

LANCE ARMSTRONG

A Biography

Lance Armstrong was born with a competitive spirit that has sent him to the top of professional cycling and into the history books for making one of history's biggest sports comebacks. Whether it's competing in some of the world's most rigorous bicycling races or beating the odds of a cancer diagnosis, Lance's courage and drive have made him a true hero and an inspiration to all cancer patients and survivors. Now with the Cycle of Hope, Lance is giving those people touched by cancer a sense of optimism that they, too, can survive.

A Natural Athlete

Born on September 18, 1971, Lance was a natural athlete at a young age. He participated in many sports and, at age 13, won the Iron Kids Triathlon. He became a professional triathlete at age 16. Deciding that he was "born to race bikes," Lance qualified to train with the U.S. Olympic team in Colorado Springs, CO, during his senior year of high school. Once graduated, he decided to concentrate on cycling full-time.

In 1989, Lance qualified for the Junior World Championships in Moscow, exposing him to cycling opportunities around the world. By 1991, he became the U.S. National Amateur Champion, and, the following year, finished 14th in the 1992 Olympic games in Barcelona, Spain.

Lance faced stiff competition when he moved from amateur to professional status after the Olympics. He got off to a slow start, but then his competitive spirit and resolve kicked in. In 1993, he won 10 titles, including 1993 World Champion, U.S. PRO Champion, and a stage victory at the Tour de France. In 1994, he won the Thrift Drug Triple Crown and, in 1995, he won the Tour Du Pont, was named the 1995 Velo New American Male Cyclist of the Year, and took Stage 18 of the 1995 Tour de France. Many called him "The Golden Boy of American Cycling."

His Battle Against Cancer

Riding high on his remarkable success, Lance hit a hurdle in 1996 that nearly ended his career. In the spring of 1996, Lance began to experience pain and swelling in

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his groin and attributed it to his six- to eight-hour days of cycling training. He did not seek medical advice until more than five months later when he started to get headaches and cough up blood. "I ignored my symptoms partly because I was riding well...1996 was probably the best year of my profession up to that point. As an athlete, and a stubborn one at that, I didn't want to know that I had a problem. I didn't want to go to the doctor. I guess what it boils down to is I didn't want a set-back...I had a fear of hearing the bad news." The bad news seemed impossible to believe at first: advanced testicular cancer that produced a dozen golf ball-sized tumors in his lungs and lesions on his brain. He was only 25 years old.

Given only a 50 percent chance of survival, Lance, along with his supporters that included his mother, friends and professional colleagues, learned everything they could about his disease and sought the best medical advice they could find. Lance's medical oncologist gave him a choice of chemotherapy regimens: one that might scar his lungs and a second that was more aggressive with more short-term side effects, but with little or no impact on his lungs. Following three surgeries, Lance opted for the more strenuous chemotherapy regimen that consisted of four week-long cycles and with two weeks in between to recover. He says he owes much of his victory over cancer to Bristol-Myers Squibb, who produced the drugs with which he was treated, saying, "This is a company, had they not been in existence, had these drugs not been in existence, I wouldn't be alive. That's the bottom line. There is no way around it. Twenty years ago, when these drugs weren't around, 90 percent of the people who had this illness died. Now that the drugs are here and Bristol-Myers [Squibb] is here, 95 percent of the kids live."

Throughout his life-threatening ordeal, Lance continued to cycle. He never gave up hope and he never gave up the race. He missed the 1997 cycling season, but decided in 1998 to return to racing. It was a slow, tough battle to regain his stamina and technique, and more than once he questioned his decision. But the competitive spirit surfaced again, and in the latter half of 1998, he amazed everyone by winning the Tour de Luxembourg, the Rheinland-Pfalz Rundfahrt in Germany, and the Cascade Classic in Oregon, and taking fourth place in both the World Championships in Holland and the Tour de Spain.

Lance then set his sights on the 1999 Tour de France race, training for the grueling race in the mountains of North Carolina and then on location in the Alps. In July 1999, he crossed the finish line in Paris with a strong lead, winning the race and, along with it, the hearts of millions around the world.

A Look to the Future

"I owe the good life to cancer," Lance remarks to those who ask about his challenges both on and off the bicycle. He has taken his success and translated it into hope for uncounted individuals who face cancer every day. He has established The Lance Armstrong Foundation to promote cancer research and awareness. He, together with his foundation, has partnered with Bristol-Myers Squibb to support early cancer detection; to reduce fear associated with cancer; to encourage a team approach to

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treatment, including a medical oncologist; and to foster hope in patients and their families fighting the disease. "I am dedicated to the *Cycle of Hope* campaign because I want to help others break out of their cycle of misunderstanding and fear and empower themselves through the *Cycle of Hope*."

In May 1998, Lance married Kristin Richard, a public relations executive he met through his foundation work. In October 1999, he and Kristin became the proud parents of Luke David, another source of inspiration to cancer survivors. Lance continues to train for the next season of cycling, but this time he does so with a more holistic approach to life. While racing is his life's focus now, it is buffered and sustained by his new family and a genuine commitment to fellow cancer survivors. "I know this [victory] can be a fantastic example for all cancer patients, all survivors," he says. "Maybe I can prove that it's possible to return to a normal life, and maybe I can prove that it's possible to be better than you were before. I think I'm a better bike rider than I was before, and I know I am a better person than I was before."

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