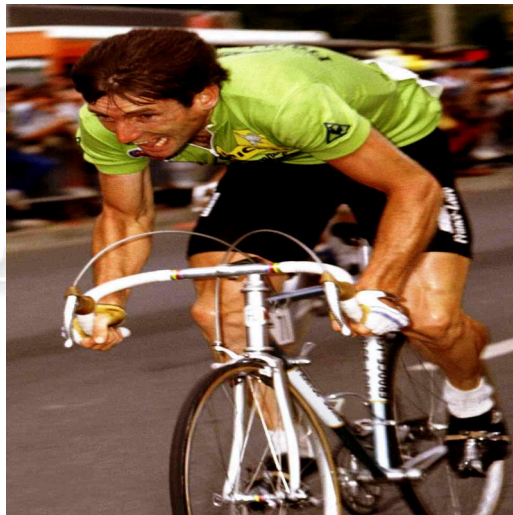


SPORTING LEGENDS: SEAN KELLY

SPORT: CYCLING

COMPETITIVE ERA: 1977 - 1994

Sean Kelly (born May 24, 1956, Waterford, Republic of Ireland but raised near Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary, Republic of Ireland), is a former professional cyclist.



A natural sprinter, Kelly won numerous Classic cycle races and stages of the Grand Tours. He also won the 1988 Vuelta a España, and was the first rider to win the points classification in the Tour de France four times.

Sean Kelly was one of the most dominant and successful cyclists of the 1980's and is regarded as one of the finest Classics riders of all time. From the start of his professional career in 1977 until his retirement in 1994, Kelly won 9 'Monuments of Cycling' Classics, and 193 races in total, a tally only bettered by the great Eddy Merckx.

Kelly also won the Paris-Nice stage race seven years in a row, and topped the inaugural UCI World Cup rankings. He has a Grand Tour victory to his credit in the 1988 Vuelta a España, and multiple wins in the Tour of Lombardy, Milan-San Remo, Paris-Roubaix and Liege-Bastogne-Liege.

Other victories include the Criterium Internationale, Grand Prix des Nations and many national tours, including Tours of Switzerland, Basque Region, Catalonia, and Ireland. Notably missing from his list of victories is the World Cycling Championship rainbow jersey, which he almost won in a close battle against Greg Lemond in 1989.

SPORTING LEGENDS: SEAN KELLY



Sean Kelly always gave 100% on every ride. Serious Peroneus muscle definition!

When FICP introduced world cycling rankings in March 1984, Kelly was the first rider to be ranked World No.1, a title he held for over 6 years and which still remains a record. Kelly was known to be one of the hard men of professional cycling and was nicknamed "The Cannibal" because of his insatiable appetite for victory, achieving an incredible 33 victories in one season (1984).

While some sprinters prefer to remain sheltered in the peloton until the final few hundred metres of a race, Kelly was capable of instigating breaks and could climb well, proving this by winning the Vuelta a España in 1988.

His victories in Paris-Roubaix (1984, 1986) showed his ability to battle against poor weather and terrible road conditions, while in the Tour de France he could stay with the climbing specialists in the mountains.

He finished 4th in the Tour in 1985 and he won the *Maillot vert* (The Green Jersey) in 1982, 1983, 1985 and 1989, becoming the first rider to win the Tour's points classification four times, a feat he repeated in the Tour of Spain. Kelly won 21 stages in Grand Tours, 5 in the Tour de France and an impressive 16 in the Tour of Spain.

Kelly was also known as a fearless descender and excellent bike handler. His brilliant victory in Milan-San Remo in 1992 saw him fly down the Poggio descent in solo pursuit of leader Moreno Argentin to make up a deficit in excess of 20 seconds in a matter of 2 kilometers.

He caught Argentin just before the finish line and beat him in the final sprint with the remainder of the peloton breathing down his neck, seemingly without much effort.

SPORTING LEGENDS: SEAN KELLY



Kelly was also a great descent rider, and fearless amongst a crowd of competitors.

Kelly also competed throughout the entire season, from the season-opener Paris-Nice in early March to season-finale Tour of Lombardy in October, starting and finishing the season by winning both of these events in 1983 and 1985.

Grand Tour Stage Wins

- 1978 - 6th stage of Tour de France
- 1979 - 1st and 5th stages of the Tour of Spain
- 1980 - 1st, 2nd, 14th, 17th, 19th stages of the Tour of Spain;
- 1980 - 19th, 21st stages of the Tour de France
- 1981 - 15th stage of Tour de France
- 1982 - 12th stage Tour de France
- 1985 - 2nd, 9th, 15th stages of Tour of Spain
- 1986 - Stages 10 and 13 of Tour of Spain
- 1987 - Stages 1 and 3 of the Tour of Spain
- 1988 - Stages 11 and 20 (and overall winner) of the Tour of Spain

'Monument' Victories

- Milan-San Remo 1986, 1992
- Paris-Roubaix 1984, 1986
- Liège-Bastogne-Liège 1984, 1989
- Giro di Lombardia 1983, 1985, 1991 (victor of amateur version in 1976)

SPORTING LEGENDS: SEAN KELLY



Ready to roll; Kelly awaits yet another endurance-sapping tour ride!

Other 'Classics'

Blois-Chaville - 1984 (this race has more commonly been run as Paris-Tours)
GP Plouay - Ouest France - 1984
Gent-Wevelgem - 1988
Grand Prix des Nations - 1986
Tour du Haut Var - 1982
Criterium des As - 1984, 1985, 1986
GP d'Isbergues - 1983
Paris-Bourges - 1984

Stage Race Victories

Vuelta a España - 1988
Paris-Nice - 1982-1988 (7 consecutive wins, a record)
Tour de Suisse - 1983, 1990
Volta Ciclista a Catalunya - 1984, 1986
Vuelta Ciclista al País Vasco/Euskal Herriko txirrindulari itzulia - 1984, 1986, 1987
Criterium International - 1983, 1984, 1987
Setmana Catalana de Ciclisme - 1988
Driedaagse van De Panne - 1980
Nissan International Classic - 1985, 1986, 1987, 1991

SPORTING LEGENDS: SEAN KELLY



Scott Burton's Final Thought

Sean Kelly was a great cyclist, and represented his country on countless occasions with reverend pride.

It's always great to watch athletes who give their absolute all, combined with their undoubted natural talent and genetic potential. Sean Kelly maximised his potential, of that there can be no doubt.

At the end of each tour stage he rode, he looked absolutely spent - never holding anything back. That kind of attitude belies the heart of a true champion.

Kelly's career is also remarkable in that his 14 Tour de France starts spanned the eras of Eddy Merckx, Bernard Hinault, Greg Lemond, Miguel Indurain and the early career of Lance Armstrong.

Evidence of his dominance can be seen from his three victories in the season-long Super Prestige Pernod International competition.



Sean Kelly's blood-and-guts approach to cycling made him a true sporting legend.