

DOMINIQUE ROLLIN




FOR MOST AMERICANS WATCHING the racing scene, the name Dominique Rollin doesn't exactly roll off the tongue. Built like Tom Boonen, this tall, muscular 25-year old from Quebec broke into the scene in a big way with a gutsy, solo move to win stage 4 in the Amgen Tour of California. Victories are nothing new to Rollin. After starting racing at a young age, Rollin went to Europe and discovered how hard cycling could be. He returned to Canada wondering if he'd race again. But a phone call from a famous director got him back racing in Europe. After a stint in France, Rollin returned to North America and quickly started making a name for himself with consistent results. When Kodak Gallery-Sierra Nevada folded, the offers started coming in. Now with a major stage win under his belt, Rollin is poised to show American cycling what he's all about.



All images of Dominique were shot by John Segesta in a hotel room in Solvang, CA after the stage 5 time trial at the '08 Amgen Tour of California.



 **ON RACING IN FRANCE:**
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How did you get started in cycling?

Dominique Rollin: It was out of the blue. My mother brought my brother to a bike race and he decided to race; I followed him into racing the next year. The first year I raced, I followed him on my mountain bike as he trained on his road bike. I kept following him and I gave racing a try. Here I am.

You make it sound so simple.

Rollin: It kind of was that simple. It was about having fun and traveling across the province [of Quebec]. I started really young, and as the years went by, I did bigger and bigger races. I was on the National Team as a junior, and from there I went to Europe for some races and signed for a pro team in Canada called Simpatico, now known as Jet Fuel. I raced for them for two years and then decided to go overseas and race in France.

Was racing in France hard culturally, even as a French speaker?

Rollin: It was hard because I was young and I came from friendly Quebec [style] racing and having fun on the bike. I went over there and the culture was quite different from the North American way of seeing things. It made it hard early on. It was a different way of seeing the sport. The races were harder and longer. It was a tough experience for

me, those three years. It almost cracked me, and I almost stopped cycling in 2005 just because of the lack of support the team gave. They paid foreigners to be on the team, but didn't support you in the hard times. They only wanted you to focus on the sport and didn't give you a break.

So what made you continue to race and not return to Canada?

Rollin: I did. I went home in 2005 and raced for a small club in Quebec. I did a couple of races and had fun. I went back to school at the same time. I started a cooking management degree. What changed everything was a stage win at the Tour de Beauce [2005] and holding onto the leader's jersey for two days, then winning Montreal to Quebec, a 275 kilometer classic. It made me realize that I could do something and give it another shot. At the same time, I got a phone call from Cyrille Guimard from V.C. Roubaix Lille Metropole and went back to Europe.

Cyrille Guimard has worked with Greg LeMond and Bernard Hinault. That must have been quite an experience working with him.

Rollin: I was expecting bigger, out of the ordinary. It turns out he was quite relaxed. It was another experience and I learned a bit more. The amateur racing was of a higher level in Europe, and he

gave me a good opportunity to get good results. Winning the National Championships opened a lot of doors to North American racing.

Did Guimard give you any advice when you were riding for his team?

Rollin: Not much. He wasn't in charge of my training. He overlooked the team, but didn't give as much advice as I expected. He did tell me that he saw some good things in me, but the main thing he told me was that like any good sprinter, I didn't like to train a lot. He told me as soon as I realized that, I would become a better cyclist. And you know, I think he was right.

So you don't like to train?

Rollin: It's a bit of laziness that sprinters have. You don't want to train much and stay fresh. It turns out that you are not as good as you could be.

Do you have a regular program now, or if I may quote you, do you 'still have a bit of laziness?

Rollin: Things have changed. After 2006, I was in Europe and I started working with Brian Walton. I became more organized with my program. Last year, I showed my capacity by being quite stable and being in good form the entire season. This year has shown more improvement, and hopefully, it can stay like this the entire season.



You were third in GC at the Tour of Missouri. Was that a much needed result or did you already have a team in mind when Kodak Gallery-Sierra Nevada folded?

Rollin: I was already talking to other teams, but it helped seal the deal. I had constant top-10's throughout the season and nine wins. So, coming to the Tour of Missouri, one of the three biggest races in America, I thought I could do something at a higher level and be someone a team could rely on.

Are you looking to become signed to a ProTour level team and return to Europe?

Rollin: At the moment, there is no racing, just local criteriums. It is a bit harder to maintain the high-level of fitness without high-level races all year round. However, the circuit in the U.S. is improving every year. At the moment, I am quite satisfied with how I am doing here and how things are turning out. But for sure, Europe has so many races I'd like to start in. Maybe one day, in my wildest dream, I would like to start at Roubaix. Racing on the cobbles; I would love to try that one day and start there. We'll see. Maybe Toyota-United will step up and race in Europe.

Kodak Gallery-Sierra Nevada was a smaller team compared to where you are now. How is it being with a team like Toyota-United?

Rollin: So far the experience has been great. My approach of the sport hasn't changed and I kept doing hard work with my coach Brian Walton to be prepared for harder events such as Amgen Tour of California and Tour de Georgia. At first, I was scared not to be able to express myself by being surrounded by strong riders and well established sprinters. But it turned out that Len [Pettyjohn] and Scott [Moninger] did great work by putting this team together. They managed to have a team where everyone completes themselves. We all have a role to play on the team and it allows me to touch different aspect of the sport, one day as lead out man for a team mate and the next, protected sprinter. I'm learning from a great mentor, Henk Vogels who helps me with my reading of the race, prior to a sprint or how to set a proper pace leading to the finish. But mostly how to stay calm facing the decisive moments of the race. It feels good to be able to help a team mate towards his success and to be respected as part of a team where everyone acknowledges each others contributions. Toyota-United gives me the opportunity to gain experience as a team mate and not only focussing on my own goals, but mainly on the team goals.


What is it about Toyota-United that has riders step up and achieve results?

Rollin: The management has a different approach. We are an aggressive team and make the race, instead of just waiting and folding our cards at the end. It paid off in California with the result we had. With guys behind us like Len and Scott, they bring a lot of experience to the team. It helps us to step up. They can read a race. Also, being surrounded by guys



ON TOYOTA-UNITED'S RESULTS: We are an aggressive team and make the race instead of just waiting and folding our cards...



 **ON LONG-TERM GOALS:** Paris-Roubaix is a long-term goal; to be in Europe to be part of that race.

like Henk Vogels, Ivan Dominguez, and Ivan Stevic is something so powerful. I have learned from them, gained experience and have become a better rider.

At the Amgen Tour of California, you won stage 4 in a strong solo move in horrible weather conditions. Was that an instinctive attack on your part or something worked out with your directors?

Rollin: It was instinct because my radio wasn't working. The way I read the situation and how the break was going, we were losing guys [out of the break] because the weather was so bad. Guys were starting to fade and get tired. We started slowing down and watching each other. I knew that if we didn't give it everything, the field would catch us. I just wanted to see how the guys were feeling and make something happen. I took a hard pull and got a couple of feet on the break and said, 'That's it. Let's give it a go.' So I gave it my all.

You kept the Sprinter's Jersey by two points over J.J. Haedo. Was there a moment that you thought you'd lose the jersey?

Rollin: I'm new to that level of sprinting, and I

learned a lot on how to read a race and rely on my teammates to start my sprint. I made a couple of mistakes. I could have lost the jersey, but luckily I was able to hold onto the jersey by a narrow margin. I was afraid the last two days, because we had just three or four points difference between us. I knew he was coming back. I just tried to give it my best.

Was the team dedicated to protecting the Points Jersey or were you on your own?

Rollin: The entire team was dedicated to this task. It was something the team wanted to bring home. They did a great job protecting me so I could bring it home.

Do you still consider your third overall in the Tour of Missouri your best achievement?

Rollin: I think winning the jersey in the Amgen Tour of California is overtaking Missouri because of how big that stage win was and holding onto the jersey after such a harsh week on the bike.

Have you ever had such a hard week of racing?

Rollin: It was the worst if you add everything together. We had bad weather, the difficulty of the terrain,

and the sickness that took out the field. That was the most attrition I've seen in any race that I've ever done.

Did any Europeans come up to you and ask about the weather?

Rollin: A couple of French guys I spoke to didn't expect that type of weather. They wondered if that was normal weather for California. We had the same type of weather at our training camp, and we were crossing our fingers that it was over and we wouldn't get it for the Amgen Tour of California. Unfortunately we ended up with the same thing.

What long terms goals do you have?

Rollin: Paris-Roubaix is a long term goal; to be in Europe to be part of that race. Mostly I'm going day by day and having fun. I'm trying to make it last as long as I can. As long as I'm having fun, I'll be still be out on the bike.

Are the Olympics in your future?

ROLLIN: I think the Amgen Tour of California helped in my selection. I know that the Canadian team won't make a selection until April, so I have plenty of time to get some more results to ensure my selection. 