

## CYCLING IS NOT THE SAME WITHOUT EUSKALTEL EUSKADI

Professional road cycling is not the same without Euskaltel Euskadi. And it's not just me who says so; it is a perception that I have gathered from various colleagues who still work in the cycling world, from the Basque Country and Australia, from Belgium, France or Italy. Euskaltel Euskadi contributed something more than just cyclists to the international peloton; it contributed character, personality, a different way of doing things, a way that was the pride of all Basque cycling fans and that the rest of the world admired and respected.

I was fortunate to be part of the orange team in two quite different phases, although unfortunately both finished with a rather hasty departure from the team. I was in the team in 2005, as soon as I returned from my two-year period working as a senior physiologist at the Australian Institute of Sport. On that occasion, both the team management and myself were aware that my work in the team would only last until my signing with Athletic Club Bilbao was organized. Nevertheless, I tried to contribute as much as I could in the areas of physiology and training, but I had the feeling that cycling was not yet prepared to embrace the methods that were completely accepted and integrated in other sports, not so stuck in traditions and ways inherited from the past.

My second opportunity came in the 2013 season, with Igor González de Galdeano and a new Euskaltel Euskadi, characterized by the signing of foreign riders and the conflict that such a change in the sport project brought about. However, I considered the project I joined solid and exciting, a project with a bright future; I was so sure about the project's bright future that I started designing training programs and I participated in the first training camp with the riders who would be racing in the Tour Down Under even before I signed my contract as head of physiology and training.

My duties included evaluating and determining the physiological status of the cyclists during training and competition; developing, supervising and coordinating individual training programs for the riders, as well as the training programs for team camps; ensuring that the cyclists and the team received top level and innovative support in the sport sciences for training and racing (physiology, anthropometry, nutrition, recovery, performance analysis, etc.); providing the sport directors and medical staff with information regarding the riders' training programs and physiological status throughout the season; contributing to the continuous education of the cyclists and the staff; complying with the UCI, WADA and the team's own anti-doping regulations, as well as with the team's code of conduct, and contributing to all athletes and team members complying with such regulations. All of it in close collaboration with my fellow trainers, medical doctors, sport directors, and the rest of the staff. In summary, maintaining a team philosophy based on ethics and scientific evidence in all areas relating to physiology, training and sport sciences; a new way of preparing for the races, competing and recovering.

My perception after this second stage is that a good deal of the objectives were achieved, although within a few months of my arrival the news about the team's future, or rather the lack thereof, made the task much more difficult; the feeling of "every man

for himself” became inevitable, but the entire team worked professionally until the end, as shown by the victory in the final team standings in La Vuelta 2013. Working with those cyclists was a pleasure and a privilege. Both the local riders as well as the newly arrived foreign riders were well aware that they were part of a very special team, characterized by its fighting spirit and sacrifice, by its eagerness to better itself in often unequal conditions. Such qualities transmitted by the team through the years have now become part of the DNA of the Basque riders, and that can be seen in their attitude on the bicycle, both in training and in competition.

I really enjoyed myself during the training camps and the races, in the interactions with the cyclists and my fellow team members, and my biggest regret is that I was not able to continue with the work that I was fortunate enough to initiate. I hope that the disappearance of the team is only a temporary step back to gain momentum, and that very soon we will all be able to enjoy the presence of a great Basque team in the world’s best cycling races.