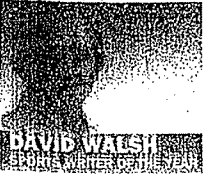


# **Exhibit 24**

# Paradise lost on tour



As the Tour de France heads towards a finish in Paris today, a cloud of suspicion refuses to be blown away

It is midday on Wednesday in a cyber bar not far from the Place Royale in the centre of the Pyrenean city of Pau. Nicolas Fouillout washes and cleans glasses and waits for his young clientele to come to have a beer, surf the internet and play computer games.

Two hours earlier, the Tour de France had left town. Down the Boulevard des Pyrenees, the departing ribbon of noise and colour had passed. A man in a white chef's jacket raced from a restaurant and made music with a sautepan and wooden spoon. Riders culled his enthusiasm; a young woman held her baby and then waved the infant's left hand. Au revoir.

Towards the back of the peloton, Lance Armstrong chatted with the German rider Jens Voigt. The mountain passes have been crossed, the challenges seen off, and from here to Paris it would be a cruise to Armstrong's third consecutive Tour de France. For a man who knows what it is like to wake up after brain surgery to remove cancerous lesions, this should have been a different kind of paradise. But for the past three weeks, and for many years before, the Tour has been Paradise Lost. What we see today is a stranger to the race of our youth. They ride the mountains as they once rode the flat; the speed and the stamina are a vision of the future we dare not imagine. The epic has become the enigma.

Armstrong's difficult moments have been explained by his six-year working relationship with Michele Ferrari, a doctor who has long been suspected of doping. On Monday last week Armstrong defended his right to work with Ferrari, said he found him "an honest man", a "clean man", and insisted he had "never seen anything that would lead me to think otherwise". Two days later, Filippo Simeoni's story was published by the Italian edition of GQ magazine.

Simeoni, a middle-of-the-road Italian rider, worked with Ferrari from October 1996 to July 1997 and kept diaries that were seized by the carabinieri investigating Ferrari. Unable to refute the evidence of his diaries, Simeoni collaborated with the police. He claimed that Ferrari encouraged him to use the powerful blood-boosting drug erythropoietin (EPO) and testosterone and helped him to get around drug controls by advising him on masking drugs.

Asked about Simeoni's testimony, Armstrong said it was an old story. The statement to the police had been made two years before, but until GQ's story few except the rider himself and the carabinieri knew it existed. The fact that it was evidence against Ferrari changed nothing for Armstrong; he would not be reconsidering his relationship with the doctor.

So while he dominates the mountains and destroys his rivals, Armstrong cannot obliterate the doubts. Even within the race, where solidarity is normally sacred, there have been



Riders on the storm: Lance Armstrong and Jan Ullrich, the leading protagonists on the 2001 Tour, have left a trail of unanswered questions in their wake en route to Paris

murderings. Rudy Pevenage, team director of the rival Telekom squad, says: "I am somewhat surprised by Armstrong. When others gasp for air with open mouths, he rides with a closed mouth, as if there is nothing to it."

Pevenage's star rider, Jan Ullrich, will finish second to Armstrong when the Tour ends this afternoon. The German has been gracious in defeat and generous to his conqueror. But then neither he nor his teammates can dare to accuse any rival. During last month's police raid on the Giro d'Italia, many products were found in the rooms of the Telekom riders. Various drugs, medical equipment and syringes full of a white substance were taken for analysis. Seven Telekom riders, including Ullrich, were placed under investigation. Among the products seized from Ullrich's room were theophylline, niobacid, sultanol, ephedra and bonafin. He insisted on his innocence. The substances were, he said, approved asthma treatments.

Michel Boyon, president of France's anti-doping council (CPLD), believes there is widespread abuse. "I am worried by it," he says. "We have a high percentage of riders using corticoids. Salbutamol and the anti-asthmatic substances are the most common. At the CPLD, we believe that in 95% of the cases where corticoids are permitted, there is an alternative treatment."

Large quantities of insulin were discovered, many riders had testosterone patches and many teams still carried mobile laboratories that could be used to ensure riders do not fail the obligatory drug tests.

In the cyber bar, still Nicolas Fouillout waits. We talk about the Tour. A few people from the social services office across the road come to watch the race in his bar, but it has never inter-

luded upon a re-run of the 1989 stage to Alpe d'Huez. There is no suspense because this is a story well remembered, but still you sit there, unable to move.

The Dutch rider Theunisse has broken away. Behind him, the Colombian Rondon and the Spaniard Delgado chase furiously, in their slipstreams the yellow jersey of Greg LeMond and his principal rival, Laurent Fignon. They race with their

wearily. Fignon's shoulders lurch from right to left, LeMond's legs can barely turn the pedals.

It would be wrong to portray the Tours of yesterday as paragons of fair play. Theunisse, who won that stage to Alpe d'Huez, would test positive for testosterone on three separate occasions. A year before, Delgado had used the masking drug probenecid in the Tour de France. Still, the 1989 climb of Alpe d'Huez appeared different from Armstrong's tour de force on the same mountain in this year's race.

Even 12 years ago, the race seemed more human, more engaging. Antoine Vayer, once an ethical but unappreciated trainer with the disgraced Festina team, believes the great change came with the introduction of EPO in the early 1990s.

"I did lots of testing with the Festina riders," he says. "Before EPO, we used to say a VO2 max [the measure of an athlete's ability to process oxygen] of 85 was damn good, but all that changed. When I tested the riders in December 1997, the average VO2 max might have been 72 or 73. But when I tested them later, at a time when riders were using EPO, the guys who were doping recorded a VO2 max that was 25-30% greater. That's totally unnatural. Christophe Moreau, who won the prologue to this year's race, had a VO2 max of 70, and three months later it was more than 92. Crazy.



**When Lance won the prologue to the 1999 Tour, I was close to tears. When I heard he was working with Michele Ferrari, I was devastated. If Lance is clean, it is the greatest comeback in the history of sport. If he isn't, it would be the greatest fraud.**

- Greg LeMond, three-time winner of the Tour de France

THE USE of therapeutic corticoids, performance-enhancing but permitted in the treatment of certain conditions, has reached epidemic proportions. After one Pyrenean stage last weekend, seven of the eight obligatory urine tests sent to the French anti-doping laboratory contained banned products. Not one could be declared positive because in each case the rider had permission to use the drug.

Since the scandal of Willy Voigt's arrest, the expulsion of the Festina team and the sustained scandal of the 1998 Tour, some things have changed. The sport is now more scrutinous, riders are tested more regularly, but it would be wrong to believe that the culture of doping has disappeared.

In their raid on the Tour of Italy, the carabinieri seized a wide range of doping products.

He has heard of Lance Armstrong? "He's the guy that was very sick, cancer," he says. "Yeah, I like him. Maybe some races still dope, I don't care about that. He's a tough guy."

THE Hotel Roncevaux is on Rue Louis Barthou, and in the early afternoon, checking to see whether television coverage of the day's stage has begun, you

mouths open, sucking whatever oxygen there is on the upper slopes of the Alps.

About three miles from the top, Fignon attacks. LeMond tries but cannot follow. Soon Delgado counter-attacks and left behind. It isn't the ebb and flow of the chase that keeps you sitting on a hotel bed 12 years on, but the inhumanity of the suffering. Delgado's head bobs

ERIK ZABEL sprinted to victory in the 19th stage of the Tour de France yesterday.

The 31-year-old German Telekom rider held off challenges from Australian Stuart O'Grady and Latvian Romms Vainsteins to win the 149.5km ride from Orleans to Evry.

American race leader Lance Armstrong, of the US Postal team, who needs only to avoid an accident to win the Tour for the third straight year, retained his lead of 6min 44sec over Jan Ullrich by finishing in the main pack.

Ahead of him, though, a dramatic race for the title of best sprinter was going on.

O'Grady retained the green jersey by grabbing second place, but Zabel's victory leaves the race wide open going into the final day.

cyber heroine. Cycling is becoming a video game, the one-time 'prisoners of the road' have become virtual human beings, an expression that could be applied to Indurain, Virenque, Ullrich and Armstrong. Cino Bartali, Robic, Coppi, Louis Bobet have been substituted by Robicop on wheels, someone with whom no fan can relate or identify."

LeMond, the three-time winner of the Tour, now watches from afar and admits to not knowing how to react: "When Lance won the prologue to the 1999 Tour, I was close to tears. He had come back from cancer, in the middle of my career I had to come back from being accidentally shot [while on a hunting trip in 1987] — it felt like we had a lot in common."

"But when I heard he was working with Michele Ferrari, I was devastated. One American journalist wrote that the only reason you visit Ferrari is to tell him to get the hell out of your sport. I agree with that. In the light of Lance's relationship with Ferrari, I just don't want to comment on this year's Tour."

"In a general sense, if Lance is clean, it is the greatest comeback in the history of sport. If he isn't, it would be the greatest fraud."

In the performance-enhancing game there is no shortage of fraud. Last Tuesday morning Tobias Rask, Larsen and Ole Steen left the Tour for a day and travelled an hour south to the Spanish city of Girona. Rask Larsen is a journalist with

ERIK BLADT in Denmark, Steen a photographer. They randomly selected four pharmacies and asked if they could buy four prescription drugs, all performance-enhancing, including EPO. In each they were told it would be possible. At the fourth, in the western suburb of Sangrepori, they purchased six ampoules of 0.5 millilitres of Eprex, a brand of EPO, for £60. They were not asked for a prescription and were not quizzed on why they wanted to buy them.

SERGE LANSAMAN is the night manager at the Hotel Roncevaux. It has been a long night, but he has slept a little and as a three-times-a-week swimmer, the long hours don't hurt him. He was 18 when LeMond won his first Tour, beating Bernard Hinault, and he thought it was the best performance he had ever seen.

Lansaman watches the Tour now, but doesn't believe what he is seeing. "The improvement over the past 10 years has been too much," he says. "Doping is a big problem, as it is in my sport, swimming. It is not normal to go as fast as they now go. I still watch, but it's not the same. Armstrong is a champion because of how he recovered from cancer, but LeMond is my favourite cyclist."

I ask Lansaman how best to describe him. "Typical French guy," he says.

# STAKEHOLDER PRU

DO OTHER PENSION PROVIDERS TICK ALL THE RIGHT BOXES?

		Prudential	Others
Will they set up the process quickly?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support you and your employees with software, payroll solutions and a helpline number?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Allow employees to manage their own plan?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leaving you free to concentrate on your business.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

CALL 0800 000 000 NOW  
BECAUSE TIME IS TICKING AWAY

PRUDENTIAL

As an employer you may be exempt from stakeholder requirements. Further information is available on request or can be accessed via our website. Prudential is a trading name of The Prudential Assurance Company Limited (which is also used by other companies within the Prudential marketing group of companies). The Prudential Assurance Company Limited is registered in England and Wales. Registered Office at 142 Holborn Bars, London EC1N 2HT. Registered number 15454. The Prudential Assurance Company Limited is regulated by the Personal Investment Authority for investment business. Calls are recorded/monitored in order to improve our service to you.

Sunday Times (London)

July 29, 2001, Sunday

## Paradise lost on tour

**BYLINE:** David Walsh

**SECTION:** Sport

**LENGTH:** 1990 words

As the Tour de France heads towards a finish in Paris today, a cloud of suspicion refuses to be blown away.

It is midday on Wednesday in a cyber bar not far from the Place Royale in the centre of the Pyrenean city of Pau. Nicolas Fouillout washes and cleans glasses and waits for his young clientele to come to have a beer, surf the internet and play computer games.

Two hours earlier, the Tour de France had left town. Down the Boulevard des Pyrenees, the departing ribbon of noise and colour had passed. A man in a white chef's jacket raced from a restaurant and made music with a saucepan and wooden spoon. Riders saluted his enthusiasm; a young woman held her baby and then waved the infant's left hand. Au revoir.

Towards the back of the peloton, Lance Armstrong chatted with the German rider Jens Voigt. The mountain passes have been crossed, the challengers seen off, and from here to Paris it would be a cruise to Armstrong's third consecutive Tour de France. For a man who knows what it is like to wake up after brain surgery to remove cancerous lesions, this should have been a different kind of paradise. But for the past three weeks, and for many years before, the Tour has been Paradise Lost. What we see today is a stranger to the race of our youth. They ride the mountains as they once rode the flat; the speed and the stamina are a vision of the future we dare not imagine. The epic has become the enigma.

Armstrong's difficult moments have been explaining his six-year working relationship with Michele Ferrari, a doctor who has long been suspected of doping. On Monday last week Armstrong defended his right to work with Ferrari, said he found him "an honest man", "a clean man", and insisted he had "never seen anything that would lead me to think otherwise". Two days later, Filippo Simeoni's story was published by the Italian edition of GQ magazine.

Simeoni, a middle-of-the-road Italian rider, worked with Ferrari from October 1996 to July 1997 and kept diaries that were seized by the carabinieri investigating Ferrari. Unable to refute the evidence of his diaries, Simeoni collaborated with the police. He claimed that Ferrari encouraged him to use the powerful blood-boosting drug erythropoietin (EPO) and testosterone and helped him to get around drug controls by advising him on masking drugs. According to Simeoni, Ferrari never spoke about the potential side-effects of performanceenhancing drugs.

Asked about Simeoni's testimony, Armstrong said it was an old story. The statement to the police had been made two years before, but until GQ's story few except the rider himself and the carabinieri knew it existed. The fact that it was evidence against Ferrari changed nothing for Armstrong: he would not be reconsidering his relationship with the doctor.

So while he dominates in the mountains and destroys his rivals, Armstrong cannot obliterate the doubts. Even within the race, where solidarity is normally sacred, there have been murmurings. Rudy Pevenage, team director of the rival Telekom squad, says: "I am somewhat surprised by Armstrong. When others gasp for air with open mouths, he rides with a closed mouth, as if there is nothing to it."

Pevenage's star rider, Jan Ullrich, will finish second to Armstrong when the Tour ends this afternoon. The German has been gracious in defeat and generous to his conqueror. But then neither he nor his teammates can dare to accuse any

TREK013955

rival. During last month's police raid on the Giro d'Italia, many products were found in the rooms of the Telekom riders. Various drugs, medical equipment and syringes full of a white substance were taken for analysis.

Seven Telekom riders, including Ullrich, were placed under investigation. Among the products seized from Ullrich's room were theophylline, otobacid, sultanol, ephynal and bonalin. He insisted on his innocence. The substances were, he said, approved asthma treatments.

THE USE of therapeutic corticoids, performance-enhancing but permitted in the treatment of certain conditions, has reached epidemic proportions. After one Pyrenean stage last weekend, seven of the eight obligatory urine tests sent to the French anti-doping laboratory contained banned products. Not one could be declared positive because in each case the rider had permission to use the drug.

Michel Boyon, president of France's anti-doping council (CPLD), believes there is widespread abuse. "I am worried by it," he says. "We have a high percentage of riders using corticoids. Salbutamol and the anti-asthmatic substances are the most common. At the CPLD, we believe that in 95% of the cases where corticoids are permitted, there is an alternative treatment."

Since the scandal of Willy Voet's arrest, the expulsion of the Festina team and the sustained scandal of the 1998 Tour, some things have changed. The sport is now more scrutinised, riders are tested more regularly, but it would be wrong to believe that the culture of doping has disappeared.

In their raid on the Tour of Italy, the carabinieri seized a wide range of doping products. Large quantities of insulin were discovered, many riders had testosterone patches and many teams still carried mobile laboratories that could be used to ensure riders do not fail the obligatory drug tests.

In the cyber bar, still Nicolas Fouillout waits. We talk about the Tour. A few people from the social services office across the road come to watch the race in his bar, but it has never interested him. He has heard of Lance Armstrong? "He's the guy that was very sick, cancer," he says. "Yeah, I like him. Maybe some racers still dope, I don't care about that. He's a tough guy."

THE Hotel Roncevaux is on Rue Louis Barthou, and in the early afternoon, checking to see whether television coverage of the day's stage has begun, you hit upon a re-run of the 1989 stage to Alpe d'Huez. There is no suspense because this is a story well remembered, but still you sit there, unable to move.

The Dutch rider Theunisse has broken away. Behind him the Colombian Rondon and the Spaniard Delgado chase furiously, in their slipstreams the yellow jersey of Greg LeMond and his principal rival, Laurent Fignon. They race with their mouths open, sucking whatever oxygen there is on the upper slopes of the Alpe.

About three miles from the top, Fignon attacks. LeMond tries but cannot follow. Soon Delgado counter-attacks and the exhausted LeMond is left behind. It isn't the ebb and flow of the chase that keeps you sitting on a hotel bed 12 years on, but the inhumanity of the suffering. Delgado's head bobs wearily, Fignon's shoulders lurch from right to left, LeMond's legs can barely turn the pedals.

It would be wrong to portray the Tours of yesterday as paragons of fair play. Theunisse, who won that stage to Alpe d'Huez, would test positive for testosterone on three separate occasions. A year before, Delgado had used the masking drug probenidol in the Tour de France. Still, the 1989 climb of Alpe d'Huez appeared different from Armstrong's tour de force on the same mountain in this year's race.

Even 12 years ago, the race seemed more human, more engaging. Antoine Vayer, once an ethical but unappreciated trainer with the disgraced Festina team, believes the great change came with the introduction of EPO in the early 1990s.

"I did lots of testing with the Festina riders," he says. "Before EPO, we used to say a VO2 max (the measure of an athlete's ability to process oxygen) of 85 was damn good, but all that changed. When I tested the riders in December 1997, the average VO2 max might have been 72 or 73. But when I tested them later, at a time when riders were using EPO, the guys who were doping recorded a VO2 max that was 25-30% greater. That's totally unnatural. Christophe Mureau, who won the prologue to this year's race, had a VO2 max of 70, and three months later it was more than 92. Crazy.

"It was scary, too. As you turn up the power, the VO2 test gets harder and the production of lactate should act as a brake. It should have made them slow down. But with EPO, this didn't happen; they felt no pain in their legs and the

lactate acted as a fuel that made them go faster. I looked at what they were doing and thought, 'We're not dealing with human beings any more'."

The tests designed to catch those who cheat have never been good enough. Voet's admission that he helped more than 500 riders to dope but did not have one positive test tells all that we need to know about the efficacy of the controls. And those who believe cycling is lifting itself out of the hell of blood-boosting drugs will find it hard to reconcile that belief with the fact that this year's Tour will be the third-fastest in history. The four fastest have been won by Armstrong (1999), Pantani (1998), Armstrong (2001) and Armstrong (2000).

The irony for the racers is that the ever-rising speeds do not excite the fans. Rather, they distance them. In the French newspaper Liberation on Thursday, the philosopher and cycling fan Robert Redeker wrote of the gulf that now exists between the race and the racers: "The athletic type represented by Lance Armstrong, unlike Fausto Coppi or Jean Robic, is coming closer to Lara Croft, the virtually fabricated cyber heroine. Cycling is becoming a video game, the one-time 'prisoners of the road' have become virtual human beings, an expression that could be applied to Indurain, Virenque, Ullrich and Armstrong. Gino Bartali, Robic, Coppi, Louis Bobet have been substituted by Robocop on wheels, someone with whom no fan can relate or identify."

**LeMond**, the three-time winner of the Tour, now watches from afar and admits to not knowing how to react: "When Lance won the prologue to the 1999 Tour, I was close to tears. He had come back from cancer, in the middle of my career I had to come back from being accidentally shot (while on a hunting trip in 1987) - it felt like we had a lot in common.

"But when I heard he was working with Michele Ferrari, I was devastated. One American journalist wrote that the only reason you visit Ferrari is to tell him to get the hell out of your sport. I agree with that. In the light of Lance's relationship with Ferrari, I just don't want to comment on this year's Tour.

"In a general sense, if Lance is clean, it is the greatest comeback in the history of sport. If he isn't, it would be the greatest fraud."

In the performance-enhancing game there is no shortage of fraud. Last Tuesday morning Torben Rask Laursen and Ole Steen left the Tour for a day and travelled an hour south to the Spanish city of Girona. Rask Laursen is a journalist with Ekstra Bladet in Denmark, Steen a photographer. They randomly selected four pharmacies and asked if they could buy four prescription drugs, all performance-enhancing and including EPO. In each they were told it would be possible. At the fourth, in the western suburb of Sangregori, they purchased six ampoules of 0.5 millilitres of Eprex, a brand of EPO, for Pounds 60. They were not asked for a prescription and were not quizzed on why they wanted to buy them.

**SERGE LANSAMAN** is the night manager at the Hotel Roncevaux. It has been a long night, but he has slept a little and as a three-times-a-week swimmer, the long hours don't hurt him. He was 18 when **LeMond** won his first Tour, beating Bernard Hinault, and he thought it was the best performance he had ever seen.

Lansaman watches the Tour now, but doesn't believe what he is seeing. "The improvement over the past 10 years has been too much," he says. "Doping is a big problem, as it is in my sport, swimming. It is not normal to go as fast as they now go. I still watch, but it's not the same. Armstrong is a champion because of how he recovered from cancer, but **LeMond** is my favourite cyclist."

I ask Lansaman how best to describe him. "Typical French guy," he says.

david.walsh@sunday-times.co.uk

**LOAD-DATE:** July 30, 2001

**CORRECTION:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Cycling; Tour de France

Copyright 2001 Times Newspapers Limited

TREK013957