

Q&A with Christian Prudhomme, Director of the Tour de France

› How important is the role of the lead car to ensure the race runs smoothly?

Each car has a vital role in the smooth running of the race. Whether it be a Director or a Commissaire car, everyone plays their role to ensure the safe running of the Tour de France for all the parties involved. Car number 1 is a sort of control tower that receives all the information of what is happening on the race route before the arrival of the riders.

› How do you work with Škoda to adjust the cars to support you in the specific roles?

Škoda is an important partner and plays a key and obvious role in the organisation of the Tour de France due to the fact that it is an event where we are almost constantly on the move. We ensure to collect our feedback and share it with Škoda so they can best adapt (if needed) their vehicles for the very specific usage that we have on the Tour de France.

Q&A with Gilles Maignan, Driver of Race Direction Car Number 1

Background information: The Race Direction Car Number 1 is driven by two-time French time trial champion, Gilles Maignan. Maignan retired from the sport in 2001 and was asked by Christian Prudhomme to be his driver after he had previously driven him in a VIP car during Christian Prudhomme's days working for French TV.

Professional cyclists are often recruited to drive inside the race as they know how to anticipate and react according to the movements of the cyclists and peloton.

› What are the best car developments over the years that have benefited you?

The switch to automatic gearboxes has really simplified the driving from inside a cycling race, especially for uphill portions. Also, the dashboard on the Superb shows exactly how many kilometres you have driven to the first decimal, which is very important in a cycling race to know how far you are from the finish. We have recently switched to hybrid vehicles which allows me to be in electric mode between the Fictive Start and Real Start of each stage, which is appreciated by the riders who have to stay right behind me on this section.

› How does it feel to lead the peloton?

It changes a bit from back when I was a rider. I have an important responsibility to lead out the best drivers in the biggest professional cycling race in the world and my job is to help Christian Prudhomme ensure a safe race for everyone, including the spectators.

› **How do the cars communicate with each other and how has it changed?**

This is done through radio communication as it has proven to be the most effective and direct way to communicate, especially when you reach some very remote areas of France where telephone signal can be scarce.

› **Are there any speed limits that need to be adhered to?**

Yes, we cannot go over 50 mph (80 km/h) except for the downhill if a rider is catching up to me. However, the main rule imposed by the UCI is that we cannot go over 12mph (20km/h) faster than the speed of riders.