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By VeloNews.com

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Velo Magazine — November 2012

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By Ryan Newill, in Silver Spring, Maryland

O'Reilly in 2000

Photo: PhotoSport International (file photo)

Lance Armstrong was on hand at the Discovery Channel world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, on Tuesday to announce Discovery Communications' deal to take over title sponsorship of his U.S. Postal squad in 2005. But it wasn't questions of a multimillion-dollar sponsorship deal that generated the most heated questioning at the ensuing press

conference.

At the post-announcement media event, questions inevitably surfaced about "L.A. Confidential," a new book by award-winning London Sunday Times sportswriter David Walsh and former L'Equipe cycling writer Pierre Ballester.

The book, released in France on Tuesday, alleges that Armstrong used performance-enhancing drugs in the years before his battle with cancer in 1996 and to achieve his five consecutive Tour de France victories.

In response, Armstrong's attorneys have filed libel suits in both British and French courts against the book's authors and publishers, as well as newspapers and magazines that have printed excerpts.

During his Maryland press conference, Armstrong was unequivocal in denying the allegations.

"I can absolutely confirm that we do not use doping products," said Armstrong. "I can also remind everybody here and everybody listening that this is not the first time this has happened. It's not the first time I've lived through this. I heard it in 1999. I heard it in 2001, and again in 2003 ... it happens all the time. And every time, we've chosen to just sit back and let it pass. But we've sort of reached a point where we really can't tolerate it any more, and we're sick and tired of these allegations, and we're going to do everything we can to fight them. They're absolutely untrue."

Armstrong said that although the lawsuits currently extend only to the authors, publishers, and media outlets that had printed excerpts, he and the U.S. Postal team's owner, Tailwind Sports "won't discriminate" when it comes to pursuing legal action against the named sources cited in the book.

One of those sources is Emma O'Reilly, the former U.S. Postal soigneur who alleges in the Walsh/Ballester book that Armstrong used the banned blood booster EPO; that she was asked by Armstrong to dispose of syringes at the 1998 Tour of Holland; and that she was sent to Spain to pick up drugs for Armstrong during his 1999 Pyrenean training camp.

"We actually had a very good working relationship," said Armstrong of the Irishwoman, who left the team in 2000. "Even as evil as this thing is going to be, it's not going to be my style to attack her."

"I know there were a lot of issues within the team and within the management, within the other riders that were inappropriate, and she was let go," Armstrong continued. "But, to be quite honest, I always had a good relationship with her. [I] did not work with her very much. We're talking about 1999, many, many years ago, and this is the first I've heard from her in years and years and of course, very interesting to read some of these stories."

Other sources named by Walsh and Ballester include Armstrong's former Motorola teammate Stephen Swart and Kathy LeMond, wife of the first American Tour de France winner, Greg LeMond.

"It's obviously distracting, two-and-a-half weeks before the Tour," said Armstrong of the controversy. But he added that, while stressful, it wasn't interrupting his focus on his primary target. "I gotta tell you, when I go home, I'm not thinking about this. I'm thinking about winning the Tour, I'm thinking about starting it, I'm thinking about ... as I said earlier I don't ever think about winning number six, but I guess I will think a little bit about winning six."

The following is a transcript of the Walsh-related questions at Tuesday's press conference (Courtesy of Tom Goldman/National Public Radio):

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**Question:** (Sal Ruibal, USA Today) Congratulations on your deal, but unfortunately, as it often is in cycling, there are other issues that are on people's minds today, and one of them is the David Walsh allegations in his new book ... about doping on your team. Lance, today can you assure your millions of fans around the world that you have never used illegal performance-enhancing drugs or techniques at any time during your cycling career?

**Lance Armstrong:** Well, I hope we can get back to the point of discussing the Discovery Network's ... um, I can absolutely confirm that we don't use doping products. I can also remind everybody here and everybody listening, that this is not the first time it's happened.

This is not the first time I've lived through this. I heard it in 1999, I heard it in 2001, again in 2003. It happens all the time. And every time we've chosen to just sit back and let it pass. But we've sort of reached a point where we really can't tolerate it anymore. And we're sick and tired of these allegations, and we're going to do everything we can, uh, to fight them. They're absolutely untrue..

We've filed action in England. We've filed action in France uh, against everybody involved. And ...enough is enough. And I personally am very frustrated; it's obviously distracting two-and-a-half weeks before the Tour. But for me, success is the best thing. And I've gone on the record many, many times and talked about this team and our approach to cycling, and I think that the people that know cycling know that we're the most passionate, fanatical, crazy team out there when it comes to preparation and the right way....

We spend more time on equipment and training and legal methods than anybody else. And I stand by that statement, and over time we'll see. It's very unfortunate and it's simply a few journalists that have taken this on as a personal mission and ... again, enough is enough....

**Question:** The other question I had, the individual that's been quoted the most in the press reports concerning this book, was someone you worked with. How stressful is it, and do you have any speculation as to why someone like this would want to hurt you?

**Lance Armstrong:** In fact we actually had a very good working relationship. I know that Emma left the team for other reasons ... um ... and even as evil as this thing has come out to be, it's not gonna be my style to attack her.

I know there were a lot of issues within the team, within the management, within the other riders that were inappropriate ... and she was let go. But ... to be quite honest, i always had a good relationship with her. I did not work with her very much. If you're talking about the years 2004, we're talking about 1999 ... many, many years ago. And this is the first I heard from her in years and years and of course, it's very interesting (laughs) to read some of these stories ... but, it's too bad. It does add up to a little stress, but I got to tell ya when I go home, I'm not thinking about this. I'm thinking about winning the Tour, I'm thinking about starting and I'm thinking about ... as I said earlier I don't think about winning number six, but I guess I will think a little bit about winning six.

**Question:** (Ryan Newell from VeloNews) Several years ago, David Walsh wrote a fairly complimentary (chapter about you in his book on the **1993 Tour de France**).

Can you just comment on how that relationship has deteriorated to the point where it is today?

**Lance Armstrong:** That's news to me. David Walsh doesn't write very many complimentary articles about anybody, and, um ... I'd have to see it first. I can't comment.

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