

## **Contador Won the 2010 Tour in only 115 KM**

The 2010 was won by Alberto Contador with a winning margin of just 39 seconds over Andy Schleck, the 7<sup>th</sup> closest finish in Tour history. Although the Tour covered 3642 kilometers, only 115 of these kilometers spread over six stages were decisive in determining the winning margin. The other 3527 kilometers saw Schleck and Contador riding nearly next to each other. Of all the kilometers ridden, only 3.2% of them determined the winner. Here is a breakdown of the six critical portions of the stages that were decisive in Contador's victory.

Prologue: Contador gained 42 seconds over Schleck in the 8.9 km prologue. Decisive km = 9.

Stage 3: This 213 km stage included six sections of cobblestones towards the end of the stage. On the fourth section, approximately 25km from the finish line, Schleck was able to drop Contador with the help of teammate Fabian Cancellara. By the finish line, Schleck had gained 1:13 over Contador to give Schleck a 31 second advantage overall in the GC. Decisive km = 25.

Stage 8: On this mountaintop finish at Morzine-Avoriaz, with less than 1 km to go, Schleck was able to gap Contador and gain another 10 seconds, to increase his overall lead by 41 seconds. Decisive km = 1.

Stage 12: This stage had a short, tough little hill at the end of the stage at Mende. This time, Contador attacked with 3km to go and gapped Schleck by to get his 10 seconds back so he was only down by 31 seconds again . Decisive km = 3.

Stage 15: The now famous chain incident occurred on this stage. About 3 km from the top of the last climb, Port de Bales, Schleck attacked and threw his chain and had to stop and fumbled putting it back on. Contador had responded to his attack and passed the slowing Schleck and went on to gain 39 seconds by the end of the stage, which finished down the mountain at Bagnieres de Luchon. Although Schleck chased, he was never able to gain back the time lost stopped to put his chain back on. Contador went from a 31 second deficit to an 8 second advantage overall. Decisive km = 25.

Stage 19: The one and only time trial of this tour, other than the prologue was the second to last stage. This was a 52km time trial. Schleck only needed to gain 9 seconds to win his first Tour. Instead he lost 31 seconds to Contador and ended up 39 seconds down overall, which is how it finished the next day on the Champs Elysees. Decisive km = 52.

This isn't to suggest that the other 3527 km were not important. They certainly were. They added fatigue to both riders, changing their ability to attack and counter-attack, and to time trial, and it was during these km that the other potential contenders fell by the wayside.

There are a couple of interesting points to ponder.

First, a couple of interesting numbers:

31: The number of seconds Schleck led by at the beginning of Stage 15 where the infamous chain incident occurred

31: The number of seconds Contador gained during the final time trial

39: The number of seconds Schleck lost during the chain incident

39: The number of seconds by which Contador ultimately won the Tour

One can only image how very close the Tour would have been had the chain incident not occurred and Schleck carried that 31 second advantage into the final time trial, where Contador gained his 31 seconds. It could have very well been the closest finish ever.

Second, the only time Schleck and Contador gained time over each other was when drafting was minimized and other skills came to the forefront. Time gains were made in the two time trials, where no drafting is allowed. Time was gained on the cobblestones where power, skill, strong teammates and luck took priority. Three mountain climbs determined the other three time gains, where climbing power was much more important than drafting, although Contador was able to maintain his advantage after the 'chain incident' by following some good descenders down the mountain. In the end, the Tour was decided on select portions of six stages where various skills (time trialing, riding cobblestones, shifting, climbing and descending) were involved. These represented a very small portion of the entire Tour route yet proved ultimately decisive. One could say these were the places where the race was 'on'. It was during these few key times that the real battle for the Tour took place.

There was and will be a lot of debate whether sportsmanship was at play when Contador gained time on Schleck due to his 'mechanical' problem. Initially I didn't think it was fair play but after having time to think through it, I have decided it was fair, for two reasons:

1) This was one of the very few sections of the entire Tour where the race was really 'on'. Schleck drew first blood by attacking at a decisive and strategic attacking point in the mountains. Contador had no choice but to respond. It turned out to be one of the only six places in the Tour that created separation.

2) It turns out the chain incident was caused by a shifting error, in other words, operator error. Unlike a true mechanical, such as a flat tire, a thrown chain due to operator error is part of riding a bike and seems like an incident that should be taken advantage of as it was a lapse in attention or skill of the rider.

While the debate will go on and people will continue to wonder "what if", one thing is for certain. The 2011 Tour de France is already shaping up to be one of the greatest battles in Tour history.

All the best in training, and winning the Tour!  
Coach David Ertl

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David Ertl is a USA Cycling Level 1 (Elite) Coach and NSCA Certified Personal Trainer. He coaches individuals interested in improving on their current cycling ability, whatever level that may be. He also provides cycling training plans and ebooks at his website: [www.cyclesportcoaching.com](http://www.cyclesportcoaching.com)  
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