

Exhibit 26

TOUR DE FRANCE

Armstrong feeling even more heat

American fends off Lemond's comments, clashes with reporters

BY JOHN LEICESTER

FIGEAC, France — Lance Armstrong's day was far from over when he stepped off his bike after finishing ninth in Thursday's stage of the Tour de France.

Once again, Armstrong found himself fending off the suspicions that have dogged him since he won the first of his five straight championships after coming back from cancer.

Armstrong said a French TV station tried to get into his hotel room in hopes of finding evidence of doping, and three-time Tour winner Greg Lemond voiced doubts that his fellow American is clean.

"They show up and they ask sporting questions to our face, but as soon as they leave they're digging in the rooms and looking for dirt," Armstrong said. "If you left a B vitamin sitting there, that would get on TV and that would be a scandal. That's what we have to live with every day."

The 32-year-old Texan said he was concerned the reporter from TV station France 3 might have tried to plant banned substances to frame him. Within his team, there are fears that some in France do not want an American to win a record six Tours.

Armstrong said the television crew tried to persuade hotel staff to let them into his room after he left to go race.

He said the reporter who visited his hotel "has been following us for months and it's scandalous."

"The scary thing is, if they don't find anything and get frustrated

after a couple of months... well, who's to say they won't put something there and say, 'Look what we've found,'" Armstrong said. "They see the sport as a target, an easy target."

The France 3 reporter, Hugues Huet, said he went to the hotel to do interviews about Armstrong's teammates and that he chatted to the hotel manager for a few minutes. But he denied he sought access to the champion's room.

"It's completely ridiculous," Huet told the Associated Press. "We do have ethics and we don't do just anything... If I played around by searching his room like that, I would be breaking the limits."

The 11th stage, won by Frenchman David Moncoutie, did not change the overall time gap between Armstrong and his main rival, German Jan Ullrich, still 55 seconds behind.

Saving themselves for the arduous and likely decisive climbs in the Pyrenees and the Alps, they did not react when Moncoutie and two other riders surged ahead.

The stage win was Moncoutie's first in five Tours on a day when a blazing sun baked riders. "We're tired and really cooked," Armstrong said.

Armstrong has been cheered by some French fans, but others bristle at the idea of a Texan overtaking the four other five-time champions, who include Frenchmen Jacques Anquetil and Bernard Hinault.

Allegations of doping have also clouded his image. In an interview published Thursday by *La Monde*, a respected French daily, Lemond voiced doubts about his fellow American.

"Lance is ready to do anything to keep his secret," Lemond told the paper. "I don't know how he can continue to convince everybody of his innocence."



Lance Armstrong fights through a crowd on a busy day at the Tour de France that had him responding to two doping-related stories. AP



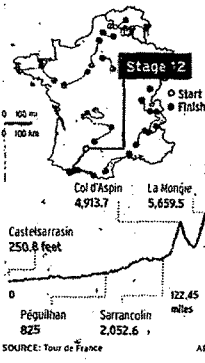
David Moncoutie Wins first stage

STAGE 11 AT A GLANCE

- **Stage:** A relatively short ride from Saint-Flour to Figeac over 102 miles of hilly roads with one notable climb.
- **Winner:** Cofidis rider David Moncoutie of France in 3 hours, 54 minutes, 59 seconds.
- **How others fared:** Time Tour Winner Lance Armstrong of the United States placed ninth, 5 minutes, 59 seconds behind. Main rival Jan Ullrich, the 1997 champion, placed 13th in the same time.
- **Yellow jersey:** French cyclist Thomas Voeckler of Bipopches La Boulanger keeps the lead.
- **Quote of the day:** "We're tired and really cooked." —Lance Armstrong.
- **Next stage:** Riders enter the daunting Pyrenees in today's 12th stage, with a 122.5-mile ride from Castelsarrasin to La Mongie that features a grueling climb to the finish line.

BACK UP THE PEAK

The Tour moves back uphill on this mountain stage from Castelsarrasin to La Mongie. Col d'Aspin's grade is 6.3 percent.



Season or no season, Hawks sign Daze, Calder

BY LEN ZIEHM
Staff Reporter

Long-term injuries to Eric Daze and Kyle Calder were among the many reasons the Blackhawks endured a trying 2003-04 season, but the wingers remain part of the club's rebuilding plans. General manager Bob Pulford announced Thursday that both had signed multiyear contracts.

"We see these players as part of our future," Pulford said.

The Hawks didn't disclose contract terms, but Calder, 25, apparently got a hefty pay raise despite the uncertainty over the start of next season. Canadian sources said Calder, who made \$900,000 last season,

signed a two-year contract worth \$3.35 million. The NHL and its players association are far apart in negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement. The present one expires Sept. 15, and training camps won't open the next day if a new agreement hasn't been reached.

Daze, who has spent his 10 NHL seasons with the Hawks, has had three back operations in as many seasons. He battled a sore back in the first three games last season, then sat out the next 63. Daze, 29, underwent surgery to repair a herniated disc on Dec. 3 and returned March 5. In the last 16 games, he had four goals and 11 assists.

Calder suffered a broken left leg March 5 and missed the last 16



Eric Daze
Tender back



Kyle Calder
Big raise

games. The Hawks won only twice after Calder went down and finished their dismal season with a nine-game winless streak. He reached the 20-goal plateau for the first time in the NHL while playing

in the first 66 games. He had 21 goals and 18 assists for the season.

The Hawks also said they had severed ties with Michael Ayres, a promising young goaltender. They relinquished their rights to Ayres, the 2003 USA Hockey Player of the Year for New Hampshire. Last month, the Hawks traded Adam Berkhoe, another goalie prospect who had been one of their draftees, to Atlanta.

The Hawks are deemed rich in goalies. Jocelyn Thibault, Michael Leighton and Craig Anderson figure to man two of the spots on the Hawks' roster, and Adam Munro and Mike Brodeur are under contract for the minor-league affiliates in Norfolk and Greenville.

BCS tries again to find right formula

Polls to get more emphasis now though it's too late for USC

BY EDDIE PELLIS

There will be fewer numbers to crunch in the revamped version of the Bowl Championship Series formula.

The big question remains whether those numbers will produce better results for one of the few major sports that determines its champion without a postseason tournament.

The Associated Press poll will count for one-third of each team's ranking under the new formula. BCS officials unveiled Thursday in their latest attempt to find a simpler, more equitable way to come up with a No. 1 vs. No. 2 matchup in the college football title game.

But in describing the new formula, BCS chairman Kevin Weiberg issued the same caveat that has existed throughout the six seasons of this system.

"There is not a perfect tool out there in this system that will eliminate all controversy," said Weiberg. The Big 12 commissioner who took over as BCS chairman this year.

Under the new formula, which goes into effect this season, the AP writers' poll, the coaches' poll and a combination of computer rankings will each count for one-third of a team's overall BCS ranking.

Strength of schedule, team record and quality wins, three components used under the old system, have been eliminated, the thought being that all are already factored into the computer rankings. In the past, results from the AP and coaches' polls were averaged, then factored in with the other components — a formula that lessened the significance of the polls.

In three of the last four seasons, there have been at least three teams with legitimate claims for the two spots in the BCS title game. Last year resulted in a split national championship, with LSU winning the BCS title game over Oklahoma and USC protesting its top AP ranking by defeating Michigan in the Rose Bowl. USC was left out of the BCS title game despite being ranked first in both polls going into bowl season.

BCS officials hired mathematicians from The Art and Science Group, based in Baltimore, to help come up with a new formula that would give them a better chance at ensuring no repeat of last season.

Had the new system been used last year, USC and LSU would have been in the title game.

Weiberg said the hope is that this system won't need to be changed again. The BCS contract expires after the 2005 season. Beginning in 2006, a fifth game will be added to the BCS.