

# The day the peloton lost its way

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July 17, 2006



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It's the one time a year that more than fifty people in the United States actually give a hoot about bicycle racing. Yes, it's the Tour de France. (Follow the racers live via GPS!) But this story isn't about the Tour. It's about Stage 4 of the 2005 ENECO Tour. You can follow along with the live report. Everything was going pretty much like a typical racing stage, until time code 13:55.

Veikkanen is now gone from the back of the lead group, but the peloton appears to have taken a wrong turn!!

The peloton is just stopped in the road.

nobody knows what happened, riders are getting off their bikes. Zabel and Verbrugghe are now negotatiting with the race leadership. Verbrugghe gestures that the peloton must follow him and that he'll just lead them back unto the race parcours. He's a local guy, and he probably knows the way. The peloton now over small roads that aren't part of the parcours with Verbrugghe leading the way.

It's almost a Monty Python episode! Riders are everywhere!

That's right. The peloton got lost. But keep reading. The story gets more and more bizarre. The police get involved to detain the three lead riders! Here's a news report that is less stream-of-consciousness. I remember in last year's Tour, a rider whose name I recognized was disqualified for being too far behind the stage winner. Apparently, the rules require all riders to be within a certain amount of time of the leader; I guess the idea is to make the domestiques at least put up the appearance of trying to win. I wondered if there ever was a Tour stage where the winner had such a huge lead that the entire peloton was disqualified. What a strange situation that would be!

It turns out that it actually did happen. I lost the link, however, but maybe somebody can find it for me. There was one stage some years ago where the stage winner had such an enormous lead on the peloton that according to the rules, the entire peloton would have been

disqualified! However, the race rules also contain a clause granting the race director the authority to cancel the “automatic disqualification” if doing so would be to the detriment of the race itself. Obviously, this was one of those times.

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