



TOUR DE FRANCE 2015 ROUTE ANNOUNCED

Geoff Thomas to take on old and new challenges as Tour route announced

- Geoff riding entire 2015 Tour just one day ahead of the peloton
- Geoff will revisit two of Le Tour 2005's most difficult stages as part of the 2015 route
- Geoff will lead a group of 20 amateur riders aiming to raise £1 million for Cure Leukaemia

London, 23 October: The route of the 2015 Tour de France was announced on Wednesday morning, closely watched not just by professional cyclists such as Mark Cavendish and Chris Froome, but also former England footballer Geoff Thomas who will be taking on the challenge just one day ahead of the main Tour.

The 2015 Tour marks the tenth anniversary of Geoff first completing the Tour de France route in 2005, which he achieved despite only having gone into remission from leukaemia six months previously. This time around Geoff, and a team of 20 other amateur riders, will again take to the same roads as the professionals, this time just one day ahead, in a bid to raise £1 million for Cure Leukaemia.

Unlike rumours surrounding other professional riders, Geoff wouldn't dream of not attempting the 2015 route following the announcement, and is relishing the chance to take on some of the same challenging climbs he rode ten years ago.

The end of next year's Stage 14 between Rodez and Mende will finish with a notorious final climb to the top of the Cote de la Croix Neuve at the end of the day – exactly the same piece of road Geoff rode a decade previously. Despite only being 3km long the gradient averages at over 10%, reaching 14% in places, and proved a memorable part of Geoff's challenge. As he wrote at the time:

“Progress was slow and we had been on the road for more than ten hours again, but I rarely worried about the clock. I was only ever interested in making it to the top and I took a lot of satisfaction from reaching the summit of such a difficult climb.”

The brutal penultimate stage of next year's race, on which many have predicted the final yellow jersey may be decided, will also be familiar to Geoff. Before the finish at Alpe-d'Huez the riders will first climb the Col du Telegraphe and the Col du Galibier, two mountains that Geoff found particularly arduous in 2005. As he wrote:

“The conditions closed in as we made our way to the foot of the Telegraphe. When we entered the village of Saint-Jean de Maurienne, it was monsoon-like and we decided to take refuge in a café until the storm clouds cleared. Trouble is, they never did. We were always conscious of the clock and as we set off on the 12km climb to the top of the Telegraphe, we did so in the knowledge that we would not be able to escape the rain for another couple of hours.

Although the Telegraphe is a tough climb, I was more concerned by the Galibier. It is such a daunting ascent that it breaks even the professionals. It has a fearsome reputation and I knew I was in for a long day when we made our way off the back of the Telegraph.

Tour charity partner:





TOUR DE FRANCE 2015 ROUTE ANNOUNCED

The higher we got, the colder it became. The wind was howling...[as we] made our way up, first in rain and then in sleet, until we approached the final few hundred yards...It got worse as we inched towards the top of the Galibier and I really wondered whether I would make it. ...The road to the top of the Galibier was the only time I felt it might be too much.

The Galibier was a monumental day because, after getting through that, I didn't think there was anything else that the Tour de France could throw at me. It was a defining moment."

Yesterday's announcement also included stages that Geoff has not experienced before, in particular a return to the cobbles that proved so hazardous on the 2014 version of the Tour. Looking ahead, Geoff said: "The cobbles will be interesting, I'll try and find some in the UK and get practicing! The whole route appears challenging but with some excellent and iconic stages. I can't wait to get going."

In 2003 Geoff was diagnosed with chronic myeloid leukaemia and was given less than three months to live. Following treatment from Cure Leukaemia Co-founder Professor Charlie Craddock, including a bone marrow transplant from his sister, Geoff has been in remission since January 2005.

Geoff is inviting riders to apply to be part of his peloton of just twenty riders who will join him for the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience life as a pro-cyclist, with full rolling road closures and support crew and vehicles, one day ahead of the actual Tour de France. Together the group will aim to raise £1 million for Cure Leukaemia.

To generate support and provide an opportunity for the public to engage and challenge themselves to fundraise for Cure Leukaemia, Geoff will also be leading a four-day, 500 kilometre cycling challenge: London 2 Paris: Inspiring the Revolution. Both events will be delivered by EDGE, the company Geoff recently set up with cycling events production expert, Dan Solley and London 2 Paris will be Geoff's final preparation event ahead of the Tour de France.

Entries for both events are now open and a number of Geoff's friends and supporters from the sports community are already committed to participate.

To find out more about Geoff's Tour de France one day ahead challenge visit: www.beforethetour.com

To enter London 2 Paris: Inspiring the Revolution, visit: www.L2Prevolution.com

===ENDS===

For more information about Cure Leukaemia please visit the website www.cureleukaemia.co.uk

For more information about EDGE please visit the website www.findyouredge.co.uk

Tour charity partner:





TOUR DE FRANCE 2015 ROUTE ANNOUNCED

For media enquiries please contact:

- Ralph Turner, Four Communications – 020 3697 4309 or ralph.turner@fourcommunications.com

Notes

- Geoff Thomas's Playing Career – 1982 – 2002. Clubs represented: Rochdale, Crewe, Crystal Palace, Wolves, Nottingham Forest, Barnsley and Notts County.
- Geoff was capped three times by England between 1990 and 1992.
- In 2005 Geoff won the BBC Sports Personality of the Year Helen Rollason Award after he raised £150,000 by cycling all 21 stages of the Tour De France, 2,200 miles in total.
- In 2008 Geoff published a biography, 'Riding Through The Storm.'

About Cure Leukaemia

Founded in 2003 by patients and clinicians, Cure Leukaemia helps to bring pioneering drug and transplant treatments to blood cancer patients throughout the Midlands. The charity helps finance the world class Centre for Clinical Haematology at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, to fund life-saving clinical trials to treat patients with blood cancer who have exhausted standard treatment options. To date, Cure Leukaemia has helped to treat over 4000 patients by leveraging over £23m worth of revolutionary drugs and funding crucial research nurses to administer these trials.

Without the expert research nurses to ensure patients are constantly monitored and cared for; these trials would not run and patients would miss the opportunity to access potentially life-saving therapies. The aim of Cure Leukaemia is to raise money to fund more research nurses at centres across the Midlands and provide world-class treatment for its patients. Only by funding more nurses in more hospitals, can more leukaemia patients benefit from access to potentially life-saving treatment.

Currently, Cure Leukaemia has nurses at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, Sandwell and Dudley, Stoke, Worcester, Coventry, Warwickshire and Birmingham Children's Hospital.

Cure Leukaemia celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2013 by launching the Cure Leukaemia for Kids appeal, raised in excess of £125,000 from runners in BUPA Great Birmingham Run and established new corporate partnerships with Deloitte, The Binding Site, OGL Computer and Hotel Indigo.

In 2014, Cure Leukaemia announced new charity partnerships with Logomotif, Stirling Business Solutions Ltd and Elonex Outside Media, raised £50,000 from the inaugural Club Legends Cup at the LG Arena, launched the "Birmingham, let's cure leukaemia" campaign and announced a collaboration with the University of Birmingham for the Bupa Great Birmingham Run 2014.

Tour charity partner:





TOUR DE FRANCE 2015 ROUTE ANNOUNCED

10 facts about Cure Leukaemia

1. Founded in 2003 to allow patients with blood cancer the chance to trial new potentially life saving drugs not yet available on the NHS.
2. Cure Leukaemia part funds the Centre for Clinical Haematology at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, a world-class centre of excellence in the treatment of blood cancer.
3. The centre has developed the second largest adult stem cell transplant programme in the UK, hailed by Prime Minister David Cameron as an international centre of excellence in haematology.
4. The charity fund a network of specialist research nurses across the West Midlands, to offer potentially life saving new drugs and treatments to blood cancer patients who have come to the end of their treatment on the NHS.
5. The Cure Leukaemia for Kids campaign was launched in 2013 to celebrate Cure Leukaemia's 10th Anniversary Year, with the charity committing to funding specialist nurses at the Birmingham Children's Hospital.
6. Leukaemia is the most common form of childhood cancer, with most children diagnosed under the age of 5. Drugs trials will help increase survival rates of children with leukaemia.
7. A specialist research nurse costs £40,000 per year to fund.
8. For every £1000 donated, Cure Leukaemia can leverage £10,000 worth of free drugs, meaning any funds donated work 10 times as hard.
9. Over the past decade Professor Charlie Craddock and his teams have treated over 4,000 across the region.
10. Each year over 30,000 people are diagnosed with blood cancer in the U.K.

About EDGE

EDGE was established in 2014 by Geoff Thomas and Dan Solley. With an aim to deliver high-end, professionally organised cycling participation events, the company works with the best brands and suppliers to create near pro-cycling experiences for riders of all abilities and ambitions.

Tour charity partner:

