

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Litke: Every year gets harder for Armstrong

By Jim Litke
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

If only for a day, Lance Armstrong rode his bike like someone who really was on a tour of France.

Pedaling smoothly on the run-in to Paris, the hard work behind him, Armstrong grabbed a flute of champagne offered from his team car, took a sip and then toasted himself by clinking the glass against the lens of a TV camera that had pulled up alongside.

Moments later, he took his right hand off the handlebars and extended all five fingers toward the camera, a gesture that needed no explanation at the end of the world's greatest bicycle race. After three weeks, two mountain ranges and 2,100 miles, his life on the run was about to slow to a leisurely victory lap.

As he rode, the only visible mark on Armstrong after two crashes, bouts with stomach flu and dehydration, a handful of mishaps and a crisis of self-confidence, was a scab just below the left elbow. Soon after, with his fifth consecutive Tour de France title a fact, he slipped into the leader's yellow jersey and answered the only important question that remained.

Would he be back?
"Of course," Armstrong answered in French, "I love cycling, I love my job and I will be back for a sixth."

But hours earlier, on the morning train from Nantes to Ville d'Avray, the western Paris suburb where the 20th stage began, the Texan hadn't sounded quite so confident.

He was about to join Spanish legend Miguel Indurain as the only champion to string all five of his wins together. But getting back on his bike right after the Tour and resuming the maniacal work schedule that left rivals always riding in his slipstream was anything but a given.

"This Tour took a lot out of me," Armstrong said. "I need to step back from cycling and from the races and

relax a little bit and focus on 2004 in due time."

By then he will be racing against history, and you can be sure it won't cut him much slack. For all his seeming dominance, the real edge between the Tour champion and the pack is as narrow as the tires they ride on at speeds up to 65 mph down the side of a mountain.

"When you think you're unbeatable," Greg LeMond, a three-time Tour winner and the first American to capture the race, wrote recently, "the first defeat is just devastating. You think you can come back. You tell yourself as much. But you're just buying time. That first defeat changes you forever."

It did with LeMond and Indurain and Eddy Merckx, the Belgian and five-time winner who devoured the competition with such fierceness he was nicknamed "The Cannibal." Each was finally humbled in the mountains the year after their final win, none so memorably as Merckx, who ran out of gas and was passed by eventual winner Bernard Thevenet on the final climb up the Alps to Pra-Loup in 1975.

"I tried everything and it didn't work," Merckx said that day. "Miracles don't exist in sports. It's always the strongest who wins."

For now, that is Armstrong. Like Indurain and Frenchman Bernard Hinault, he is that rare champion who can chew up the field in flat races or up and down mountains. And while he claimed only one stage win this time and the margin of victory was his narrowest ever—61 seconds over five-time runner-up Jan Ullrich—Armstrong still bettered his own record for average speed by a half-second, to 25.383 mph.

"Of course it's possible," Indurain said about another Armstrong win. "But every year it gets more difficult." Armstrong will be 32 in September, and though racers have won the Tour at that age and beyond,



PHOTO COURTESY OF: WWW.LANCEARMSTRONG.COM

US Postal Services team member Lance Armstrong celebrates after winning his fifth Tour de France Sunday in Paris. Armstrong beat rival Jan Ulrich by more than a minute. He will look for a record-breaking sixth straight Tour de France title in 2004.

all the five-time winners logged their final victory before that telling birthday. To remain the strongest, he will have to remain the hungriest.

So far, motivation has been Armstrong's strongest suit. When he won the first time in 1999, he was still recovering from a deadly form of testicular cancer. Ringing in his ears was the verdict of doctors who doubted he'd ever compete at anything more strenuous than poker. In successive years, he rode to crush rumors of doping and to claim a place among

those cyclists whose accomplishments merit comparison with the greatest athletes of all time—in any sport.

Armstrong's training regimen has always been something only a sadist could love. He would go for months in the winter in Europe with just two days off, testing himself in the cold and wet of the mountains, then shift to the Texas heat and ring up heart and aerobic conditioning rates that flirted with the limits of human performance.

In the midst of the drug controversy that swirled around him, Armstrong's main sponsor, Nike, played off those numbers with an ad that showed him pedaling furiously down the road.

"What am I on?" Armstrong said in the voice over. "I'm on my bike." He'd better be again, and soon.

Because holding up six fingers on his way to the victory stand on the Champs-Elysee next year will be tougher than just pulling both hands off the handlebars.

Baylor looks into possible NCAA violations by coach

By Bobby Ross Jr.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WACO — At first blush, the world's largest Baptist university would seem an unlikely arena for a sordid saga involving allegations of gun-toting basketball players, improper payments by coaches and doctored drug tests.

A Big 12 Conference school, Baylor University isn't known as an athletic powerhouse, but it touts its Christian heritage.

Yet the accusations made in the wake of 6-foot-10, 230-pound center Patrick Dennehy's disappearance have reopened wounds for a basketball program twice placed on NCAA probation since the mid-1980s.

Prompted by claims made by friends and relatives of Dennehy, Baylor opened a new inquiry last week into possible NCAA violations.

Coach Dave Bliss and his staff have declined to comment but deny wrongdoing.

"This whole thing just breaks my heart," said Pat Nunley, the team's longtime radio analyst.

It's not the first time Baylor's program has come under scrutiny.

The program was put on five-year probation in 1994 after an investigation found that coaches were illegally doing correspondence work for players. An FBI inquiry resulted in mail and wire fraud convictions against three assistant coaches. Former head coach Darrel Johnson was fired.

In 1986, the Baylor basketball team was slapped with a two-year probation after the NCAA said it provided cash, transportation and other illegal benefits to players. A player secretly recorded a conversation in which former head coach Jim Haller agreed to give him \$172 for a car payment.

"One would hope that a university with a religious heritage would not have these ethical problems," said Chuck Weaver, president of Baylor's Faculty Senate. "That's not always the case. Coaches at Baylor face the same kinds of pressures to win as coaches at any other university."

Weaver added: "In general, Bliss has been one of the most respected basketball coaches Baylor has ever had. His hiring was considered to be a response to previous difficulties."

Baylor finished last season 14-14 but won only five of 16 conference games. But the disappointment on the court was nothing compared to the sorrow that has engulfed the campus since mid-June.

Dennehy's family reported him missing June 19, a week after he was last seen in Waco, about 100 miles south of Fort Worth. His Chevy

Tahoe, stripped of its license plates, was found June 25 in a Virginia parking lot.

Authorities found a badly decomposed body Friday night about five miles southeast of Waco, but officials said it may take days to identify the remains.

Carlton Dotson, a former teammate who lived with Dennehy, was charged with Dennehy's murder last week and remains jailed without bond. Waco police said Dotson told FBI agents in his home state of Maryland that he shot Dennehy after the player tried to shoot him. But he said he "didn't confess to anything."

Three Baylor Law School professors will investigate allegations that a coach told Dennehy his education and living expenses would be paid if he gave up his scholarship for a year. The committee also will examine whether Dennehy received \$1,200 to \$1,800 from an assistant coach toward a car loan for his sport-utility vehicle, and if players passed urine tests despite smoking marijuana.

"We're going to be looking into every allegation that has been reported ... and other issues that we may encounter on our own," committee member Bill Underwood said.

Adriana Gallegos, a former girlfriend of Dennehy's, told The Associated Press that Dennehy was excited when he returned to New Mexico last spring from a recruiting trip to Baylor.

"He was just like, 'They're going to hook me up and they're probably going to get me a nice SUV,'" said Gallegos, 22, who now lives in Midland.

"I didn't really think much of it because I've heard so many stories of really good athletes getting so many benefits from their coaches. ... I thought they were just bribing him to come out to Baylor."

Gallegos said Dennehy occasionally smoked marijuana, but "it wasn't an everyday thing."

Dotson's estranged wife, Melissa Kethley, said Dotson and Dennehy were among three players she drove to get tested at a Waco clinic after a team-ordered urine test came back positive for illicit drug use. Kethley told The Dallas Morning News that Dotson passed a test at a time she knew he and five or six teammates were smoking marijuana.

"Half of them used to go to practice high," she said.

Jerrel Bolton, a Chevrolet dealer in West, north of Waco, said Bliss called him last fall and told him Dennehy was looking for an SUV. NCAA spokeswoman Kay Hawes said she couldn't say whether such a call would be a rules violation because "it would depend on too many specific factors."

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Widow of former Pro-Bowler files lawsuit against NFL

By Joshua Freed
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MINNEAPOLIS — An attorney for Corey Stringer's widow said she will sue the NFL on Monday, alleging that the league's policies led to Stringer's heat stroke death during the Minnesota Vikings' training camp in 2001.

Stan Chesley said Kelci Stringer's suit would also name football helmet maker Riddell Sports Group Inc., and some NFL medical advisers. He said the federal lawsuit would include a wrongful death claim on behalf of Stringer's widow and son, and a class action claim on behalf of all NFL players.

"What's on trial here is the rules and procedures and the culture of the NFL," Chesley said Saturday. "Frankly, it's no coincidence that the average football player in the NFL plays for 4 1/2 years. They use them up and spit them out."

Chesley declined to say publicly where the lawsuit would be

filed. The planned suit was first reported by The New York Times.

Stringer collapsed during training camp on July 31, 2001, in sweltering heat and humidity. The 335-pound Pro Bowl lineman's body temperature was 108.8 degrees when he arrived at a hospital. He died 15 hours later.

Phone messages left by The Associated Press with an NFL spokesman and Riddell were not immediately returned.

Kelci Stringer had already filed a \$100 million wrongful-death lawsuit against the Vikings and the team's training camp physician, David Knowles. In April, a Hennepin County District Court judge dismissed Kelci Stringer's claims against the team. She later settled with Knowles for an undisclosed sum.

Her attorneys said at the time they planned to ask the state appeals court to reinstate the claims against the Vikings.

Chesley said the issues in the new lawsuit are different. The suit against the team stumbled because the law limits how much

Stringer's widow could get from his employer, the Vikings. Chesley said that while the league does not employ the players, it sets the procedures for the mandatory training camps.

Chesley said the league wanted a 335-pound player like Stringer but then did little to protect him in the heat that led to his death. He said the lawsuit is designed to change that.

The NFL has said it has already made changes.

Before training camp opened in 2002, the NFL consulted with several experts and held a series of discussions and seminars on the subject. The league banned the herbal stimulant ephedra and began random testing for it last summer after learning that dietary supplements increased the risk of heat-related illnesses.

A bottle of Ripped Fuel, which contains ephedra, was found in Stringer's locker after he died, though Stringer's remains weren't tested for the substance during investigations of his death.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Chicago takes two of three from Houston, Astros still lead division

HOUSTON (AP) — When Sammy Sosa tied Ted Williams and Willie McCovey for 12th place on the career list, he let his bat speak for him.

Sosa hit his 521st career home run, his 12th in July, as the Chicago Cubs beat the Houston Astros 5-3 Sunday.

Sosa, who had been 0-for-7 in the series, homered to left in the first inning, his 22nd of the season. He trails Jimmie Foxx by 13 homers for 11th place on the career list.

Sosa, 1-for-11 in the series, declined to speak with reporters. He was booed at every plate appearance in the series.

Shawn Estes (7-8) got his first victory since June 10 as the Cubs took a 5-4 lead in the season series and pulled within 4 1/2 games of the first-place Astros in the NL Central.

"The pressure was to go out and have a good outing more than anything," Estes said. "It's a big game. The Astros are the team to beat in our division right

now and we won two out of three here. This was a big series for us."

Eric Karros and Mark Grudzielanek also had solo homers, and Kenny Lofton went 3-for-5 with a single, double and triple.

"You can't put your finger on any one thing," Lofton said. "Against a guy who has a good record like that, he's not unstoppable, you just have to battle and battle, and that's what we did today."

Jeroime Robertson (10-4), who had been 9-0 in 15 starts since Montreal chased him after three innings on April 25, lasted just 28 pitches and allowed three runs and six hits in 1 2-3 innings. It was the shortest outing of his major league career.

"I felt great," Robertson said. "My arm felt good. My stuff was sharp coming out of the bullpen. Even when they got some hits, I felt good."

Jeff Bagwell hit a two-run homer in the third, and Richard Hidalgo homered in the sixth off Dave Veres.

"Today just wasn't our day," Craig Biggio said. "But we lose just one game in the loss column in this series. Estes just changed speeds-on us. He doesn't give in. We never really got anybody on. You have to tip your hat to him."

NEWS

THE BATTALION

On one day, Armstrong's leaders were temporarily blocked by protesters; on the other, he had to veer through a void of a fallen rider.

Armstrong fought through flu before the July 5 start, bruised in an enormous crash the second day.

Armstrong and just three other riders won the Tour five times, but not consecutively. They are Jacques Anquetin and Hinault. If Armstrong wins a sixth title, the question is the best will long.

Armstrong's courageous, somebody who persevered to the end," said Hinault. He came in 1978-1979, 1982 and 1985.

He's certainly a star, but now if he's a superstar, a new generation of riders, with their radios, they work in teams. It's a different world," he said.

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acuity ratio accounting.

said students at A&M are receiving degrees of respect to the proposal.

held three forums last week with students and faculty.

the University's need for increased funding and investments.

said that during those discussions, the same story had voted for the proposal during the last three sessions.

ly said no to three sessions this past semester.

said he urged the board to consider that most tend to plan their academic year around the proposal.

opposed to the proposal, which follows a similar trend.

tion increase would be a financial burden, Joseph said. Families did not see an increase in tuition through the school.

lodge, a junior psychology major at Blinn plans on attending the spring.

it's like the tuition but it isn't affecting the decision to go to A&M.

her schools are raising tuition, too," she said. "Many reasons I'm &M."

said tuition increases are a last choice, but that's unnecessary at this point.

it a doubt, the value of the experience is priceless.

make that same point. "As you seek to will benefit students in the long run, please consider tuition as an investment."

ard also authorized the signing of an agreement with the Athletics Department and the 12th Man Foundation.

moving all athletic operations to the foundation.

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