



## LANCE ARMSTRONG



Born and raised in Plano, Texas to a single mother, Lance Armstrong showed an early interest in sports. Going against the football culture of his hometown, he earned a spot on both the track and swim teams. Armstrong became a state champion swimmer, adding cycling to his repertoire and becoming a professional triathlete at age 15. With the dream of one day competing in the Olympics (triathlon was not yet an Olympic sport), Armstrong turned his focus to cycling.

In 1992, Armstrong represented the U.S. at the Barcelona Olympic Games, turning professional immediately after. In 1993, he won cycling's "Triple Crown," the Thrift Drug Classic, the Kmart West Virginia Classic and the CoreStates Race (the U.S. Professional Championship), placed second in the Tour Dupont and competed in his first Tour de France, cycling's most prestigious event. By 1996, he was an established international competitor, setting a record victory at the Tour DuPont and riding again for the U.S. at the Atlanta Olympics.

Then, the unthinkable happened. After ignoring escalating symptoms, Armstrong, then age 25, was diagnosed with Stage 3 metastatic testicular cancer that had advanced to his lymph nodes, abdomen, lungs and brain. Given only a 40% chance of survival, he underwent surgeries and multiple rounds of chemotherapy. Turning his never-give-up drive to beating cancer, he vowed that he would one day return to cycling.

Armstrong was declared cancer free in February of 1997. That same year, he founded the Lance Armstrong Foundation, later called Livestrong, known for its iconic yellow band bracelets. According to Armstrong, Livestrong has raised over a half a billion dollars to advocate for and support people with cancer.

Despite his odds-defying victory over cancer, Armstrong's \$600k annual sponsorship had been pulled and companies were hesitant to sponsor him. He eventually signed a \$200k annual deal with the United States Postal Service team. His return to professional cycling became one of sports' most legendary comeback stories. In 1999, Armstrong became the second American to win the Tour de France, a victory he repeated the following year. He also won a bronze medal at the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Over the next five years, Armstrong dominated international cycling, winning the Tour de France a total of seven consecutive times before retiring from the sport in 2005 at the age of 34. In 2009, he came out of retirement to compete in the Tour once again, placing third. In 2010, he competed in what was to be his final Tour, coming in 23rd place, and permanently retiring.

Through his peak years, Armstrong's tremendous success was met with rumors of performance-enhancing drug (PED) use. The controversy first surfaced in 2001, when he was linked to an Italian doctor being investigated for supplying PEDs to cyclists. Amidst numerous allegations, Armstrong vehemently denied any drug use. In 2012, the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) announced that Armstrong would be stripped of all of his Tour de France titles, his Olympic medal and all other honors earned between 1999-2005 and be banned from cycling for life. Armstrong later admitted to PED use during a notable national interview with Oprah Winfrey, attributing it to "a ruthless desire to win."

In addition to losing his titles, Armstrong also lost an estimated \$111 million in endorsements along with legal costs. At his lowest point, with his career in shambles, he worried about how he would support his family.



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Fortuitously, his situation was turned around when he became an early investor in Uber, and later, DocuSign. Combining a talent for spotting winners with his lifelong interest in sports, health and wellness, Armstrong founded Next Ventures, a venture capital firm designed to maximize growth opportunities in the exploding sports, fitness, nutrition, and wellness markets.

Armstrong credits much of his current comeback to his keen understanding of the power of digital media and influencers in brand building. He currently hosts THEMOLVE, a podcast that provides analysis of the Tour de France and other cycling, triathlon and endurance races. THEMOLVE has had millions of downloads and is one of Apple iTunes' top 10 sports and recreation podcasts. Armstrong also hosts The Forward podcast, interviewing musicians, athletes, politicians and influencers from all walks of life. Past interviewees have included Matthew McConaughey, Molly Bloom, Charles Barkley, Tony Robbins, and Wolfgang Puck. These popular podcasts are the cornerstone of WEDU MEDIA and the WEDU brand, a content destination for a growing community of endurance athletes and those pursuing an endurance lifestyle. Armstrong also continues to be actively involved in philanthropy, most recently teaming with others to send a bike to every child in Uvalde, Texas as a way to help foster normalcy after the traumatic school shooting.

Regretful about the past, but with eyes firmly fixed on the future, Armstrong shares a story of resiliency and hard-learned lessons that resonate with multiple audiences. Speaking with total candor and making no subject off-limits, he champions the power of mental endurance to overcome any failure, challenge or obstacle. "I've landed on my feet," Armstrong says. "I have five beautiful kids and I've been given another chance. I'm extremely grateful for that."