saying, 'Tour de France 2022'. Crowds press against the barricades lining the streets. People of all demographics are dressed in garish yellow t-shirts and polka-dot hats. They wave national flags and cheer. There is a party atmosphere and a palpable sense of anticipation.

In the marshalling area, the pro cyclists are getting ready for the race. Bike tyres are inflated, and gears are adjusted. We see close ups of cycling shoes, gloves and sunglasses being donned.

It takes a moment before the reveal... These fit, professional cyclists are, in fact, female.

These young athletes look extremely fit, and supremely confident. They are surrounded by numerous support staff assisting them to get ready. Race officials cluster importantly around them. Photographers record their every move. A television crew interviews one of the riders and she confidently answers questions about her race tactics.

Off screen, we hear a television commentator begin his introductory spiel. *"Good morning, everyone and welcome to the first edition of the "Tour de France, Femmes". You are witnessing the beginning of a very special event. One that is long overdue. For the next eight days, the best female cyclists in the world will take on the greatest and most hallowed race in the world."*

We hard cut to a remote rural ranch in Oregon. A herd of cattle bellow. A woman in her mid 60s (Inga Thompson) is efficiently herding cattle through a gate into a field. She is dressed in worn jeans, a flannel shirt, and a wide brimmed hat. Her face is lined, and her hair is scraped back into a practical ponytail. She looks utterly at home in her environment, like she has been working on the ranch her entire life.

She speaks with a mid-western American accent, *"When they announced that there was going to be a women's Tour de France this year, it made me kind of mad. They made it sound like this was the first time women were going to ride the Tour de France. I was like, "Hang on! What are you talking about? What about us? We were the first. I rode the Tour de France four times. I wore the yellow jersey... I mean, it's great that women are racing the Tour de France again. But it feels like everyone has forgotten what we did. It feels like we're invisible."*

OPENING CREDITS

We hear pulsing music that evokes the mid 1980s. We see a montage comprising photos and grainy VHS footage of 1980s women's Tour de France, newspaper headline clippings about the women's race, and a transparent map of France with race routes, mountains and towns marked.

Punctuating these images are contemporary, slo-mo, portrait style shots of the female riders (now aged in their mid 60s). They are wearing their national jerseys, the fabled yellow jersey, and the polka-dot jersey. They break the fourth wall and stare down the barrel of the camera directly at the audience. Their expressions convey complicated, deep feelings simmering beneath the surface.

As the montage plays out, we hear snippets of legendary cycling commentator Phil Liggett commentating on the women's race. *"Well, one has to say that the girls in this year's Tour de France have kept up a very, very high average speed indeed. Very*

few of the girls in this year's Tour de France will have ridden such a distance before..."

The commentary segues into soundbites from the women of all different nationalities who rode the race. *"It was the beginning of a new generation of women's cycling." "The attitude was that we should be grateful to be there", "People were confused... were we going to race with the men?" "The press said someone was going to get killed." "Bloody women getting in the way!" "Put a lot of aggressive alpha females together and there are going to be problems." "It was a real clash of the Titans." "There was a big crash, the whole peloton went down." "The Tour was the highpoint of my life" "I didn't realise how special it was at the time."*

Full screen title:

BREAKAWAY FEMMES: The women who conquered the Tour de France

ACT ONE

The music changes to evoke the olden days. The tone is light but not ridiculous. Montage of b&w photos and footage of women in skirts, bloomers and bonnets riding bicycles

in the late 19th early 20th centuries. The narrator/expert interviewee does a brief 101 of the history of women's cycling.

In a talking head interview, Australian cycling commentator Matt Keenan unearths some of the forgotten early pioneers of women's racing: Alfonsina Strada, aka the "devil in the dress", who rode and finished the gruelling Giro d'Italia in 1924 by entering under a man's name, and the 41 women who rode the Tour de France in 1955, competing in a truncated one-off women's race which was staged as a publicity stunt by the organisers, treated as a fairground attraction by the crowds and was derided by the press as an embarrassment.

The narrator/expert interviewee says, *"Despite the heroics of these early pioneers, the cycling world remained convinced that women did not belong in cycle racing. The women persisted, but progress was slow."*

We cut to a series of b&w archival television vox pops from 1968. Ordinary French citizens on the street are being quizzed on what they think about women racing bicycles. Their answers reveal the casual and ingrained sexism of the time.

Character intro

We cut to the exterior of a suburban



house. A palm tree and tropical foliage suggest it is located in warmer climes. We hear the sound of a bike chain whirring.

We cut to a scene in the back garden of the house. A woman is cleaning her bike on a bike stand. She talks about her modern bike and describes some of the modern features: a carbon frame, electronic shifters, a bike computer. She laughs, *"It's very different to the bike I used when I rode the Tour de France"*

We cut to a contemporary slo-mo, portrait style shot of the woman, dressed in a vintage 1980s Australian team jersey. She breaks the fourth wall and stares down the barrel of the camera.

A title appears over her image:
Liz Hepple (AUSTRALIA)
TDF Féminin: 1986, 1987 & 1988

Liz Hepple tells the story of why she took up cycling and what it was like as a young female racing cyclist in the early 1980s. We see photos of her younger self at bike races

"It was quite unusual for women to race bikes. You know, bikes were greasy and

mechanical, and it was dangerous. You fell off and broke bones and you know, landed on your face and had scratches and bruises."

"Initially, it was welcoming... But I did feel resentment and competitiveness if I was going better than some of the men.... So it was sort of funny in that the guys were really encouraging, but then they didn't like being beaten."

Archival photos and footage show the male legends of cycling conquering the great mountains. The narrator/expert interviewees talk about how, over the decades, professional cycling had become emblematic of masculinity. Archival images show the men suffering as they climb the mountains. They are wiry, gaunt, exhausted, pushed beyond their limits and venerated by the crowds for their courage. *"Riding in and finishing a race like Tour de France was the ultimate test of manhood. It was a god-like accomplishment beyond the abilities of mere mortals"*

Colour photos circa late 1970s, early 1980s appear. They show young women at small local bike races in America, Canada,



England, and Australia. They look fit and determined, but they are clearly in the minority. Lost in the sea of male cyclists.

In interviews, the women (all now aged in their mid 60s) paint a picture of how difficult and unusual it was to be a woman racing cyclist in the early 1980s.

"There were hardly any women racing back then..."

"My cycling club didn't have any female change rooms..."

"All of a sudden I was racing bikes, my parents would say, 'Yeah, but when are you gonna have a family?'"

"I used to get abused for racing. I got punched by a spectator once during a race. He said I had no business being on a bike."

"It never occurred to us to ask for more. That's just the way women's cycling was. We were used to accepting scraps"

We see archival b&w images of female spectators cheering male Tour de France riders as they climb mountains, and colour images from the 1970s of scantily clad attractive women kissing the winner of the yellow jersey on the podium. In interview, Australian female cycling commentator Bridie O'Donnell describes the Tour de France as a sacred French institution. *"It was meant to be very egalitarian, but of course it never was. Women could only be spectators or podium girls."*

We cut to a French television news clip from the mid 1980s. The report is subtitled, and the news reader announces that a new race for women will be held as part of that year's Tour de France.

In interview, legendary cycling commentator Phil Liggett says, *"Now as you know, the French are very chauvinistic... but there was a big move on. They wanted a women's Tour de France. It was going to be called the 'Tour de France, Féminin'. And it eventually came to fruition in 1984."*

Character intro

We see the exterior of a suburban house is

Windsor, Ontario. We hear the ticking sound of a metronome... then a piano begins to play. We cut to an interior shot of the living room. A woman in her mid 60s plays a piece of classical music on an upright piano.

We cut to a contemporary, slo-mo, portrait style shot of the woman, dressed in a 1980s Canadian team jersey. She breaks the fourth wall and stares down the barrel of the camera.

A title appears over her image:

Kelly Ann Way (Canada)

TDF Féminin - 1984, 1985, 1986, 1988 & 1989

Kelly-Ann Way talks about why she took up cycling and about how she was selected to go to the Tour de France.

Canadian Kelly Ann Way says, *"It was not so much a dream come true, because it wasn't*



a dream that I ever really had. I just couldn't believe I was in that situation where I was going to race the Tour de France... It was like, all of a sudden, waking up in the morning and realizing you're a bit of a rock star."

The narrator/expert interviewees provide a succinct exposition about the details and format of the new race. Instead of sponsored professional teams in the men's Tour de France, the women's race would comprise of national teams. The women would ride 18 stages over 23 days. They would start ahead of the men and ride the same course.

"We rode in front of the same crowds, over the same mountains, across the same cobblestones, and across the same finish line."

The narrator/expert interviewees explain that the new race was restricted by international cycling rules which limited how far women could race. Therefore, the women would ride a shortened version of the men's course, omitting the first 100km or so.

Kelly-Ann Way says drily, *"We weren't allowed to race too far in case our ovaries fell out."*

We cut to an archival clip of Tour de France champion Laurent Fignon. He is being interviewed on a French talk show in 1984. He is asked for his thoughts about the new women's race and is very comfortable in giving his opinion. He is blunt and rudely dismissive, *"A woman racing a bicycle is not attractive. I like women, but I prefer to see them doing something else."*

Newspaper headlines about the new women's race. The women talk about the reaction of the press to the news of the new race.

"The flavour of the press coverage was very much 'Women in the kitchen'."

"The French media was against us. They basically said we had no business doing the Tour."

"Everyone was really worried that the women wouldn't be able to get up the mountains."

"Tour de France legend Jacques Anquetil said that women should stick to playing tennis because they looked pretty in a tennis dress"

"The male cyclists, particularly some of the French male cyclists, were quite derogatory towards women racing. They didn't think it was appropriate."

"The press predicted someone would be killed."

Character intro

We see contemporary overlay of a woman in her mid 60s at a local cycling race in the English midlands. It is grey, cold, and blustery. She gets her bike out of the car and puts the front wheel on. She warms up for the race with her bike on stationary rollers. She is very fit and very at home in this setting. She banters cheerfully with her fellow riders.

We cut to a contemporary slo-mo, portrait style shot of the woman, dressed in a 1980s Great Britain Ladies Team jersey. She breaks the fourth wall and stares down the barrel of the camera.

A title appears over her image:

**Clare Greenwood (Great Britain)
TDF Féminin - 1984, 1986, 1987, 1988 & 1989**

Clare tells us that she has been competing in bike races since the late 1970s and that she jumped at the chance when she was picked for the Great Britain Ladies Team to ride in the very first Tour de France in 1984.

Clare laughs, *"We were so clueless. I can't remember who... but someone had told us that we should put brandy in our water bottles. We wanted to do well, and we took any cycling advice we were given very seriously. So, when we got to France, we stopped and bought this enormous flagon of brandy. And then we dutifully lugged it all around France with us. It tasted disgusting."*

Clare goes on to explain how little the women had in terms of support compared to the men.

Female riders from various countries chime in and describe the problems they faced getting to the Tour de France":

"I had to take unpaid leave from work. My boss wasn't happy."

"We were self-funded. We basically had to pay for our flights to get to France."

"We provided our own bikes, our own spare parts, our own bike shorts and shoes."

"We were given a national team jersey, but we had to return it after the race."

"We didn't have a coach. We didn't have a mechanic."

"The French provided us with a coach, but he didn't speak English..."

"We were just thrilled that we got put up in a hotel and got fed. It was unheard of for a women's race."

"At the time we didn't question it, you know, to rock up to ride a Tour France, and you have a couple of spare tires and no spare bikes. I just can't fathom it happening these days."

Legendary cycling commentator Phil Liggett says, *"The race was great, but there was a snag. First of all, they had to find the men to handle the women's race, and many of those men worked on the big tour. Being French, they didn't really want to go and do the women's race."*

We hear the clarion call of a trumpet fanfare. Photos of women cyclists at the 1984 Olympic Games appear.

The narrator/expert interviewee highlights another problem that the inaugural women's Tour de France faced. The best female riders from each country would be unavailable that first year. They would be in Los Angeles competing at the 1984 Olympic Games. As amateurs, the female riders were eligible for both events unlike their professional male counterparts.

Canadian rider Marilyn Trout says, *"We were definitely the B Team. We had no business being there. My only goal that first year was to finish."*

We see footage of the start of stage one of the 1984 Tour de France. A dignitary fires the starting gun, and the peloton of women rolls out and starts the race.

We see archival television footage of the women's race. The television commentary is enthusiastic, but also has an ingrained paternalistic misogyny. The commentator talks about the terrain and distance ahead of the women and questions how they will cope.

Riders from various countries reflect on how utterly unprepared they were:

"I had only started racing 18 months before the Tour."



"This concept of a three-week race was quite foreign. We thought racing two days was big."

"I'd never even seen a big mountain, much less rode up one."

We see archive footage of the crowds lining the streets and cheering the women on. A couple of funny vox pops with the watching spectators reveal how much they are enjoying the women race. The narrator/expert interviewee tells us that the French crowds enthusiastically embraced the women's race.

USA rider Patty Peoples says, *"I have this memory of racing up the mountains and there's this crowd... just this wall of people that I was riding towards. And then just as you get there, then they separate and let you through... and there's just screaming so loudly.... It's so noisy. It's unbelievable."*

British rider Clare Greenwood recalls how the crowd was a little too enthusiastic sometimes. *"They kept smacking us on the bum as we rode up the mountains. They didn't mean anything by it. They were just being French. I actually ended up with a bruised backside. Eventually us British girls got some foam and stuck it down the back of our shorts to give us some protection."*

We see photos of the female Tour de France riders signing autographs after the race for their fans, who are young girls and women.

Canadian Kelly Ann-Way says, *"We were definitely the warmup act before the men's race. One of the biggest fears the organizers had was that people wouldn't be interested. But they had a new type of spectator out and it was the women. I remember vividly all of these university-age girls waving signs and screaming."*

We see photos of women's teams at the Tour de France. They are wearing national uniforms, standing next to team cars and lined up on rostrums.

The narrator/expert interviewee tells us the teams that took place in the first Tour de France Féminin were Great Britain, the USA, Canada, the Netherlands and

two French teams. Dutch rider Heleen Hage was the number 1 female rider in the world and the hot favourite to win.

Canadian Marilyn Trout says, *"The teams to beat were definitely the European teams. They had a lot more experience racing than we did. I remember being really jealous of the French girls because they had these very chic uniforms with blazers. We just had mismatched old tracksuit tops. We didn't look like a team at all. I was embarrassed by how unprofessional we looked next to them."*

We cut to photos of the Dutch team wearing bright orange jerseys.

British rider Clare Greenwood recalls, *"The Dutch team were terrifying. They were really big girls. They couldn't climb for shit, but they could really sprint. We called them the 'Orange train'. I would try to get on the wheel of a Dutchie and just hang on."*

USA rider Patty Peoples recalls, *"The French team actually had tactics. They rode as a team. Whereas our American team was just a bunch of riders who didn't know each other, had never ridden together before. It was every woman for herself. It was pretty cowboy."*

We see archival television footage of the women racing. The camera focuses on the USA riders. We hear Phil Liggett commentating on the American team. He singles out one of the American riders, Marianne Martin.

Character intro

We see contemporary footage of a sign saying, 'Welcome to Boulder Colorado'. A woman in her 60s puts on a cycling jersey and cycling shoes and rides off. She rides through the Rocky Mountains. She is very fit and knows how to handle a bike. She dances on the pedals as she climbs through the spectacular peaks.

We cut to a contemporary slo-mo, portrait style shot of the woman, dressed in a vintage 1980s Team USA jersey. She breaks the fourth wall and stares down the barrel of the camera.

A title appears over her image:

Marianne Martin (USA)
TDF Féminin - 1984

Marianne talks about how she started riding *"My dad bought me a racing bike as a present when I graduated college. It cost \$600... I started riding and the guys at the local bike shop said I should come race with them. I did pretty good... Then I heard there was going to be a Tour de France for women... and that's all I wanted to do."*

Marianne Martin is sitting at her kitchen table. She opens an old photo album and thumbs through the old cycling photos, *"I'd had anaemia in the months leading up to the Tour. I hadn't been able to train much and wasn't performing well. But I heard there was still a spot open on the team, so I went and begged for them to include me. I said, 'I won't let you down.'"*

We see a photo of Marianne Martin looking young and naïve. Marianne says, *"I was the last American rider selected. I was the least experienced rider on the team. No one expected much of me."*

We see a photo of the American riders lined up together. USA rider Patty Peoples says, *"We didn't really have a team leader or a plan. The most experienced rider on our team was Betsy King. It was sort of expected that she would get the best result."*

We see television footage of the women climbing a steep mountain road and hear Phil Liggett commentating.

Marianne Martin says, *"But then we hit the mountains and I just started climbing at my own pace. When I got to the top, they told me I was ten minutes ahead of the field. I just flew down the mountain. I expected someone to catch me, but they never caught me."*

Patty Peoples says, *"I was a really strong rider, so I had sort of taken on the role of domestique for the team. I had been helping our best rider, Betsy King. But when Marianne got the yellow jersey, I decided it was my job to keep her in the lead. So, I switched and started helping Marianne instead. Betsy was really upset. She called me a traitor."*



We see a photo of the young Marianne Martin. She is climbing a mountain with an intense expression. She says, *“And I started to think... maybe I can win this thing.”*

We cut to a contemporary slo-mo, portrait style shot of Marianne Martin (now aged in her mid 60s). She is wearing the coveted (overall leader's) yellow jersey. She stares determinedly down the barrel of the camera.

We see television footage of the women racing and hear the French commentator describing the race. The camera focuses on Mariann Martin, who stands out in the peloton in her yellow jersey.

British rider Clare Greenwood tells us how the race organisers called the women together before the final stage. The organisers wanted to ensure a spectacular finish to the inaugural women's race. The riders were instructed that, no matter what happened during the final day's racing, all the women needed to arrive on the Champs Elysée together before they began the final sprint. *“I was really angry. I was the number three ranked climber in the world. I had a real chance to make up some time on the final mountain climb. Instead, I was forced to slow down and ride at the pace*

of the Dutch girls who couldn't climb but they could sprint. The Gendarmes actually towed the Dutch girls up the mountain with their motorbikes. It meant they arrived completely fresh on the Champs Elysée ready for the final sprint. How is that fair?”

Archival television footage shows the women entering the Champs Elysée. The famous boulevard is packed with tens of thousands of screaming fans.

Tense drone music plays, a montage of photos and video archive show the women racing aggressively over the cobblestones past the Arc de Triomphe.

The narrator/expert interviewee relates the race finish and how the underdog American Marianne Martin hung onto the yellow jersey and became the first winner of the *Tour de France Féminin*.

Marianne Martin smiles as she recalls that, unbeknownst to her, her father had travelled to France to see the finish of the race. *“Every time I finished a lap, I heard someone yelling ‘Go Marianne Martin!’ When I finished the race, I looked over to see who it was... and I saw my dad standing there cheering.”*



Archival television footage captures the moment when Marianne Martin's father climbs over the barricade to embrace his daughter. They both burst into tears.

Clare Greenwood describes the chaos surrounding the end of the race. The organisers had not considered how to get the women off the Champs Elysée after their race finished. Tens of thousands of people were pressed against the barriers and the officials could not find a gap to get the women off the course. *"The men's peloton was approaching, and they were panicking. They told us to ride another lap. So, we just kept riding around and around the Champs Elysée while they frantically tried to find a way to get us off."*

Archival photos show Marianne Martin standing triumphantly on the podium. Marianne is standing next to the men's winner, Laurent Fignon. She holds the winner's trophy. She is resplendent in yellow and has a huge smile on her face.

Phil Liggett says, *"But I remember the headlines. And the headlines were 'Bien fait!' Well done to the women. Because they became so impressed with the way the women raced."*

Australian cycling commentator Bridie O'Donnell says, *"It's tempting to put an asterix next to that first Tour de France in 1984. To say that it was a lesser race because the countries chose to send their best female riders to the Olympics Games instead that year. But that ignores what these women accomplished. There were so many people who doubted that the women were capable of finishing the Tour de France. But 36 women started in 1984 and they all finished except for one woman who crashed and broke her collarbone. You don't just roll out of bed and ride the Tour de France."*

Kelly Ann Way says, *"1984 race was about more than names on a results sheet. We were guinea pigs. I remember one newspaper saying, 'These women won't get to the finish without a casualty. It's not made for women. Someone will probably die.'" We were there representing something bigger than ourselves. We proved that we could do it."* The narrator/expert interviewee explains that the inaugural 1984 Tour de France

Féminin was deemed a success and the race was renewed for the following year. But future editions of the race would not include Marianne Martin.

Marianne Martin talks about how ongoing health problems forced her to retire from competitive racing in 1984 shortly after her Tour de France win. *"I was also hugely in debt because I had borrowed money to go to the Tour de France. I owed thousands of dollars. I had to work two jobs to pay back all the money I had borrowed to get to France. Even if my health had been okay, I couldn't have afforded to keep racing."*

We cut to a contemporary, slo-mo, portrait style shot of Marianne Martin, dressed in the yellow jersey. She smiles ruefully, then turns and walks out of frame... leaving a void.

ACT TWO

We cut to an archival clip of a television newsreader welcoming viewers to the 1985 Tour de France. Archival footage and photos show riders from Italy, Spain, Germany and Sweden.

The narrator/expert interviewee explains that the following year, the field for the *Tour de France, Féminin* expanded to include new national teams and more riders. But the women still faced challenges.

We see photos of the Swedish women's team leaning against a car. The roof racks of the car are laden with bikes. Swedish rider, Marie Wynan, recalls how the entire Swedish team crammed into one car with all their luggage and bikes. *"Money was very tight, so we decided to drive to France. We left from Stockholm and spent several days driving across Europe to get to the Tour de France."*

We see photos of the Canadian team standing beside their car with their bikes. Kelly-Ann Way recalls how one of her teammate's bikes was lost in transit on the way to France. The Dutch team stepped in and loaned her one of their bikes. *"We all helped each other out."*

A USA rider recalls how the mechanic they had brought with them went AWOL early on in the race. *"I guess he had better things to do than a women's bike race."*

The narrator/expert interviewee explains the international cycling organisation had changed the rules so that the already meagre distance the women were allowed to race was even more limited. The Tour de France solved this challenge by exploiting a loophole. They split the 1985 women's race into two different events and ran them back-to-back. Joining them seamlessly so that appeared to be one race.

We see photos of the women sprawled inside cars and team buses. They are wearing their sweaty cycling kit and look exhausted. Clare Greenwood talks about how, because of the shorter distance of the women's race, they had to spend much longer driving between stages than the men did. *"After each stage, we would always have to drive three, four hours to get to the hotel before we could have a shower and a massage. Whereas the men would only have to drive two hours max."*

We see archival footage of riders getting their bikes ready at the start of a stage. There are lots of new faces. The women are competent and efficient as they make final adjustments to their bikes and discuss the race route. There is no small talk. They are totally focussed on the upcoming stage.

The narrator/expert interviewee explains that despite the loss of Marianne Martin, the 1985 women's Tour de France would have a stellar line up. Now that the Olympic Games were over, countries were free to send their best female riders.

Canadian Kelly Ann Way tells us that the second year of the Tour de France, Féminin was a huge step up from the previous year. *"Most of the girls who rode the first year weren't selected for the second year because all the best riders were suddenly available."*

We cut to archival television footage of the 1985 Tour de France Féminin. We see an extremely fit, wiry woman in an Italian jersey accelerate her bike up a mountain climb. She has a lovely fluid pedalling style. Legendary cycling commentator Phil Liggett calls the race. *"And here comes Maria Canins, the Italian housewife they call 'Mama Volante'... 'the Flying Mum'"*

Character intro

We cut to a winter landscape high in the mountains. Icicles hang from the eaves of buildings. The world is serene. A woman skis towards camera, huffing a little in the crisp air. She is aged in her mid 70s. She



is small. Almost petite. She is very fit and looks like a serious outdoors woman.

The woman skis gently and peacefully through her tranquil world. We hear her speak. She talks in Italian and is subtitled.

"I was so lucky to grow up here in the Dolomite Mountains. Everything we did was outdoors. I was a cross country skier. I enjoyed being outdoors and I was very good. I became national champion. Then I became a mountain biker, and I became world champion.

We cut to a contemporary, slo-mo, portrait style shot of the woman, dressed in a 1980s Italian team jersey. She breaks the fourth wall and stares down the barrel of the camera.

A title appears over her image:

Maria Canins (Italy)

TDF Féminin: 1985 - 1989



I didn't start road cycling until I was 32 years old. I already was married and had a young daughter... but I wanted to see how far I could go."

The music changes to a tarantella, which conveys energy and evokes Italy. A montage of archival footage from the mid 1980s shows Maria Canins storming up the mountains in the Tour de France, while the television cycling commentators praise her feats in glowing terms.

We see a photo of a young Maria Canins at the Tour de France. She is aged in her mid 30s and has a gentle kind face. The narrator/expert interviewee tells us that Italy sent a team to the second Tour de France Féminin in 1985. Their best rider was Maria Canins, also known as 'The Flying Mother', 'Maria the Beast', and 'Coppi in a Skirt', after the legendary Italian male cyclist, Fausto Coppi.

We cut between several talking head interviews with other TDF Féminin riders and they describe Maria Canins.

"Lovely."

"Delightful."

"She was older than most of us, so she had this maternal sort of vibe."

"Canins was peerless"

We cut to a scene of Maria Canins sitting at the table with her now adult daughter, Concetta. They are looking at a photo album and Concetta recalls her childhood memories of watching her mother race in the Tour de France.

Maria Canins talks about how her husband and young daughter would come to the Tour de France with her. *"My husband would go out and ride the course on his bike the day before I raced. He would draw on the ground with chalk and mark out the turns for me."*

We cut to a contemporary, slo-mo, portrait style shot of Maria Canins. She stares down the barrel of the camera. She is wearing the fabled polka-dot (King of the Mountains) jersey. Then in a jump cut, her jersey changes to the coveted yellow (overall leader) jersey.

Canins talks about the 1985 race. How she took the lead early and then extended it. *“A race has to be hard fought. You have to give everything to reach the finish line. The most important thing for any athlete is to be satisfied with what you’ve done, regardless of the result.”*

Clare Greenwood tells us, *“Maria Canins totally owned that race in 1985. I can’t say enough about how good she was.”*

We see a series of photos of Canins wearing the yellow and polka dot jerseys. She stands on podiums and accepts the acclaim of the crowds.

The narrator/expert interviewee tells us that Maria Canins won the 1985 Tour de France Féminin with a staggering 22-minute lead over her closest rival, Frenchwoman Jeannie Longo. The camera zooms in on the curly dark-haired woman who is standing in Maria Canins’ shadow and scowling.

We see a photo of Maria Canins riding on the Champs Elysée alongside the men’s winner, Bernard Hinault. They both have their hands raised, saluting the crowd.

Maria Canins says, *“I’ve had plenty of success in my life, but my most treasured memory is my victory in the Tour de France. Riding in Paris alongside Bernard Hinault, a cyclist whom I really admired. That was a huge satisfaction, a real joy.”*

We see photos of Maria Canins standing, with her husband and daughter, in her small hometown in Italy being congratulated by crowds of people. *“The people in my village have always been very supportive. When I came back from the Tour de France, they greeted me with torches, a band. They rang the church bells. They drove me around the village in a carriage. I felt a great warmth from my people, and that’s what convinced me to carry on racing.”*

We see another archival montage of Maria Canins dominating in the Tour de France. We see a photo of her standing on a podium on the Champs Elysée with men’s winner Greg Lemond. They are both wearing yellow jerseys and holding trophies aloft. The narrator/expert interviewee tells us

Canins defended her title by also winning the 1986 Tour de France Féminin. She again defeated Frenchwoman Jeannie Longo, but by a substantially reduced margin.

The music changes. It becomes darker and more edgy. We see a photo of Jeanie Longo. She is a young, intense looking woman with unruly dark curls. She is wearing a French team jersey. She is scowling.

We cut to an archival television interview with Jeannie Longo from 1986. She tells the interviewer that she was a flop in the Tour de France. He assures her that two 2nd place finishes in the Tour de France is not a flop. But she shakes her head, dismissing his platitudes. Clearly nothing but first place will satisfy her.

Maria Canins says, *“Jeannie was ten years younger than me, and she was improving all the time. I knew that the following year, Jeannie would be harder to beat.”*

We cut to a montage of archival television footage of the 1987 Tour de France Féminin. Phil Liggett is commentating, *“Longo is storming up the mountain. She is really giving Maria Canins a run for her money.”*

Maria Canins tells us that she led for the first part of the race, but on the fifth stage up Luz Ardiden, they battled side by side for miles. *“As we approached the summit, Jeannie found a new gear and rode away from me. I couldn’t go with her. She rode almost the perfect tactical race.”*

We see a photo of Jeannie Longo standing on the podium on the Champs Elysée next to the men’s winner, Stephen Roche. Maria Canins stands on the step below her in 2nd place.

The narrator/expert interviewee explains that after Marianne Martin’s surprise victory in 1984, the *Tour de France Féminin* was dominated by the rivalry between Maria Canins and Jeannie Longo.

Photos of Logo and Canins appear. They are seen alternately both wearing the yellow and polka dot jerseys. Canadian Kelly Ann Way says, *“It was a real clash of the Titans. They were just so much better than everyone else. It was always close between them. Longo was the better all-around*

rider – but Canins was the better climber.”

Clare Greenwood tells us that, *“the French media loved Jeannie Longo. She was a Frenchwoman, and she was winning the Tour de France. They were always interviewing her for French television and for newspapers. They made her into a celebrity in France.”*

Television footage of Jeannie Longo being interviewed in the 1980s appears. Various clips show her being grumpy, uncomfortable, and abrupt with journalists and scowling.

The camera cuts between contemporary talking head interviews of the various female riders. There is a pause as the women mull over how to describe Longo. They hesitate... then decide to be honest.

“Jeannie was a bitch.”

“She’s horrible.”

“She spat at me after a race once.”

“She called me a fat cow.”

“She grabbed jerseys, screamed at other riders, yelled and slapped people in the legs,”

“Jeannie basically abused me... she wanted to make it clear who was in charge.”

We see an archival television interview with Jeannie Longo. She is laughing and joking with the television interviewer. She comes across as likeable and intelligent.

We cut to another series of rider interviews:

“I quite liked Jeannie. I spent two weeks sharing a room with her at a race once because no-one else wanted to share a room with her. But we got on okay. She was just super serious.”

“Jeannie was misunderstood.”

“She was very intelligent.”

“She probably had more in common with male athletes. It’s more accepted for men to have one personality on the bike and another off the bike. For a woman, if you’re not nice on the bike, you’re not nice.”

Character intro

We cut to contemporary footage of a rural French farmhouse in the foothills of the Alps. We hear chickens squawking. A woman’s voice calls to the chickens in French.



A small, wiry woman in her mid 60s emerges from the house and dozens of chickens run up to her squawking for food. She talks to the chickens as she feed them, calling them by name.

She addresses the camera, speaking in English with a French accent. She tells us a little about her chickens. That she raises them to be organic and free range, and how she sells their eggs at the local market. The woman looks very fit, with dark unruly curls that show no trace of grey. But in close-up, her face is lined and cragged with skin damage from years exposed to the wind and sun. Despite her obvious fitness, she looks every bit her age, or more.

She says, *"Without being too pretentious. I believe I was a personality. I believe I marked the history of cycling."*

We cut to a contemporary, slo-mo, portrait style shot of the woman, dressed in a 1980s French team jersey. She breaks the fourth wall and stares down the barrel of the camera.

A title appears over her image:

Jeannie Longo (France)
TDF Féminin: 1985 - 1989

We see an archival clip of a television story about Jeannie Longo in 1980. She is shown skiing, playing with her dogs and riding her bike in a race. She talks about her ambitions as a cyclist. She is softly spoken, almost demure. But underneath there is a sense of ruthless determination.

We cut to a contemporary talking head interview with Jeannie Longo. *"I was originally a skier. Living in Haute-Savoie, just in front of Mont Blanc. In the Alps, everyone is a skier. I did ski competitions. Cycling was just a way for me to train in the summer. Then in 1979, the world cycling championships were in Sallanches, just 10km from my house. And I saw Bernard Hinault race and win. It was a bit insane, but after that I thought I might be able to do that also."*

We see a montage of photos of Jeannie training and competing in the early 1980s. *"The truth is I did everything to be good. I trained hard. For me a champion is chosen from heaven."*

The narrator/expert interviewee explains that Jeannie Longo was already a French national champion, a world champion, and an Olympian, before she arrived at her first Tour de France in 1985. Longo was regarded as unusual in that she chose not to be part of the French national cycling program. Instead, she prepared separately, training under her mentor and coach Patrice Ciprelli... whom she married in 1985.

We see a photo of Jeannie and her husband. Jeannie says, *"Sometimes I feel like a little mouse, but my husband taught me to be strong."*

We see a montage of Jeannie Longo racing up the mountains.

"In 1987, I won the Tour de France. I knew if I could stay with Canins on the climb I could win. It was a huge joy, of course."

"When you're the favourite nothing is easy. It's actually a lot more complicated. A title, okay. But then you have to keep it and defend it. It's terrible."

The narrator/expert interviewee describes Jeannie Longo's growing reputation for being difficult. She fought with the French cycling federation, refused to eat with her teammates, and refused to sacrifice herself so that a teammate might win.

British rider Clare Greenwood says, "Her teammates hated her. The French girls used to sneak out of the hotel and meet at a café so they could bitch about her."

Other riders chime in:

"Jeannie rode only for herself. She demanded that everyone on her team ride to support her. And she got her way."

"Jeannie had a lot of power with the French cycling Federation because she won so much. She could decide who she did and didn't want riding on her team. She was ruthless."

We see photos of the French team at the Tour de France. Jeannie Longo stands apart from the team in every photo. Jeannie Longo says, *"I am paying the price of success. It is the price of my personality"*



because I always say what I want to say. It is easier to stay the same way as the others. If you want to go further, you have to go through this. You have to fight them."

We see a couple of photos of Maria Canins standing next to Jeannie Longo on the podium. Maria Canins recalls her rivalry with Jeannie Longo and talks about her thoughts of Jeannie Longo as a person. She is tactful, perhaps kind: *"It is not easy being a champion."* We cut to a montage of Canins and Longo battling it out in the mountains. The narrator/expert interviewee sums up the Canins Longo rivalry, explaining that Canins won the 1985 and 1986 Tour de France Féminin, with Longo as runner up. Then Longo would win the 1987, 1988 and 1989 Tour de France Féminin with Canins as runner up.

Canadian Kelly Ann Way talks about how the rivalry lifted the quality of the entire race. *"They set the bar really high, and we were all forced to push ourselves to try to keep up with them."*

The music changes. The pace picks up and becomes more dynamic. We see a video and photo montage of the Tour de France Féminin. The women racing and having fun behind the scenes. Their competitiveness and camaraderie are apparent. They are young and have the world before them. It is a golden time.

The women describe their experiences riding in the Tour de France from 1985 onwards. Their accomplishments, the fun times, and the challenges they faced.

"We climbed Tourmalet. We climbed La Plagne."

"I remember climbing the Puy de Dome. It's so high there is no vegetation at the top. It's this barren landscape. It's like riding to the moon."

"I was in a breakaway group once. Everyone was trying to stop the French from moving up, with the result that two girls were pushed into a ditch. There were punches thrown and a real fight broke out between the riders."

"We didn't pay much attention to the men's race. We were too busy concentrating on our own race."

Kelly Ann Way talks about how different racing was back in the 1980s. *"There was no race radio. We were on our own during a race. I used to write directions on my arms so I would know when the hills and the descents were coming up and where I should attack."*

British rider Clare Greenwood talks about how the cyclists knew very little about proper nutrition back then. She tells a story about being unprepared for a stage and running out of food and water halfway up the infamous mountain Alpe d'Huez. *"I thought I was going to have to quit. But there were all these people having picnics on the side of the road and waiting for the men's race. They started offering me food. They were holding out glasses of wine and baguettes and cheese, so I started taking them. Then I*

got picky and started wondering if the people around the next corner had better food."

We cut to contemporary footage of Australian rider Liz Hepple. She is sitting on the sofa in her lounge room and sifting through memorabilia that is spread out across the coffee table. We see Tour de France race bibles, maps and photos.

Liz says, *"The Australian women's cycling team got invited to do the 1986 Tour de France. We got cheered at a lot. There was, surprisingly, quite a lot of Australians in the crowds and they'd be madly waving Australian flags. And the French loved us. We were this novelty from the other side of the world. They'd yell out "Kan-ga-roo!" and sometimes, "Skip-py!"*

We see photos of the Australian Team, wearing white jerseys with a distinctive green and gold vertical stripe.

Liz Hepple talks about how the Australian team first went to the Tour de France in 1986. *"We were given two Australian jerseys to take to the Tour de France. But one of them was made of wool and it was way too hot to wear in France in the middle of summer. So essentially, we only had one jersey to get us through the entire race. I would wash mine out in the basin of our hotel room each night. And it got torn up when I crashed, so I had to darn it up. It was pretty ragged by the end of the race."*

We see another photo of the Australian team standing next to their bikes. They are wearing hideous 1980s cycling jerseys with the Sydney harbour bridge and the Opera House printed on them in garish colours.

Another Australian rider, Donna Rae-Szalinski, recalls how they were also given a training jersey to take with them, *"It was designed by the famous Australian designer Ken Done. It was the ugliest thing you have ever seen. But all the other teams wanted to trade with us for them. They became the hottest item that year. But I wouldn't trade mine. I still have it."*

Liz Hepple says, *"The other teams didn't give us any respect. Australians weren't known for cycling back then. The girls used to make jokes that the vertical stripe on our jersey was to hide the grass stains when we fell off."*

We see photos of Liz and the Australian team in the peloton. They are swamped by riders of different nationalities.

"I think we lacked confidence. Honestly... our first races over there... we were in a bunch of a hundred riders. We had never raced like that before. And so there were very few tactics. It was really just survival and trying to stay out of crashes."

Liz tells us that despite her team's inexperience, she managed to finish in 5th place that first year.

Donna Rae Szalinski tells us, *"Liz was as a phenomenal climber. She could climb with Maria Canins. Yeah, just a huge engine. As soon as it went uphill, Liz just took off. And that gave us so much street cred, to have this Australian team come out of nowhere on their first Tour de France."*

We see a montage of photos and footage of new riders wearing national cycling kits we haven't seen before. A rider wears a red jersey with a hammer and sickle on the



front and 'CCCP' printed on the back. The camera focuses on a Chinese rider. She smiles and laughs in an embarrassed way.

The narrator/expert interviewee explains that over the years, more and more countries began sending women's teams to take part in the Tour de France Féminin.

Liz Hepple says, *"The Colombians sent a team. God, those girls could climb. The East Germans... The Soviets sent a team too. It was the communist era... I remember that the Russian girls always wanted to trade. They were under strict instructions not to mingle with the other teams, but they used to sneak into our hotel rooms at night and would try and trade bottles of vodka for our cycling equipment."*

Clare Greenwood recalls, *"The Chinese girls didn't speak any English, so it was hard. And they weren't allowed to speak to us anyway. They always had their coaches there keeping an eye on them. I do remember that they Feng Shui-ed their hotel room. We didn't know what that was at the time. It just seemed like such a weird thing to do."*

Archival footage shows riders getting ready. The camera focuses on a Chinese woman who smiles politely and waves. *"The Chinese girls were middle-distance runners who had been selected to take part in the Tour de France. They were really fit, but they had no cycling experience, and their bike handling skills weren't good. We all quickly worked out not to ride behind any of the Chinese girls. They were really twitchy. If they crashed, they would take out everyone behind them."*

We cut to an interview with a Chinese rider (now aged in her 60s). She talks about the Chinese team's experience at the Tour de France. She describes the culture shock of being thrown into the western world, and also the difficulty of competing in a sport they knew nothing about.

We see a montage of photos of Liz Hepple racing in her Australian jersey. Then photos of her climbing mountains wearing the polka-dot jersey.

Liz Hepple says, *"In 1987 I crashed, and I had to pull out of the race. But in 1988, I rode really well. I was in 3rd place overall at the start of the last stage. I had enough time advantage over the fourth-place rider that I just needed to finish in the bunch to hold onto third."*

We see a photo of Liz Hepple and the Australian team racing furiously on the Champs Elysée.

You always worry before every stage you start. You just fear puncturing or crashing out, especially when you are trying to hold onto one of the high positions. I punctured during the sprint on the Champs Elysée... and I just thought, "It's all over."

"But we were much better at racing as a team by then. I got a quick wheel change, and then my teammates all dropped back to help me."

Australian rider Donna Rae Szalinski recalls, *"It would've been about halfway through the sprint. Our team car came up and they yelled, "Donna! Liz has punctured. You gotta help her." And I was reasonable time trialler, so I just buried myself. And we got her back on to the bunch."*

We see footage of Liz Hepple standing on the podium on the Champs Elysée. She is wearing her Australian jersey and smiling proudly. She stands in 3rd place, just below Longo and Canins.

Liz says, *"I was the first Australian to finish on the podium at the Tour de France. Everyone took us seriously after that. The women's Tour de France was growing and that contenders were coming from countries all over the world now. It felt like a new era."*

We cut to an archival French television clip from the 1985 Tour de France. Jeannie Longo is sitting at a table being interviewed along with several pro male cyclists. The men are asked about the women's race. They discuss it in an entitled, well-meaning, patronising way. They are oblivious to the fact that Jeannie Longo is sitting beside them looking increasingly annoyed and uncomfortable.

French cyclist Marc Maidot, 2-time winner

of the Paris Roubaix Race, is particularly scathing. *"It's a very beautiful sport, but a woman on a bike is ugly and ridiculous."*

We see some archival vox pops with French spectators who are watching the women's race. They are asked about women racing and their answers are generally supportive but are unintentionally patronising.

The narrator/expert interviewee talks about the ongoing sexism that the women had to deal with.

Various riders chime in with their experience of the Tour.

"The men were resentful of the attention that the women's race got."

"I can remember the commentator saying, 'Oh, the women are getting ready to race. No doubt they're swapping recipes while they're waiting to start.'"

"We didn't get much press coverage after that first year. I think our novelty had worn off".

Canadian Sara Neil recalls, *"The French newspaper l'Equipe published a story that accused me of having an affair with one of the gendarmes."*

Australian Donna Rae-Szalinski says, *"This person came out of the crowd to give me a push. And... it's actually embarrassing... he didn't give me a push. He groped my butt."*

British rider Clare Greenwood says, *"The prevailing attitude was that we should be grateful to be there."*

We see photos of the women at the Tour de France post-race awards dinner.

USA rider Susan Elias says, *"For the men's race, they always give out an award called 'Le Prix de la Combativité', which goes to the most aggressive rider. But for the women's race, they decided instead to give an award called 'Le Prix de Elegance', for the most graceful rider. The male winner won 20,000 francs. I won a shopping spree."*

We cut back to that archival television interview of Jeannie Longo arguing with



Marc Maidot about the women's race. Maidot brushes off Jeannie's arguments and doubles down of his dislike of women's racing, declaring, "Non, non, non. I have the right to my opinion. I love women too much to see them suffer."

Australian Liz Hepple says, "But some of the male riders were supportive. I remember after our first Tour, the Australian rider Phil Anderson bought us a bottle of champagne to celebrate and made a really big deal about Australia's first women's team to do the Tour de France. It was really respectful and greatly appreciated. I'll never forget that. So thank you, Phil."

Canadian Kelly Ann Way recalls, "Bernard Hinault drove past the peloton once and cheered us on from his car window as he passed. Then later he invited us over to his table for a drink. He became a big supporter of the women's race."

The music changes to become more frenetic and dangerous. We see archival video footage of riders flying down steep mountain descents, navigating corners and switchbacks with no guard rails between them and the abyss.

The women talk about some the dangers they faced riding the Tour.

"The whole peloton went down. I just saw everybody falling like dominoes across the road."

"One of the girls went off the side of the cliff. And it was lucky the German mechanic saw her go off. She was hanging by a tree root... and he managed to go over and drag her back up."

"A Dutch rider crashed and broke her arm."

Canadian Kelly Ann Way says, "I crashed on a descent once and wiped out someone's picnic. They were actually very good about it. They even helped me get back on the bike."

Liz Hepple says, "The helmets we wore back then were just strips of leather. They didn't offer much protection. I crashed in 1987 and fractured my skull."

Another Canadian rider, Denise Kelly, recalls, "Once I was descending Mont Ventoux, I locked handlebars with another rider at 50kph. We took out half the peloton when we crashed. A chain ring went into my back and ripped it open. The broom wagon picked me up. I had my back stitched up without anaesthetic."

Clare Greenwood says, "Riders dropped out of the race sometimes because they crashed. But no-one ever just dropped out. We would have crawled over broken glass to get to the Champs Elysée."

"Women took part in this gruelling race, and we thrived."

Character intro

We cut to an aerial shot of a ranch in Oregon. A woman rides a horse across the wide, open pastures. A dog runs beside her wagging his tail. Snow-capped mountains are seen in the distance.

It is the same ranch and woman that appeared in the opening scene.

"I was always athletic when I was a kid. Running, cycling, skiing. But really horse riding is where my heart is now. It's really beautiful out here, and sometimes it's hard to stop once I get going. It's just so picturesque, and you can get lost pretty quickly."

We cut to a contemporary, slo-mo, portrait style shot of the woman, dressed in a 1980s Team USA jersey. She breaks the fourth wall and stares down the barrel of the camera.

A title appears over her image:

Inga Thompson (USA)
TDF Féminin: 1986 & 1989

We see photos of a very young Inga Thompson in the mid 1980s. She has a long blonde plait and a focused expression.

The music changes and becomes more serious, even ominous. The tone suggests that figurative storm clouds are gathering on the horizon. We see an archival montage of Inga Thompson racing in the Tour de France. We see photos of her standing in third place on the podium on the Champs Elysée. She is

wearing the polka dot jersey and is standing below Maria Canins and Jeannie Longo.

Inga talks about riding the Tour de France and how she finished 3rd overall in 1986 and 1989, despite suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome. *"I had bad experiences with coaches right throughout my cycling career. They forced me to overtrain and agree to questionable medical treatments. I think that's what led to me developing chronic fatigue syndrome."*

The music changes and becomes more ominous. We cut to archive of a news report about the US cycling team being accused of doping at the 1984 Olympic Games.

Inga says, *"I refused to participate in blood doping leading up to the 1984 Olympics. As a result, the national coaches persecuted me and did everything they could to get me to quit. It was so difficult getting kicked out because I chose to be clean."*



We see a montage of archival footage and photos of Inga Thomson racing in the Tour de France Féminin. Inga says, *"When I got the chance to ride in the Tour de France, it seemed like an opportunity to get away from all the crap I had gone through."*

We cut to a series of archival headlines and television news stories about doping in cycling.

The narrator/expert interviewee tells us that the Tour de France was not a safe haven from drugs. Doping was becoming endemic in professional cycling in the 1980s.

Swedish rider, Marie Andersson recalls finding syringes in the women's change room at the Tour de France, *"After that we started wondering, 'Is it really fair?'"*

Australian cycling commentator Matt Keenan tells us that a signature of the drug use in that era was the number of young fit male cyclists who suddenly dropped dead.

We see a photo of a young blonde woman wearing an orange jersey. The narrator/expert interviewee tells us that in 1987, a Tour de France Féminin rider collapsed at the finish line of a race in Holland and died. She was the Dutch rider, Connie Meijer. The official cause of death was a heart attack. She was 25 years old.

Australian Donna Rae-Szalinski says, *"There was certainly question marks over riders from some countries, and sadly a competitor that we raced against passed away. I also remember looking at some people in the peloton and thinking, 'Wow!'"*

Clare Greenwood explains that the women were drug tested daily. *"They've got an area set up to do antidoping. Back then they just took you away... it is a bit of a confronting thing to have to pull your top up to your shoulders and your, your pants down around your knee and have someone watch you pass a specimen."*

We see an archival television clip of Jeannie Longo being interviewed. She is having a friendly chat with the reporter. He asks her if the women riders take banned substances

like the men. She acknowledges that many cyclists will do whatever it takes to improve their performance, but that she prefers to train hard and achieves a similar result. The journalist asks: *"Is that your secret?"* Jeannie Longo laughs and says, *"That's my secret."*

Inga Thomson says, *"I think it was 1987. EPO began hitting women's racing right around that time. The change was obvious. You could tell who was doping by the size of their improvements. Suddenly Jeannie Longo just completely exploded. Out of the blue she started making two and three minute improvements in the time trials. It was ridiculous."*

We see an archival video clip of Jeannie Longo arguing with an official. He is directing her to a drug testing station. The narrator/expert interviewee tells us that in 1987, a couple of months after winning the Tour de France, Jeannie Longo tested positive for the banned substance Ephedrine after setting a world record at a race in Colorado Springs.

The narrator/expert interviewee tells us that Longo furiously denied that she had taken performance-enhancing drugs and publicly accused the head of drug testing for the U.S. Cycling Federation of trying to sabotage her before the 1988 Olympic Games.

In her contemporary sit-down interview, the doping question is put to Jeannie Longo and she mulls over it. Her eventual answer is surprisingly ambiguous. *"There are no level playing fields in sports because we all do what we can to be better. Athletes who do no harm to anyone are pestered."*

The narrator/expert interviewee tells us that Longo was stripped of her world record and received a one-month ban. She was able to return to the Tour de France the following year where she successfully defended her title.

We cut to a photo of Inga Thompson at the Tour de France. She looks determined, almost heroic. *"In the end I had enough. In 1993, I walked away from cycling."*

We cut to a contemporary, slo-mo, portrait style shot of Inga Thompson dressed in the polka dot jersey. She stares accusingly at the camera, then turns and walks out of frame... leaving a void.

We cut to a montage of archival photos and footage of the Tour de France. The women look fit, strong, and increasingly professional.

Clare Greenwood from Great Britain, Kelly Ann Way from Canada, and Liz Hepple from



Australia talk about how the women were becoming increasingly frustrated by the limits placed on their race. *"We were getting better every year. We wanted to ride further, but instead they kept making the race shorter."*

The narrator/expert interviewee tells us that the original three-week version of the Tour de France Féminin lasted only two years. In 1986, the Tour was reduced to two weeks and then was reduced again to just 10 stages.

We cut to archival footage of the Tour de France. A huge convoy of vehicles traverses the French countryside. Official cars and motorcycles, press vehicles, and the bizarre assortment of sponsors' floats that make up the publicity caravan. Horns honk, crowds wave, and gendarmes frantically attempt to direct vehicles.

We cut to television footage of the women's Tour de France. The women are struggling up a narrow mountain pass. Legendary cycling commentator Phil Liggett can be heard saying, *"But my goodness me. I don't think it is any secret to say that the team cars are openly towing the women back up to the main peloton in a desperate effort to keep the women's race ahead of the men. So much so that the American team has threatened to pull out and go home if this cheating continues."*

In an interview, Phil Liggett talks about the logistical problems that beset the women's race. *"The trouble was, they're riding the same course as the men and it wasn't working, because an hour in front of the Tour de France, you have all these publicity vehicles giving out things to the people, and you've got all the entourage behind the women's race. The roads were getting too crowded."*

Phil Liggett's wife, the British team manager, Trish Liggett talks about the problems she encountered during her time managing the team. *"The feeling was: Bloody women. Getting in the way."* Nevertheless, Trish talks about how she did her best to shelter her riders from any problems that she had to deal with.

Clare Greenwood recalls the women being trapped for hours on top of Col du

Tourmalet after finishing a stage because the men's race was coming up behind them. *"It was cold, and we were only wearing our summer cycling kit. We all nearly got hypothermia. It was horrible."*

Phil Liggett tells a story about how one day he was unable to reach his commentary booth at the finish line to call the men's race. He got stuck in his car behind the women's race. *"The girls were zigzagging up this climb in the Alps because it was nearly too steep for them. And the gendarmes wouldn't let my car go past the race at all. And I was fuming. Frustrated wasn't the word."*

ACT THREE

The music changes and becomes discordant and sombre.

We see a montage of newspaper headlines announcing that the Tour de France, Féminin has been cancelled.

We see close up photos of the women's faces. They look sad, confused, and pissed off.

In a series of interviews the women say why they think the race was cancelled. Their opinions are based on rumours and second and third hand information. They are wildly different and often completely contradictory. There is no consensus.

"The race got cancelled because of logistics."

"...because it was too expensive..."

"...there were probably some influential men who didn't want women there..."

"... because the organiser Felix Levitan retired..."

"... because the women were stealing the limelight from the men..."

"... because Jeannie Longo always won..."

"...because Jeannie Longo was going to retire..."

The narrator/expert interviewee tells us that the Tour de France Féminin was

cancelled after 1989. The official reason was that it was judged *"Too restrictive economically"* by the Tour de France.

We cut to contemporary footage of Clare Greenwood at a race in England. She has just finished a race. She packs up her cycling equipment and loads her bike into the car.

Clare tells us that it was a *"slap in the face"* when the Tour was cancelled. *"They had created this amazing race, which we thought that it would go forever and be a springboard for women's cycling. Then it was pulled from under us."*

Other riders chime in with their thoughts. *"It was a capricious decision"*. The hurt is still apparent even after more than 30 years.

The music changes and becomes strangely sapped of energy.

We see archive photos of female riders racing in France. The bicycles are slightly more modern. Their cycling outfits have changed, and everything has a distinct a 1990s aesthetic. There are no crowds. No atmosphere.

The narrator/expert interviewee explains that after the *Tour de France, Féminin*

was cancelled in 1989, it was replaced by a different women's race: The *'Tour Cycliste Féminin'*. This new race would be held at a different time of year... so it would not interfere with the men's Tour de France race.

Clare Greenwood talks about how she rode in several of these races during the 1990s, and how it was never the same after 1989. *"No-one came to watch. Why would they? It wasn't the Tour de France anymore. It was a second-rate race. Towns didn't want to bid to host the start and finish of stages. It was too expensive. Not worth their while. We had to drive further between stages. The accommodation got worse. The media didn't want to cover the race."*

Cycling commentator Phil Liggett says, *"Then the Tour de France decided that the women shouldn't be allowed to use the word 'Tour'. That was only for the men's race."*

The narrator/expert interviewee tells us that the women's race grew smaller and smaller, until 2009 when it was finally cancelled all together.

The women express their frustration at how



women's cycling fell from such a pinnacle. *"We thought we were going to be pioneers, and inspire new generations of women..."*

The music disappears and we hear the sound of wind. Time-lapse footage shows clouds rushing over the mountains, and the seasons passing.

In a short series of portrait vignettes, the key characters in the film describe their lives after the Tour de France and where they are at now.

Marianne Martin (USA)

We see contemporary footage of Marianne Martin at home in Boulder, Colorado. Her Tour de France trophy sits tucked away on a shelf, out of line of sight. It is dusty and has a couple of pens and a bus pass stuffed in it.

She reflects on her cycling career. *"I took home less than \$1,000 in winnings. I retired from cycling \$12,000 in debt and worked two jobs in L.A. to pay it off. But it didn't matter. I felt so lucky to be in France. I got to race my bike every single day for a month. "*

We see photos are Marianne in the years after her cycling career ended. *"The transition from having my sport be my life was difficult. Cycling was my family. My focus. My life. At the time, my cycling family understood me better than my real family."*

We see footage of Marianne at work. She now works as a portrait photographer in Boulder Colorado. We see her in her studio working. *"Just because I was really successful in cycling, it doesn't mean I'm successful in everything in life. I mean, I'm a horrible business person. I'm a great photographer, but I have no discipline."*

We cut to a scene of Marianne having weekly drinks with friends. Marianne seems happy and content.

Marianne says, *"I'm a photographer. I love to stay fit. I mean... winning the tour was something I did a long time ago. It, it doesn't define who I am. A lot of my friends right now don't even know a that I was a cyclist or that I won the tour. It just doesn't come up with a conversation. It's not who you are today. Right. That's not who they're friends with today."*

Inga Thompson (USA)

We see photos of Inga Thompson at the Tour de France surrounded by other girls. Inga talks about how, despite her success, she feels she missed out an opportunity to really advance women's cycling. *"We were all so young back then. Hindsight is wonderful. I'd have spent more time getting to know the people in our federation and try to work with them more, to have been more a voice for the women, advocated for better coaches, more support for the women. Yet, at the time, all I wanted to do was race my bike as hard as I could. It was my love, my passion, my world."*

We see contemporary footage of Inga Thomson working on her ranch. She now lives in the remote town of Halfway Oregon. She describes how she chose to walk away from cycling completely in 1993 because she was so disillusioned by the sanctioned doping.

"I was beyond angry. It was too painful to watch what was going on in the sport, so I shut it out, I refused to even speak about cycling or even tell anyone I raced a bike. Inga talks about how she disappeared from cycling for more than 20 years. She married, divorced, raised her son on her own and bought a cattle ranch in Oregon.

"My ranch was a place to hide for me. I had so much anger to deal with. I'm in a patriarchal, ranching community where it allowed me to escape. I always had this dream of farming. We see contemporary photos of Inga. She is at various cycling races talking animatedly to female riders and posing for the camera. Inga talks about her decision to get involved in cycling again after more than 20 years away. She tells us about the foundation she has started for female cyclists.

"There does seem to be positive change happening in the racing field for the women. I see more and more advocates for the women, more grass roots programs, more awareness, more coverage. Now that my son is off to college, I'd like to help in the movement for the women. It's time for me to give back to the sport."

Maria Canins (Italy)

Maria Canins lives in the same little village in the Italian Dolomites where grew up. She retired from cycling in 1992 aged 42. She is now aged in her mid 70s.

We see photos of Maria with her husband and children. She talks about life after the Tour de France. Her marriage and raising her two children.

We see footage of Maria out walking and riding her mountain bike. *"I still love walking. Getting out in the fresh air and discovering new places in my valley. I train the kids at the cross-country skiing club. And I try to transmit my passion for sport. Not for winning. Simply for doing something wholesome with your life."* I am also a cycle tour guide and lead rides around the Dolomites. We have around 20 or 30 people in the group. We get a lot of young women who join the rides too. They look so elegant in their chic jerseys and shorts on stylish bikes. Sometimes they worry about not being able to manage the mountains. But then they only need to look at me and how old I am, and they think to themselves "if she is doing it at her age then I should be capable too!"

Kelly Ann-Way (Canada)

We see footage of Kelly Ann Way in her home in Winsor, Ontario.

We see photos of Kelly Ann in the years after the Tour de France. She talks about her life and her family and where she went with her career.

Kelly Ann tells a story about how, when she was little, her daughter did a presentation in primary school about how her mother rode in the Tour de France. *"The teacher told her she was making it up because women don't ride in the Tour de France. I was so angry."*

"Did you know that I was the first ever non-European, male or female, to win a stage of the Tour de France? My husband is a former cyclist as well, and he said, 'If you were a man, you'd have lots of money,' There were men who accomplished a quarter of what I did and... yeah... you can be bitter about it. But what can I do? I was just pleased that I



was able to push myself to race at that level. I know what I accomplished, and no one can take that away."

Clare Greenwood (Great Britain)

We cut to footage of Clare Greenwood at a local race in Britain. She buckles up her helmet and wheels her bike to the starting line. She is surrounded by other riders of the same age.

Clare says, *"When I had first joined a cycling club, I wasn't really welcome as a female. But all of these riders I rode with were obsessed by the Tour de France. So, when I raced in it and did well, I came home and was totally accepted after that."*

We see photos of Clare at races in Europe and America in the 1990s. Clare talks about how she continued to race at the highest level for more than a decade after the Tour de France ended... and how she kept racing even after that.

We see footage of Clare in Florida. She is walking along a beach holding hands with another woman. Clare tells us that she now splits her time between her home in England, her second home in Florida where her partner lives, and Europe where she continues to race very competitively in Masters races.

Clare's partner talks about how sad it makes her that Clare doesn't talk much about her experiences at the Tour de France. Clare talks about how very few people remember the Tour de France, Féminin. Even most cycling fans seem unaware that there was a women's race in the 1980s.

"It makes me so angry that people don't remember what we did. There have been so many books written and documentaries made about men's cycling... but you go online and there is almost no mention of the women's Tour de France. The 1980s is this golden era of cycling. Every cycling fan knows all about the famous rivalries and victories of Fignon, Hinault, Lemond and Roche... but they don't know that we were there and that we raced too."

Liz Hepple (Australia)

We see footage of Liz Hepple at home in

Brisbane, Australia. She is exercising on a wind trainer next to a swimming pool surrounded by palm trees. She still looks extremely fit.

We see photos of her life after cycling. She tells us that she retired after the 1988 Tour de France because being away in Europe half the year was placing too much strain on her new marriage. *"My husband was quite happy for me not to do any more international racing. In some ways I regret that I couldn't have raced for longer... I had that sort of like finite line of, okay, if I'm gonna have children, I have to do it by a certain age. That would be my only regret. It's getting better in women's sport... they can get maternity leave when they have children. But that certainly didn't happen back in the 1980s."*

We see footage of Liz working in her job at the Queensland Institute of Sport. She is talking to some young female cyclists. She talks about how she loves her job acting as a mentor to young female athletes. *"These young women today don't realise how easy they have it."*

We see photos of Liz at the Tour de France in 2018. She talks about how, on a whim, she applied for a job with a cycling holiday company to lead tourists on trips to the Tour de France. *"I gave them my CV, which was pretty good, you know, 3rd at the Tour de France. 2nd at the Giro d'Italia... and they called me the next day and told me I had the job."*

Jeannie Longo (France)

We see footage of Jeannie Longo looking after her chickens at her home in France.

Jeannie talks about how she retired from cycling in 1989 because she wanted to have a baby. But she failed to become pregnant and, just a year, later she returned to competitive cycling.

"Cycling freed me because I did things that I would never have done with a normal life... but I am also a prisoner of cycling. I am caught in a web. I invested myself so heavily into cycling that there were other things I never did."

We see a montage of Jeannie Longo riding in world championships and Olympic Games.

Jeannie tells us about her illustrious career. *"I am 25-time French national champion, I won the Tour de France three times, I was world champion thirteen times, I set 38 world records, I rode in seven Olympic Games ... in 1996 in Atlanta I won the gold medal..."*

We see an archival television news report from 2011. Police cars are shown parked outside Jeannie Longo's farmhouse carrying out a raid. The report tells us that Jeannie Longo's husband was arrested and jailed for possession and distribution of performance enhancing drugs.

A French television chat show discusses the case. The panellists talk about the fact that Jeannie Longo has been cleared of suspicion of being an accomplice, but that her entire career is now tainted by the suspicion of doping.

We see contemporary photos of Jeannie Longo competing in races. She is aged in her mid 60s but looks as fit as her competitors who are half her age.

"Retirement? What retirement? I continue to do small regional races, time trials or even the master's World Championships... In my

categories, I sometimes win. Retirement is a kind of failure. It's admitting that you have to stop. It's hard. That's the dilemma because stopping means giving up, fleeing."

We see more time-lapse footage that suggest the years passing.

Increasingly modern footage and photos show women racing. The bikes and the technology visibly improve as the years pass.

Cycling commentator Bridie O'Donnell talks about how female cycling continued to grow and progress. There were now professional women's cycling teams, and many of the major men's cycling teams now also have a women's team. It finally reached the stage where women could make a living as a professional cyclist.

"Women started to say, 'Hang on... Why isn't there a Tour de France for women?' And their voices got louder and louder with every year that passed."

We see more modern footage of women racing in France. There are crowds cheering them.

The narrator/expert interviewee tells us that



eventually the Tour de France gave in to the calls for a women's race. In 2014, a new race called "*La Course by Le Tour de France*" would be held. It would be a one day, 90km race, that would be held on the same day as one of the men's stages, before the men raced.

Cycling commentator Bridie O'Donnell tells us that the new race both excited and infuriated the female racing community. "*I mean it was great that the women were back as part of the Tour de France again... but it was really just a token event. It was meant to placate the women's racing community. But instead, it just made the calls for a proper women's Tour de France grow louder.*"

The music changes. It becomes more positive. It starts slowly and begins to build.

We see contemporary footage of our characters. They are at their homes in their respective countries. They are all getting ready for a bike ride. The scene cuts between them as they get ready. They pull jerseys out of drawers. They ratchet up their cycling shoes. They grease their chains. They do up their helmets. They wheel their bikes out of the garage. A foot clips into a pedal. A rider pushes off and becomes defocused as they begin their ride.

We cut to contemporary footage of the 2022 Tour de France. It is a huge and grand spectacle. More than a hundred cyclists are lined up at the start line of the stage. The cyclists are fit, athletic looking women in team jerseys adorned with major sponsor logos. They wear state of the art aerodynamic helmets and expensive sunglasses.

The starting gun fires. The crowd roars. The sound is deafening. The women roll across the starting line and start to race.

We see crisp, high-definition television footage of the women racing through France, along roads lined with spectators waving flags. The commentator can be heard talking about the new women's Tour de France Race.

The narrator/expert interviewee tells us that in 2022, a new women's stage race was held as part of the Tour de France... for the first time in 33 years.

Canadian Kelly Ann Way says, "*I would like to see the media get the facts straight. Several of the media outlets are reporting that this new race is 'history making for women.' It is not. The 1984 inaugural Tour de France Féminin was history-making.*"

In a series of interviews, our characters talk about their thoughts about the new Tour de France. Their emotions are bittersweet... Regret at being born a couple of generations too early to make a living as a professional cyclist. Pride at seeing a new generation of women competing in the Tour de France.

Marianne Martin says, "*It's a start. This new race is only 8 stages. It should be longer. The prizemoney isn't equal yet. But it's a start.*"

The music changes. It becomes positive and uplifting. Anthemic. The film is coming to a close.

We cut to contemporary footage of our characters. They are all in the great outdoors surrounded by majestic scenery. They are riding their bikes, or riding horses, or hiking or skiing. It is magic hour. The sun is about to set.

The women traverse the landscape in slow motion. We hear their voices summing up their final thoughts about riding the Tour de France.

"We were there representing something bigger than ourselves."

"Oh, yes. I still think there's ripples. All the way to today, with the modern women that are riding, that are on the backs of what has been done previously. Only the riders that were in that moment can understand exactly where they fit in to that big tapestry that we see on the wall. And we see that one colour, that one little thread that goes throughout that whole tapestry. And we can say, "That little thread, it started in 1984".

"I feel like I can do anything now because I rode the Tour de France."

The music crescendos and fades. The losing credits roll.

Breakaway FEMMIES



CONTACT

ESCAPADE MEDIA PTY LTD

Building 21, Fox Studios Australia
38 Driver Avenue
Moore Park NSW 2021, Australia

CONTACT

Natalie Lawley

natalie@escapademediamedia.com.au

 **ESCAPADE**MEDIA