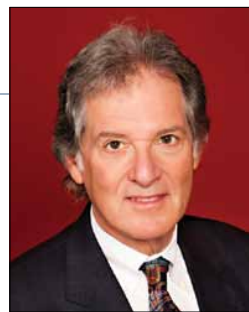


# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



*It's Not About the Bike* – Lance Armstrong with Sally Jenkins, Putnam press

For those of us who have idolized Lance for more than a decade, this week has been one of sadness and confusion. His “No more” was not the “No más” of Roberto Durán, who was a beaten fighter whose career was over. Lance continues to roll on in other, more important, spheres. This was the week that Lance decided not to fight the allegations of doping anymore. It was paraphrased that he would rather be eaten by zombies than spend another year in rooms with lawyers, sucking millions from him. This fight was taking too much of a toll on him and his family. Here is perhaps one of the greatest athletes of all time, someone whose urine and blood have been tested more often than any other, with never a sample that could implicate him of steroids, blood doping, erythropoietin, or too many PowerBars.

I was struck by the differences in the op-eds between the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, which were more disparate than a tricycle and a Madone. So what are the arguments? Juliet Macur in the *Times* (24 August 2012) suggested to us that the testimony of at least 10 eyewitnesses—including some of his closest teammates, as well as a massage therapist—carried greater weight than the negative drug tests. She considered Lance to have tumbled into the ranks of Marion Jones, Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens (recently acquitted), Floyd Landis, Alberto Contador, and others whose fall from grace was regrettable but as precipitous as the descent from L'Alpe d'Huez. In the next day's *Times*, the same author noted that more witnesses were willing to come forward; however, Travis Tygart, head of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), refused to reveal any identities. The case was “overwhelming” despite a total lack of tangible evidence. She states that Lance's refusal to be subjected to any more persecution was a clear admission of guilt. Her piece then dribbles a series of rumors and innuendos, long on nonsense, short on documentation. Still, as Richard Sandomir wrote in the *Times* (24 August 2012), Lance's backers remain solid behind him, from fans to sponsors. He represents a fight for good.

Closer to my home, the *Washington Post* piece by Rick Maese (25 August 2012) appeared more thoughtful. Lance is not only a world-class cyclist but, perhaps more importantly, a world-class philanthropist. He likened Armstrong's struggle against years of accusations to the boardwalk game Whac-A-Mole: every time he beats one down, another

rears its bucktoothed head. Even when an insurance company refused a performance bonus on the grounds that he had doped, Armstrong won the case. The witnesses whose credibility we are to believe include Tyler Hamilton, who was stripped of his Olympic medal for doping, and was promised a reduced sentence to testify against Lance. How can the USADA strip him of medals that were given by another international cycling organization? Let us not forget that the statute of limitations of 8 years has expired on several of the Tours. Was he cowering to the pettiness of the USADA or rising about it? His foundation has raised more than \$500 million in 15 years, and, as a testimony to him, donations went up 30% the day after he pulled out of the fight. Also in the *Washington Post*, Tracee Hamilton (I am sure no relation to Tyler) raised the point of whether we should believe witnesses with secondary gain or 500 negative tests of urine and blood (24 August 2012). So, why even bother testing if you are not going to believe the results? The USADA can't have it both ways.

Sally Jenkins, who has written two books with Lance, notes in the *Post* that a federal judge questioned the motives of the USADA as being less than noble, and questioned the constitutionality of their proceedings (24 August 2012). Can Lance appeal? Sure, but in the Court of Arbitration for Sport, athletes have lost 58 of 60 times, so why waste the effort?

We will never really know if Lance is guilty of the charges. Does it matter? Against all odds, he was a victor in the war against cancer. In a sport where everyone is assumed to be doping until proven otherwise (which surely isn't easy), he was the best of all time. Here is a true American hero, no matter what cynical, overly zealous people like Tygert try to implicate. His charitable works, the good he has done for cancer patients everywhere, bespeak his character. All of the authors of the newspaper articles lament that there are no winners here. In a way that is true, except for all of the patients who will benefit from his charities. He has clearly shown what sort of person he is, and that “It's not all about the bike.”

Until next month . . .

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Bruce D. Cheson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bruce D. Cheson