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Lance Armstrong vs The World... USADA's turn to bat

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Lance Armstrong in 2005, his 7th & final TdF win, leading Floyd Landis, Jan Ullrich and Ivan Basso over the Aubisque. All but Lance have been sanctioned for doping. Is it realistic Lance could have competed clean? That's the question of the day.[/caption]In the never-ending saga of Lance Armstrong and doping, a story in which truth is not just elusive but likely not recognizable due to the lack of credibility of various "witnesses", we are seeing perhaps the final contestant up to bat against Lance Armstrong.

From the article in the Washington Post-
USADAâ€™s letter, dated June 12, alleges that Armstrong and five former cycling team associates â€" three doctors including Italian physician Michele Ferrari, one trainer and team manager Johan Bruyneelâ€" engaged in a massive doping conspiracy from 1998 to 2011, and that â€œthe witnesses to the conduct described in this letter include more than ten (10) cyclists .?.?.â€•
And so it continues. Interesting timing (isn't it always?), just prior to the "big event"... in this case, the Ironman in Nice in 11 days. Pretty darned close to the schedule that was kept prior to various TdF revelations.

Will anything come from this? Who knows. If there was strongly-damnable evidence, why didn't it come out in the prior proceding? And if there was such evidence, why didn't Lance chose to retire instead of continue with a "bring it on" attitude by going after the Ironman titles?

Really surprising is that USADA puts stock in theÂ so-calledÂ (by Tyler Hamilton)Â "positive" Tour de Suiss EPO test from 2001, which did not show indications strong enough to be seen as a positive at that time; the tests then available were far more susceptible to a false positive than later tests, so the threshold for a sanctionable indication of doping was higher than shownÂ by Lance's sample. To say that the sample showed evidence of possible dopingÂ did not thenÂ and should not nowÂ merit a sanction. Testing today would tell the truth, but there are no samples from that event to test. Very weak evidence to bring to the party.

There may in fact be far better evidence of systematic doping that will come out. But as yet, they've claimed to have it, but have given no details. Could be a big surprise down the road. Or not. Ultimately, it will be George Hincapie's testimony, if in fact he gave any, that will be the evidence that decides if this ship sinks or floats. George is the only player that nearly everyone believes will tell the truth.

In the meantime, USADA has not just thrown down the gauntlet, but also, because rules governing road and triathlon events forbid participation byÂ an athlete under investigation, they have exacted a huge penalty well ahead of any judgement. Well played on

USADA's part. It will be interesting to see how Lance's legal team reacts.