



In Search of Robert Millar: Unravelling the Mystery Surrounding Britain's Most Successful Tour De France Cyclist

Richard Moore

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The compelling story of Britain's best-ever cyclist – one of the most enigmatic, complex and contradictory athletes in any sport – and the unravelling of the puzzle surrounding his sudden and dramatic disappearance. Cyclist Robert Millar came from one of Europe's most industrialised cities, Glasgow, to excel in the most unlikely terrain – over the high mountain passes of the Pyrenees and the Alps. He was crowned King of the Mountains during the 1984 Tour de France and remains the only ever Briton to finish on the podium of the world's toughest race. In attitude and appearance he was unconventional – the malnourished-looking young Scot with the tiny stud in his ear who could be prickly, irascible and unapproachable – but to many followers he was the epitome of cool. Flying the flag for British cycling, this one-off original became a cult hero. In Search of Robert Millar will follow the career of this other-worldly character, from his tough childhood on the streets of Glasgow in the 1960s to his move to France and success in the world's most brutal and unforgiving races, including the controversy surrounding his positive drugs test and his enforced retirement from the sport at the age of 36. It examines what set Millar apart from all other British cyclists who tried, and failed, to make an impact in this most European of sports, describing his single-mindedness, his eccentricity and the humour and intelligence that emerged only towards the end of his career. It also proffers explanations for his subsequent disappearance, which repeated a familiar pattern; he vanished from Glasgow and never returned; he left his wife and son and his adopted country, France. Now, it appears, he has turned his back on cycling (amid rumours that he had undergone a sex-change operation). Through interviews with Millar's friends, acquaintances, cycling colleagues and ex-classmates, author Richard Moore helps to unravel the mystery of this maverick Scotsman, arguably one of the greatest enigmas in a sport full of remarkable characters. Richard Moore is a freelance journalist who has written on sport, art and literature, contributing to the Scotsman, Scotland on Sunday, Herald, Guardian and Sunday Times. He was a member of the Scotland team in the Prutour, the nine-day cycling tour of Britain, and represented Scotland in the 1998 Commonwealth Games.

In Search of Robert Millar: Unravelling the Mystery Surrounding Britain's Most Successful Tour De France Cyclist Details

Date : Published (first published September 28th 2007)

ISBN :

Author : Richard Moore

Format : Kindle Edition

Genre : Sports, Cycling, Biography, Nonfiction, Sports and Games, Biography Memoir



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Ginniep says

Being French, I grew up, watching the Tour de France on TV with my grandfather, I saw the echappees and the peloton every few summers just down the road from where we lived. We gathered on rainy Sundays as a family to watch the Paris – Roubaix and it is famous paves. Poulidor, Anquetil, Merckx, Hinault and many other are part of my vocabulary. But I never thought about what laid behind until I read this book, the pains and sacrifices each of the riders make as well as the strategies behind the race. Millar is a great character, the forever outsider .. Interesting comment on French culture too.. Captivating book, one of the best I read!!

Dan Cohen says

I enjoyed this book but have to say that the lack of substantive input from the subject and from so many of the key figures in his life makes it hard to see as a definitive bio. This is not the author's fault - it seems that Millar and his family are very hard to pin down, but does make the author's attempts to psychoanalyse Millar rather inconclusive. I had not realised just how long a career Millar had, or how suddenly he was catapulted to fame with his KoM title and 4th place overall in the Tour de France, followed by a number of years of never quite living up to that initial eye-catching success. That's not to denigrate Millar - he achieved great things as a cyclist before and after, but none to quite capture the imagination in the same way.

Millar's character is strongly portrayed by the author. I'm a huge admirer of Millar the athlete and the author is at pains to point out how many of his professional associates rated him highly as a human being, but he seems to have been a nightmare for everyone else. Someone who could be as nice a guy as anyone if he happened to have time for you but without much toleration for the vast majority of human beings.

The rather speculative nature of the book makes it hard to rate highly, but it's still essential reading for any British follower of cycling in the 80's.

Increase Mather says

I am always excited to learn anything about cycling history, and this really filled in some gaps for me. Robert Millar's career was exciting and fascinating. His personal story, eh ... somewhat interesting.

What ended up distracting and frustrating the story was the author's adulation and delight for Millar. Moore's blind love for Millar demanded a comment on *every* little & tiny capsule of his life. Personally, I didn't find the thousands of comments valuable or interesting ... I was interested in the story itself. Moore really tried to be insightful ... but I think he failed.

The greatest insight to the story and the man, Millar, came from More's *wonderful* and *extensive* research and

interviews. So many good quotes - *they* made the book worthwhile.

John McCormick says

Absolutely riveting part biography part detective story, and so rare these days a sports biography in which the actual subject of the book Robert Millar barely contributed. The author as the title suggests tells the story of the cyclists career, and searches for him now and what happened once he stepped off the bike.

Sum Doood says

First rate writing about an unusually interesting racing cyclist.

Jtomassetti says

IN SEARCH OF ROBERT MILLAR was written by Richard Moore. For most Americans, the title could have been WHO IS ROBERT MILLAR. Until Mark Cavendish came onto the scene, Robert Millar was the best ever British pro and he is still the only English speaking rider to win the King of the Mountains in the Tour de France.

Moore had to write the book without the assistance of Robert Millar as Millar disappeared after he dropped out the cycling scene. Nevertheless, through interview and excellent research, Moore gives the reader a complete view of the good and bad aspects of Robert Millar. Millar turns out to be a loner, who worked hard and followed his own road to success. Robert Millar didn't see himself as the most talented cyclist but he was able to succeed due to hard work.

In addition to the story of Robert Millar, the author as covers the famous riders from the mid-70s to the mid-80s including Paul Sherwen, Stephen Roche, Sean Yates, Sean Kelly, Pedro Delgado, Allan Peiper, Graeme Obree and Chris Boardman.

The book gets a little slow at times but overall it is enjoyable.

Pablo says

A good book about a rider I had little memory of. While not as enthralling as Moore's "Slaying the Badger", still a fine addition to cycling history. Filled with strange characters and even stranger circumstances, it gives a good overview of the nastiness and brutality, inherent it seems, in the business of professional cycling. Solid 4 stars !

Cyclingart says

If there's one book to read on the great Scotsman, this is it. I enjoyed it and still marvel at how good he was despite the mystery!

Sid Smallman says

A fascinating read of a rider who appeared outwardly taciturn but who is an equally fascinating character. Reading this made me also purchase the dvd mentioned within the book, another equally fascinating insight

Michael says

This is probably the best cycling book I've read. I've only followed professional cycling for about 8 years. The book describes the career and life of Robert Millar as seen by his contemporaries. Richard Moore does a fine job describing the day to day life of top professional cyclists in the 80's and early 90's. It sheds a light on an era and riders of know of but never really knew.

D says

Richard Moore brings on a journey of exploration - trying to find Robert Millar, and find him in more ways than one. The word that everyone who knew him when he was cycling said off the man from Glasgow is that he was 'special.'

In this enigmatic figure we find a man who can be gruff, direct, and not really out to make friends or influence people who could help him. He just puts the miles in and attempts to be the best that he can be - and he was King of the Mountains in the TdF, and in the Giro D'Italia. He was a legendary climber and after his retirement he wrote a few articles for cycling magazines, but effectively he disappeared - only surfacing via emails to small select few people.

He's gone from cycling - but his wisdom lives on in this book as does that air of 'special' that was about him.

'You don't get good legs looking at the Telly' was one of his Millarisms. I know what he means but it is so wet and grey out there!

Claire Webster says

My interest in cycling came just after Robert Millar's heyday, so unlike many readers, and indeed the author, of this book, I cannot say that watching him win the King of the Mountains jersey in the Tour de France, or battle against the 'Spanish Armada' in the Vuelta were formative moments for me. Nonetheless, I found this

book fascinating. To say that Millar was and is an enigma is an understatement and Richard Moore makes it clear that this is a man who gave and gives concessions to no-one (you only have to read his occasional blogs for cycling magazines to realise that this is still the case). Ahead of his time in many ways, pricklier than any other sportsman in the history of sport -- heck, even Graeme Obree found him difficult -- Millar has succeeded in remaining largely hidden in retirement and this book goes some way to squirreling him out and explaining him.

Derek says

Richard Moore has admirably captured the spirit and character of Robert in the book. He [Richard] has done an amazing amount of research into writing this biography. And it is much more than a 'Sports Biography', with comprehensive accounts of each Robert cycling seasons. It has I feel, a fairly sad ending, perhaps because of the apparent closing of a door on Robert's life.

It really is a 'warts and all' story, and none the worse for that.

There's an amazing amount of detail in the book, despite Robert not having a great deal to do with it, although he gives it his blessing and adds some email comments on various aspects. His explanation of the doping scandals and EPO testing criteria was very interesting indeed, especially the different rules regarding cyclists and cross-country skiers for example. This is a must buy for anyone remotely interested in bike racing. Well done Richard, you've done Robert proud.

Robert Daly says

Excellent read!

Excellent read! Brings back great memories of watching the Tour on Channel 4 in the 80s. Also really enjoyed Slaying the Badger by Moore so it's on to his next book.

Adrian says

Very interesting portrait of a great British cyclist who should have more recognition for his achievements.
