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Thursday, Sep. 25, 2008

Will cyclist Lance Armstrong race in Merced?

Fresno Bee staff and news services

Early reports that Lance Armstrong will compete in the Tour of California bicycle race, which has a leg beginning in Merced, have been premature, race organizers said.

The seven-time Tour de France champion, who is coming out of retirement at 37, announced Wednesday he will ride for the Kazakhstan-based Astana team. But it was unclear whether he will compete in the Tour of California, which has stops in Merced, Clovis and Visalia.

Australian cycling officials said early in the day that Armstrong would ride in January's Tour Down Under in Adelaide, Australia. Later, Kazakh Cycling Federation deputy chief Nikolai Proskurin told the Associated Press that Armstrong's first race would be the Tour of California in February.

Andrew Messick, president of AEG Sports, which owns the Tour of California, indicated in a news release that Armstrong's participation isn't a done deal.

Messick said AEG officials met with Armstrong's representatives Tuesday in New York. "We applaud the commitment that Lance Armstrong has made to return to cycling for the purpose of raising awareness of cancer," Messick said, before adding, "It is our hope to see Lance Armstrong and his Astana teammates in our race next year."

Bob Keyes, chairman of Clovis' Tour organization committee, said he contacted AEG for a clarification and was sent Messick's news release.

"AEG and us want it to happen," Keyes said. "They're courting Lance to come and it's certainly our hope, but it's speculation now. It would be huge for Clovis. In my opinion, it would double the size of the crowd, garner more sponsorships and boost economic impact."

The Tour of California, an 800-mile course that runs Feb. 14-22, is the largest and most prestigious road race in the United States. Merced will host the start of Stage 5 on Feb. 18, which ends in downtown Clovis. Stage 6 on Feb. 19 goes from Visalia to Paso Robles.

The six-stage Tour Down Under, the first event on the 2009 world pro cycling calendar, will be Jan. 20-25 in the South Australia state, centered on the capital Adelaide.

September 25, 2008

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It's not uncommon for cyclists to ride in consecutive touring races. For example, this year's Tour de France (July 5) started a little more than a month after the final stage of the Giro d'Italia (June 1).

Local cyclist Mark Sasser is hoping Armstrong joins the Tour of California field.


"He's such a global icon," Sasser said. "It's going to generate a lot of buzz and get people to look at cycling again because he has such a huge following."

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Help & Info

Thanks to local folks like me who live in L.A. and work in the entertainment industry, we continue to spread the word around the nation about just how corrupt Merced, CA is. I was on the set of "Extractor" (Ben Affleck and Mike Judges new project) and was speaking to Mila Kunis about Larry Morse and his teacher Gordon Spencer. Seems the words gotten around to many here in L.A. who correctly equate Merced with Corruption.

If Lance wants to bring his career out of retirement, I know he'll stay far away from Merced. :: 09/25/08 7:57am - rgentltd 

With the sorry state of condition of Merced's existing bike paths and the complete lack of others in the rest of the city, I would be surprised if he visited let alone ride in our community. :: 09/25/08 7:52am - LUCKYHORSE 

Lance is a queer! He's bailed on his family to marry anti-American Sheryl Crow! :: 09/25/08 7:31am - mercedistrash 

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