

## **Nike cuts ties with disgraced Armstrong**

*Matt Cutler*

Sportswear giant Nike announced the termination of its sponsorship contract with Lance Armstrong yesterday as the seven-time Tour de France winner stepped down as chairman of his non-profit cancer organisation Livestrong.

The US sportswear giant has been a long-time backer of Armstrong and last week reiterated its backing for the 41-year-old following the publication of the damning United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) report into doping activities at the US Postal team. The USADA released its report on the case against the US Postal team and Armstrong, the seven-time winner of the Tour de France, describing the affair as a "tragedy". The explosive document included sworn testimony from 26 people, including 11 of Armstrong's former teammates on US Postal. The USADA said these teammates had admitted their own doping and say that Armstrong doped, encouraged doping and administered doping products on the team.

Nike said in a statement yesterday: "Due to the seemingly insurmountable evidence that Lance Armstrong participated in doping and misled Nike for more than a decade, it is with great sadness that we have terminated our contract with him. Nike does not condone the use of illegal performance enhancing drugs in any manner. Nike plans to continue support of the Livestrong initiatives created to unite, inspire and empower people affected by cancer."

It was also reported yesterday that brewer Anheuser-Busch would curtail its sponsorship of Armstrong with immediate effect and cycle maker Trek would not renew its existing partnership with the American cyclist. Oakley, one of his other commercial partners, stated: "Our policy with our athletes is to support them until proven guilty by the highest governing body of sport or court of law. We are reviewing the extensive report from the Usada, as well as our relationship with Lance, and will await final decision-making by the International Cycling Union."

Armstrong also confirmed yesterday that he would be resigning as the chairman of Livestrong, which was founded by the Lance Armstrong Foundation in 1997 after he had been diagnosed with testicular cancer in late 1996. "I am deeply grateful to the people of the foundation who have done such hard and excellent work over the last 15 years, building tangible and effective ways to improve the lives of cancer survivors," said Armstrong. "And I am deeply humbled by the support our foundation has received from so many people throughout the world – survivors, world leaders, business leaders and of course, the cancer community itself. We turn to this community frequently for guidance and collaboration to achieve our shared goals. They are unfailingly generous with their wisdom and counsel and I can never thank them enough." He added: "I have had the great honour of serving as this foundation's chairman for the last five years and its mission and success are my top priorities. Today therefore, to spare the foundation any negative effects as a result of controversy surrounding my cycling career, I will conclude my chairmanship."

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