



Olympic Gangster: The Legend of José Beyaert—Cycling Champion, Fortune Hunter and Outlaw

Matt Rendell

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The remarkable biography of a 1948 Olympic cycling champion who became a swashbuckling fortune-hunter in Colombia. Restlessly vital and possessed of great physical strength, José Béyaert lived many lives. During the Second World War, he boxed and trafficked arms for the Resistance on his bicycle. After it, he became an international cyclist. In 1948, a mile from the end of the Olympic road race around Windsor Park, he broke away alone to take the gold medal and started an adventure that would last the rest of his life. A Tour de France rider in the sport's golden age, José was invited to open a new velodrome in Colombia, South America. He traveled, intending to stay a month. Instead, driven by his thirst for adventure, he stayed for 50 years, becoming by turns athlete, coach, businessman, emerald-trader, logger, smuggler, and perhaps even hired killer. Matt Rendell, who knew José Béyaert and met many of his family, friends, and associates, tells the fascinating story of an almost-forgotten sporting hero who, incapable of living by other people's rules, lived his many lives on his own terms.



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