

FRANCO BALLERINI'S COLNAGO C40

Franco Ballerini's Colnago C40 did not set any world records. Nor did it demonstrate an abundance of technological advances in bike design. But as a snapshot, as a single moment in the history of the sport, it helped to produce one of the most memorable and iconic displays cycling has ever seen.

In 1998 Ballerini, having won the race three years previously, was one of the favourites going into Paris-Roubaix, but few expected him to do what he did. Breaking away on one particularly treacherous section of cobbles, the Mons-en-Pévèle, with more than 43 miles (70 km) remaining, he rode alone to hold off the entire field, and won by four minutes, fourteen seconds: the biggest margin of victory since Eddy Merckx in 1971. His rival, Magnus Backstedt, realized that the Italian was about to make his move and tried to give chase. However, with just a few bike lengths between the pair, Ballerini looked back and accelerated again. Backstedt and the chasing pack fell away; they would not see Ballerini again until the podium celebrations in Roubaix.

Ballerini's ride that day was a pure demonstration of the unadulterated synergy between man and machine. His powerful physique was ideal for the tough terrain and, while other riders bashed their way through the race, Ballerini appeared to glide over the pavé.

Ballerini died after crashing during a car rally in 2010. Poignantly, the C40 he rode to victory in the 1998 Paris-Roubaix sits in Ernesto Colnago's factory in Cambiago, the mud and grit still caked to it.

Ballerini rode to Roubaix glory on a San Marco Regal saddle. This model came with a full-sized shell, and fairly generous padding, essential for the cobbles that make Roubaix such a demanding and prestigious race.

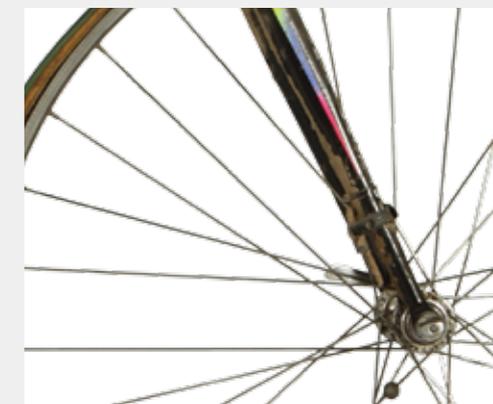
Ernesto Colnago was a huge fan of Franco Ballerini and still keeps the Classics star's bike in his factory.



Ambrosio supplied wheels for the Mapei team. At Roubaix they used low-profile aluminium rims.

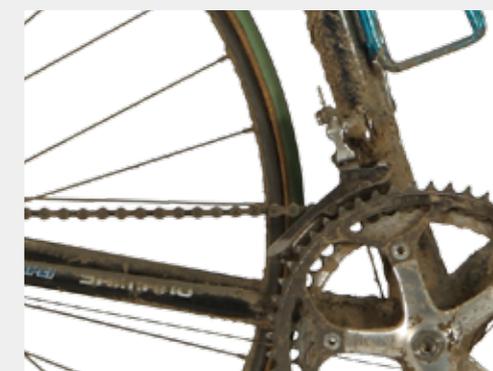
Rival teams and manufacturers toyed with mountain bike technology for races such as Paris-Roubaix, but Colnago stayed true to his principles in design.

DESIGN DETAILS



STEEL STRAIGHT FORKS

Colnago's C40 is one of the legends of the peloton. The company was one of the first to move to straight forks, and Ballerini's bike utilized a carbon frame with steel forks and was designed with standard Colnago tube and lug carbon construction.



CUSTOM GEOMETRY

This bike was structured with custom geometry with a longer rear end and additional tyre clearance for the mud kicked up along the Paris-Roubaix course. Vittoria tubular tyres were fitted, with Shimano Dura-Ace nine-speed components.