



Armstrong team hits out at Landis

Lance Armstrong's Team RadioShack have launched a scathing attack on Floyd Landis after the disgraced cyclist accused Armstrong of doping.

Landis, stripped of his 2006 Tour de France title for a positive drugs test, admits he regularly doped as a rider.

Armstrong claimed he was not surprised by the accusations as Landis had been threatening him for over two years.

The claims were described in a lengthy statement by Armstrong's lawyers as "incredible concoctions".

In all, Landis accused 16 other riders and officials of breaking doping rules.

Seven-time Tour de France winner Armstrong has often been accused by his rivals and critics of cheating but has never officially failed a doping test and has always maintained his innocence.

said: "In levelling these false and baseless accusations, Landis provided selected emails to multiple journalists in connection with his public statements on Wednesday evening.

"What was not conveyed were descriptions of the threatening text messages from Landis to others, including Lance Armstrong, that began more than two years ago.

"Mr. Armstrong and others, then, as he has now, told Landis he had nothing to hide and that he was not going to submit to Landis' baseless threats to "disclose" falsehoods.

"While these types of repeated, tired and baseless accusations against Lance have been proven false in the past, it is quite regrettable, but telling, that so many in cycling are now attacked by a bitter and scorned Landis who, quite simply, has zero credibility."

The 32-year-old Landis has sent a series of e-mails to cycling officials and sponsors acknowledging and detailing his long-term use of banned drugs, and accusing former team-mate Armstrong of doing the same, including once on a team bus during a race.

Team RadioShack's lawyers

between them and Landis on their website on Friday.

Landis has also accused cycling boss Johan Bruyneel and Armstrong of paying off an International Cycling Union official to cover up a test in 2002 after Armstrong purportedly tested positive for the blood-boosting drug EPO.

I think history speaks for itself here
Lance Armstrong

In an e-mail sent to USA Cycling chief Steve Johnson, Landis said Armstrong's positive EPO test was in 2002, around the time he won the Tour de Suisse.

However, Armstrong won the Tour de Suisse in 2001, not 2002, prompting the cycling great to say on Thursday: "We're a little confused, maybe just as confused as you guys. The timeline is off, year by year."

The UCI released a statement saying it had "never changed or concealed a positive test result."

Landis also alleged that Bruyneel had introduced Landis to practices including steroid patch use and blood doping.

Bruyneel led the US Postal team, which later became Discovery Channel, to victory in eight of nine Tour de France races from 1999, including Armstrong's seven successive wins between 1999-2005.

Landis joined US Postal in 2002, and teamed with Armstrong in three Tour de France campaigns before winning in 2006 riding for Phonak.

Landis also implicated other cyclists, including Armstrong confidant George Hincapie and former US Postal team-mate Michael Barry.

"I have been a professional on the circuit for 17 years - which is one of the longest careers in the peloton," said Hincapie.

"During that time, I have earned the respect of my peers and a reputation for working hard, honestly and honourably. I'm really disappointed to hear these accusations."

Hincapie's thoughts were echoed by Barry, who now rides for the British-based Team Sky.

"It's not true," he told Cycling Weekly. "When you see false allegations about yourself like that it's pretty shocking."

Barry confirmed that he had talked with his Team Sky management about the allegations. "They just wanted to know my side of the story and that was it," he said.

"The team have been very supportive. For the last few years, I have raced with teams that have a strong anti-doping stance, and throughout my career I've had a strong anti-doping stance. That was the big reason why I decided to come to Sky."

Landis says he is speaking out now partly because World Anti-Doping Agency's statute of limitations for doping offences of eight years meant his evidence would shortly become unusable.

"I made some misjudgements and want to clear my conscience," Landis told ESPN. "I don't want to be part of the problem any more."

Team Radioshack's Armstrong, 38, spoke to reporters before the start of the fifth stage of the Tour of California.

"I think history speaks for itself here," Armstrong said. "We don't know what he did or didn't do during the Tour. We followed the case, followed all the drama with regards to the [Landis] case. And now we see something different."

"At the end of the day, he pointed the finger at everybody still involved in cycling, everybody that's still enjoying the sport, everybody that still believes in the sport, everybody that's still working in the sport, was in the crosshairs."

Landis's claims have drawn a swift response from the World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada).

"We are very interested in learning more about this matter and we will liaise with the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) and any other authority with appropriate jurisdiction to get to the heart of the issues raised," said Wada president John Fahey in a statement.

Landis lost his appeal against being banned for two years and stripped of the 2006 Tour title at the Court of Arbitration for Sport, which threw out his case in June 2008 and ordered him to pay \$100,000 (£69,000) in judicial costs to the US Anti-Doping Agency.

His attempts to clear his name are believed to have cost him some \$2m (£1.4m).

Landis revealed he first used performance-enhancing drugs in 2002 when he was a member of the US Postal team.

He said he had used testosterone, human growth hormone and female hormones as well as making use of frequent blood transfusions.

He also confessed to a one-time experiment with insulin, adding he was never threatened or forced to take drugs.

However, Landis maintains the result of his test at the 2006 Tour, when he was riding for Swiss team Phonak, was inaccurate and that he had been taking human growth hormone and not the synthetic testosterone he tested positive for.

Story from BBC SPORT:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/sport2/hi/other_sports/cycling/8695890.stm

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