



Chris Froome (file pic)

# Tour will be massive challenge

## France

Chris Froome says he faces a "massive challenge" to win his fifth Tour de France, as the route for the 2018 race was announced yesterday.

The 105th edition will run from 7 to 29 July and be the shortest route of the 21st century, covering 3,329km.

It will start with a 195km stage from Noirmoutier-en-L'île and stage nine will include 21.7km of cobbled road.

There is a return for the famous climb and finish up Alpe d'Huez on stage 12 and the shortest stage will be 65km.

Stage three will be a team time trial and the penultimate stage could be a potentially crucial hilly individual time trial from Saint-Pee-sur-Nivelle to Espelette.

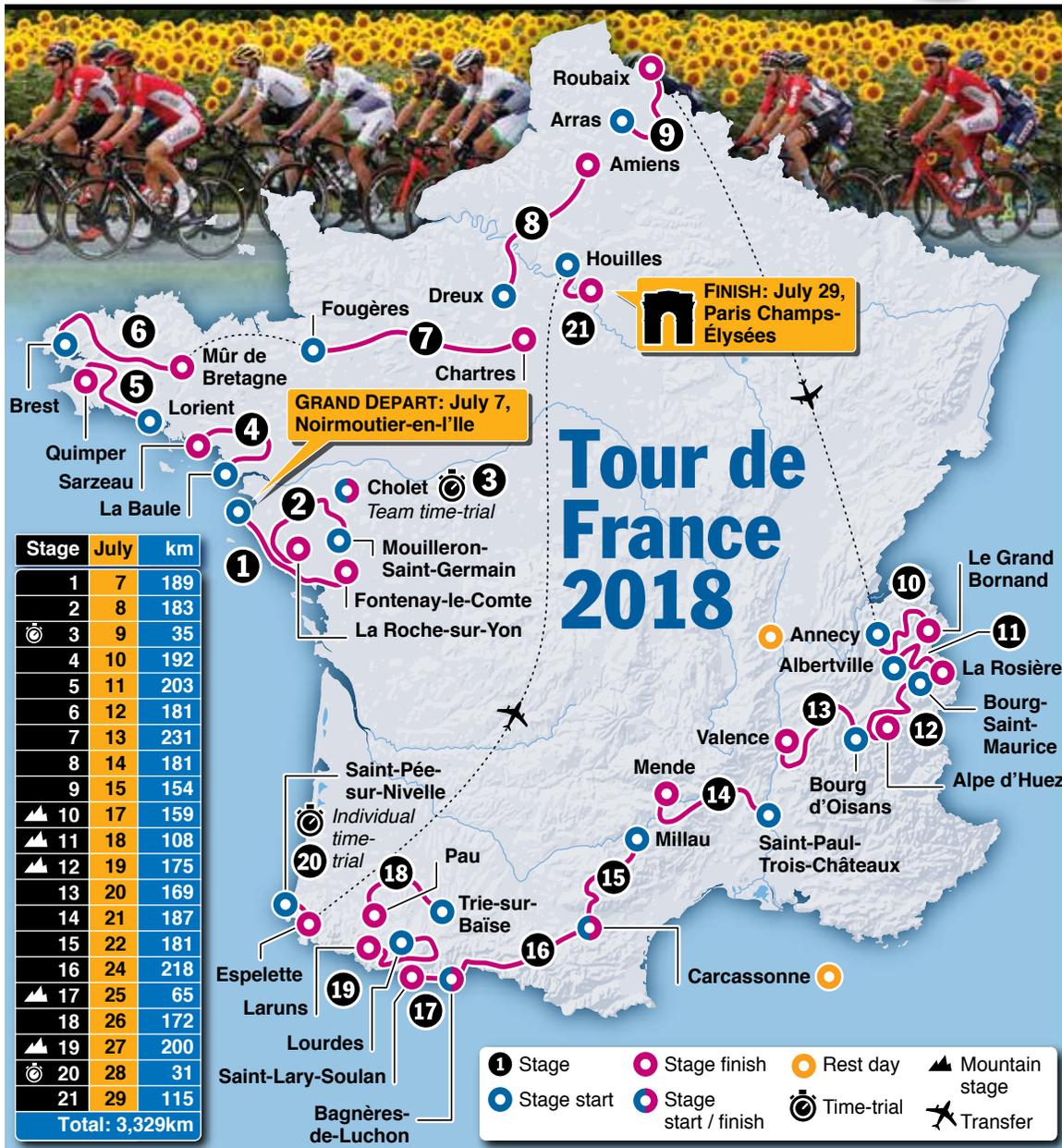
"I wouldn't expect anything different from the organisers," said the 32-year-old, who has won the Tour in four of the last five years.

"It is a massive challenge for next year and a Tour de France that tests every aspect of cycling."

Only 15km of the race will take place outside France, when it goes into Spain on stage 16.

"We especially wanted to emphasise stage variety and the routes that may prove decisive, whilst combining legendary climbs with brand-new ascensions or ultra-dynamic formats, to provide a vision of modern and inspired cycling," said Tour director Christian Prudhomme.

At the announcement of the route, Froome was awarded the 2017 Velo d'Or - the Velo magazine rider of the year prize - for the third time after also claiming it in 2013 and 2015. (BBC)



Source: Le Tour

Picture: Associated Press

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## I was suspended for a lot less: David Warner



David Warner (file pic)

## London

Australia's vice-captain David Warner has compared the Ben Stokes affair to his 2013 suspension for punching Joe Root, saying his transgression was "a lot less than we've seen on the footage" of the England allrounder in a Bristol bar.

Warner's glancing blow at Root was called a "despicable thing" by Cricket Australia's chief executive James Sutherland and resulted in his ban from Australia's 2013 Ashes warm-up matches, effectively suspending him from the first two Tests of that series.

Warner was also made to deliver a public apology in London, and the saga indirectly led to the sacking of coach Mickey Arthur, who was replaced by Darren Lehmann. However, there was neither footage of the incident nor any police investigation, and Warner rebounded to be a key player in the return series in Australia later that year.

"I did do my time. It was a lot less than what we've seen on that footage, that's for sure," Warner said in Sydney.

"It's up to them what they want to do - how they punish him [Stokes] and first of all it's up to the police. Obviously with their investigation findings, to see what happens there. I think everyone in the world is waiting to see what happens there and what the outcome is." (espnricinfo)



Brendon Hartley (file pic)

# Brendon Hartley to make debut in Austin

## London

New Zealander Brendon Hartley will race for Scuderia Toro Rosso at the next round of the Formula 1 World Championship, the USA Grand Prix in Austin, as Pierre Gasly will be racing in Japan for the last race of the Super Formula Championship in Suzuka.

Brendon last tested with the team back in 2009. Eight years later, he will be taking part in his first Formula

1 Grand Prix, at the Circuit of the Americas, alongside Daniil Kvyat.

Since his last outing with Scuderia Toro Rosso, Brendon has gained experience in many different categories, including the Formula Renault 3.5 Series, GP2 Series and sports car Series. In the last three years, he successfully raced the LMP1 Porsche in the FIA World Endurance Championship.

In 2015 he was crowned WEC

Champion alongside his teammates Mark Webber and Timo Bernhard. In June this year, he won the prestigious 24h of Le Mans race and he's currently leading the 2017 WEC Championship, with three rounds to go - the next one is the 6 Hours of Fuji, in Japan. After that, he'll travel to Texas for his first F1 race weekend... A well-deserved reward that has been eight years in the making: never say never!

Brendon Hartley said: "What an

amazing feeling! This opportunity came as somewhat of a surprise, but I never did give up on my ambition and childhood dream to reach F1. I have grown and learnt so much since the days when I was the Red Bull and Toro Rosso reserve driver, and the tough years I went through made me stronger and even more determined. I want to say a huge thanks to Red Bull for making this a reality, and to Porsche." (Reuters)