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Dear cycling fans,

With this book, I want to thank you for the tremendous support you have given me throughout the years.

My honor roll has 525 victories. Hence the title of this book, Merckx 525.

Those 525 victories have given me great satisfaction, have made me who I am today. I am proud of those wins, but I am equally proud of my life after my cycling career. And after more than 65 years, I realize only too well that my great good fortune in those victories rested not just with the bicycle but also in the power and love of the people who surrounded me all those years and who still do today. I therefore dedicate this beautiful book to them.

I could always count on the support of my family and am very grateful to my parents that I got the chance to be a bicycle racer. Both worked hard for their children to secure a good future for them. Along with my sister, Micheline, and my brother, Michel, I had a happy childhood in a warm nest. They were always there to support me.

Sabrina and Axel: my greatest pride. I missed them so often. When I had to leave to race abroad, it was often with tears in my eyes and pain in my heart. But I am proud to see them today as strong adults making their way through life and achieving their dreams.

That is why I, along with my wife, Claudine, cherish the moments with our children and grandchildren, sharing the world through their eyes.

My thanks a further 525 times to everyone!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Merckx', written in a cursive style.

Eddy Merckx

525

32 CLASSICS, 4 WORLD TITLES, 1 NATIONAL TITLE, 11 GRAND TOURS, WORLD HOUR RECORD

7x Milan–San Remo, 5x Liège–Bastogne–Liège, 3x Ghent–Wevelgem, 3x Paris–Roubaix, 3x Flèche Wallonne

2x Amstel Gold Race, 2x Omloop Het Volk, 2x Tour of Lombardy, 2x Tour of Flanders

1x Grand Prix of Frankfurt, 1x Paris–Brussels, 1x Scheldeprijs

3x Professional World Championship, 1x Amateur World Championship, 1x Belgian National Championship

5x Tour de France, 5x Giro d'Italia, 1x Vuelta a España

World Hour Record

**7x Super Prestige Pernod, 6x Belgian Sportsman of the Year, National Sports Merit Trophy,
Belgian Sportsman of the Century, Best International Cyclist of the 20th Century (International Cycling Union)**





MORE THAN A SHOW-OFF

Vittorio Adorni or Rudi Altig. One of those two would win La Primavera, Milan–San Remo. That was the clear prediction of the team leaders on the eve of springtime’s first big one-day race. Lower down on the list of favorites compiled by the sports managers, the names Ward Sels and Bernard Van De Kerckhove—the only Belgians mentioned—also appeared. No Eddy Merckx. It rather looked as if everyone was a favorite except Eddy Merckx. Admittedly, who in heaven’s name was Eddy Merckx? Merckx, just 20 years old, had in 1966 only just started on his second year as a pro.

In the year of his debut with Solo-Superia, he had already shown glimpses of his class. Experts realized that this young man was cut out for greatness. And Rik Van Looy, up to then the Emperor of one-day events, knew it too. But no one at this stage expected a resounding victory from young Merckx in his first international top classic race. Not the team leaders, not the journalists, not his colleagues. Not even Merckx’s parents. “Who would have believed that of our Eddy?” was what father Merckx was reported to have said after his son’s victory on San Remo’s Via Roma.

Merckx rides in the black-and-white checkered Peugeot-Michelin jersey. Quietly confident, he lines up in Milan on March 20. Earlier that month during the Paris–Nice stage race, he had shown that he could hold his own in all the disciplines of bike racing. Jacques Anquetil won Paris–Nice, but Merckx came in fourth.

The greats have therefore been warned and realize that this young chap has a lot to offer. But to give the great one-day racers the go-by in a 288-km classic? No, that would still be rather too early for Merckx.

It’s sunny but very cold at the start. A tailwind will push the peloton onward to San Remo and the finish line on Via Roma. The race will only get going properly along the Riviera. In Savona, a place that later in Merckx’s career will acquire a painful connotation, Merckx, Felice Gimondi, Rudi Altig, and eight others set chase in pursuit of a small group of leaders. On the Capo Berta, Merckx has a go. Now the others have to join in too, including Van Looy, who fights a match within a match with his young rival. At stake: the title of best racing cyclist of Belgium. A small group of 18 riders is the first to reach the Poggio, the last hump before the finish. This group includes Raymond Poulidor, Italo Zilioli, Herman Van Springel, Adriano Durante, and Michele Dancelli. The young Merckx is not impressed and twice tries to break away, though without success; he is brought back by Durante and Dancelli. It is going to be a sprint with a limited group on the Via Roma. Or will it?

Van Springel ventures an ultimate breakaway on the flat, in the streets of San Remo. However, near the fountain he is challenged. It is the Dutchman Hubertus Zilverberg who gets past Van Springel and starts on a furious sprint. The finish is close. Horribly close. Although he doesn't want to be taken by surprise, Merckx does not immediately react to this push by Zilverberg. It is the keen Italians who do the job for him.

Merckx sticks to their wheels and waits. And waits. "Waiting was more difficult than the actual winning," he explains afterward.

At 150 meters from the finish line, Merckx continues full speed on the left-hand side of the road with Van Springel who, despite his late breakaway in the final stretch, has quickly gathered speed. Durante and Dancelli sprint on the farthest right of the road. Who makes it? Merckx. Durante has just been beaten by a youngster. Merckx is over the moon. Milan–San Remo: The first great classic victory is in the books. In the end Van Springel comes in third, in Merckx's wake. He can take it. "I am happy that the strongest man in the race has got what he deserved," says Van Springel. Merckx himself is barely out of breath. "The closer we got to San Remo, the less I believed the experts who told me how impossibly difficult the Primavera was."

What is that fellow still keeping up his sleeve? The style, the daring, the single-mindedness, his understanding of the race: Merckx has shown it all. And straightaway at the highest level, in the first top classic race of the new bike-racing year.

And everything he showed there: Are those not the ingredients that make a champion of a good racer? Surely this is not the accidental good luck of any old show-off. "Who says he won't be competing with the best of them on Mont Ventoux and the Pyrenees tomorrow?" can be heard here and there.

On the home front, Van Looy's future has already been decided: Van Looy is the champion of the past. Merckx is the current one. The succession to the throne is now assured. More than that: It is a fact. The only question now is how soon Merckx will bear this out. For Merckx it can't be soon enough. In that season with respectively an eighth and a second place in such very tough classic races as Liège–Bastogne–Liège and the Tour of Lombardy, Merckx's future success looks to be very promising. Year one of an unparalleled reign has begun.

MARCH 20, 1966 **MILAN–SAN REMO**



Piazza della Signoria, Florence, Italy



Paris-Nice, 1967 (left)

Paris-Roubaix, 1967 (opposite)







02/18/1973	LAIGUEGLIA	07/08/1973	NANDRIN
02/27/1973	CAMPU OMU	07/21/1973	<i>OOSTENDE</i> ³
03/01/1973	TOUR OF SARDINIA (OVERALL)	07/22/1973	MERCHTEM
03/03/1973	HET VOLK	07/25/1973	SAINT LAMBRECHTS-WOLUWE
03/11/1973	PONTHIERRY	07/26/1973	DE PANNE
04/03/1973	GHENT-WEVELGEM	07/27/1973	LONDERZEEL
04/07/1973	AMSTEL GOLD RACE	08/02/1973	<i>AMSTERDAM</i> ⁴
04/15/1973	PARIS-ROUBAIX	08/05/1973	MOORSLEDE
04/22/1973	LIÈGE-BASTOGNE-LIÈGE	08/13/1973	WILRIJK
04/26/1973	CALPE	08/15/1973	SAINT LEONARDS
05/02/1973	<i>PUEBLA DE FARNALS</i> ¹	08/17/1973	MONTECAMPIONE + OVERALL
05/04/1973	CASTELLON-CALAFELL	08/19/1973	CHRONOSTAFFETTA (TIME TRIAL)
05/06/1973	BARCELONA-AMPURIABRAVA	08/19/1973	<i>CHRONOSTAFFETTA</i> (WITH ROGER SWERTS AND <i>JOSEPH BRUYÈRE</i>) ⁵ + OVERALL
05/11/1973	TORRELAVEGA		
05/12/1973	TORRELAVEGA-MIRANDA DE EBRO	08/20/1973	MISANO
05/13/1973	HERNANI-SAN SEBASTIAN	08/24/1973	HEUSDEN
05/13/1973	VUELTA A ESPAÑA (OVERALL)	09/10/1973	ROCCASTRADA
05/18/1973	VERVIERS (WITH ROGER SWERTS) ²	09/22/1973	FOURMIES
05/19/1973	VERVIERS-KEULEN	09/23/1973	FOURMIES GRAND PRIX (OVERALL)
05/22/1973	GENEVA-AOSTA		
05/27/1973	LIDO DELLE NAZIONI-MONTE CARPEGNA	09/26/1973	PARIS-BRUSSELS
05/29/1973	ALBA ADRIATICA-LANCIANO	09/27/1973	LIÈGE
06/07/1973	VERONA-ANDALO	10/01/1973	JEUMONT
06/09/1973	GIRO D'ITALIA (OVERALL)	10/06/1973	LANDENPRIJS
06/12/1973	MONSUMMANO	10/07/1973	LAUSANNE ROAD RACE
06/17/1973	EVERGEM	10/07/1973	LAUSANNE TIME TRIAL + OVERALL
06/21/1973	MAGGIORE		
07/01/1973	PAVULLO		
1973 - 51 VICTORIES			

Races in italics are not included in the tally of official victories; see page 209.

1. Team time trial 2. Two-man time trial 3. Omnium 4. Pursuit 5. Three-man time trial



With Ward Janssens, autumn 1974



COLOPHON

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Eddy Merckx

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525 VICTORIES

7x Milan-San Remo
 5x Liège-Bastogne-Liège
 3x Ghent-Wevelgem
 3x Paris-Roubaix
 3x Flèche Wallonne
 3x Paris-Nice
 2x Amstel Gold Race
 2x Omloop Het Volk
 2x Tour of Lombardy
 2x Tour of Flanders
 2x Tour of Belgium
 1x Dauphiné Libéré
 1x Midi Libre
 1x Grand Prix Frankfurt
 1x Paris-Brussels
 1x Scheldeprijs
 1x Tour de Suisse
 1x Tour de Romandie

1x World Amateur Road Champion
 3x World Professional Road Champion
 1x Belgian Road Champion

5x Tour de France
 5x Giro d'Italia
 1x Vuelta a España

7x Super Prestige Pernod International

World Hour Record

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