

Changing teams part of the job for professional cyclists

By John Schumacher, Sacramento Bee

Cycling's version of free agency plays out every year. As riders seek their best opportunities, team management searches for the right mix in building rosters.

With most cyclists on one- or two-year contracts, change and uncertainty are givens. Throw in a team disbanding or merging with another and the deck shuffles even more.

Christian Meier, the 2008 Canadian national road champion, rode for Team Garmin-Transitions last year. But when Garmin and Cervelo Test Team merged, Meier found himself looking for a job.

He landed one with UnitedHealthcare, one of 19 teams set to race in the sixth annual Amgen Tour of California, which begins Sunday at Lake Tahoe.

"I actually knew a lot of the guys," Meier said of UnitedHealthcare personnel. "It's that familiarity of knowing all the riders.

"A lot of times, if you're looking, you find a good team you're very comfortable with; you want to stay as long as possible.

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