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The Case Against Lance Armstrong

AS THE CYCLIST AND CANCER CRUSADER FACES POSSIBLE INDICTMENT BY A GRAND JURY, SI TAKES A CLOSE LOOK AT OLD AND NEW ALLEGATIONS THAT HE USED PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS WHILE WINNING TOUR DE FRANCE CHAMPIONSHIPS

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Around 8 p.m. on Nov. 11, 2010, Italian police and customs officials acting at the behest of agents of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) pulled over Yaroslav Popovych as he drove on a roundabout in Quarrata, a quaint Tuscan village of stucco facades and colorful shutters between Pistoia and Florence. The officials had been looking for Popovych, one of Lance Armstrong's Radio Shack teammates, to execute a search warrant. Italian authorities say the Ukrainian cyclist was startled but cooperative. He led them through olive groves to his house beside a cemetery. There the officials found drug-testing documents, medical supplies and performance-enhancing drugs. They also found e-mails and texts that, they say, establish that as recently as 2009 Armstrong's team had links to controversial Italian physician Michele Ferrari, with whom the Texan had said he cut ties in 2004.

This new evidence is now part of the FDA's investigation, directed by agent Jeff Novitzky, into whether Armstrong was involved in an organized doping operation as a member of the team sponsored by the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), an independent agency of the federal government. In light of this criminal inquiry involving the greatest Tour de France rider of all time, SI reviewed hundreds of pages of documents and interviewed dozens of sources in Europe, New Zealand and the U.S. Because the case could potentially involve accusations that are more than a decade old, SI also examined doping allegations against Armstrong throughout his career as a pro cyclist, discovering information that is reported here for the first time.

The federal inquiry focuses on the period from 1999 to 2004, during which Armstrong won six of his seven Tour de France titles and the USPS team received more than \$40 million toward sponsorship of the squad, which was managed by Tailwind, Inc., according to documents reviewed by SI. Through his attorney, Armstrong claims that he "started at USPS as a low paid, regular rider" and "was never the boss, director, the owner, or the doctor." But because government sponsorship is involved, if evidence suggests that Armstrong was directing illegal doping activity, the inquiry could result in charges against him of conspiracy, wire fraud, money laundering, racketeering, drug trafficking and defrauding the U.S. government.

Since August a grand jury has been meeting in Los Angeles to hear testimony by associates and confidants of Armstrong's. Those subpoenaed or interviewed include Armstrong's former teammates Tyler Hamilton, George Hincapie and Kevin Livingston; Mike Anderson, who

once worked as Armstrong's bike mechanic and assistant; and Oakley sunglasses marketing representative Stephanie McIlvain. Another former teammate of Armstrong's, Floyd Landis, who won the 2006 Tour de France but was stripped of the title because of a positive drug test, also gave information to investigators.

Because of Landis, Armstrong is facing a related legal challenge. Last April and May, Landis sent e-mails to USA Cycling accusing Armstrong and other riders of having doped while Landis and Armstrong were both on the USPS team. In May, Landis also filed a whistleblower lawsuit against Armstrong under the U.S. False Claims Act, which allows citizens with evidence of fraud against the government to sue on behalf of the government. The Department of Justice is weighing whether to join Landis's suit. If Landis wins, he could collect up to 30% of what the government recovers. (In July, Armstrong called Landis "a person with zero credibility.")

Armstrong lives as he rides—surrounded by a cocoon of aides and helpers, his gimlet eyes focused on victory. Asked about the investigation, he told *The Sydney Morning Herald* on Jan. 5, "I don't let it affect me. I have a foundation to help run and lead. I still have, theoretically, a job—I ride my bike and train every day. It has no effect in what I do on a daily basis."

The Texan holds a unique place in American culture. Addressing Armstrong in a public ceremony at the White House in 1999, Vice President Al Gore said, "You captured the eyes of the nation and the hearts of the entire world." Armstrong rode into everyone's life on a bike saddle, breaking the record for Tour de France victories and giving hope to anyone who has ever been told, as he once was, "You have cancer." In 2002, after his fourth Tour de France victory, Armstrong was named SI's Sportsman of the Year.

He has been a fierce advocate for cancer patients, as attested by more than 70 million yellow Livestrong wristbands. Politicians line up to be photographed with him. Celebrities clamor to attend his fund-raising events. Corporations pay him millions to pitch their products. The self-described atheist has become a deity.

But now what? It is unclear if the grand jury will decide to issue an indictment (all grand jury proceedings are secret), but the inquiry's findings may cause the Armstrong faithful to ask, Was the miracle a mirage?

If so, it wasn't created by one man. A legion of devotees rode beside Armstrong as he transformed himself from an unknown teenager out of Plano, Texas, into a global icon. If a court finds that Armstrong won his titles while taking performance-enhancing drugs, his entourage may come to be known as the domestiques of the saddest deception in sports history.

The lab run by famed anti-doping expert Donald Catlin doesn't measure up to *CSI* images of forensic facilities. The only hint of the work that goes on inside this nondescript two-story brown building off Grand View Boulevard on the West Side of Los Angeles is a sign on a windowsill next to a brown metal door: ANTI-DOPING RESEARCH.

When Armstrong announced on Sept. 24, 2008, that he was returning to cycling after more than three years away, he added a twist: His Astana team had hired Catlin, who had run the U.S. Olympic anti-doping lab at UCLA for 25 years, to test his blood and urine samples and

post the results online. "This will be the most advanced anti-doping program in the world," said Armstrong. "I'm not going to tell you how clean I am, and I'm not going to insinuate how dirty the others are.... Don Catlin can tell you if I'm clean or not."

The move was praised by cycling officials and the media for directly addressing rumors and allegations, particularly in the European press, that Armstrong had achieved his success with the help of PEDs. (Astana was not above suspicion either. At the end of 2007 it had replaced its management team after its lead rider, Alexander Vinokourov, was banned for a year for blood doping—the practice of withdrawing and later reinjecting his own blood to increase his volume of oxygen-carrying red cells.) But some in cycling, and even in Catlin's lab, questioned whether the joint operation might be more about public relations than about meticulous testing. "When I saw them together, it didn't surprise me," says Landis. "[Lance] knows Catlin well." Andreas Breidbach, who was head of the lab's EPO testing group from 2003 to '06, had a similar reaction. "Oh, great, Lance is being tested by his greatest admirer," Breidbach recalls thinking, "and to the outside world it looks convincing."

Catlin says he didn't meet Armstrong face-to-face until 2008, but he says he did field calls over the years from Bill Stapleton, a USOC executive from 1997 to 2004 and Armstrong's longtime agent. "He would call with questions having to do with testing," says Catlin. "It wasn't Lance calling; it was Bill."

Catlin, now 72, has been a member of the International Olympic Committee's medical commission since 1988. The UCLA lab was the official testing facility for the 1984 Los Angeles Games and the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics, and it has performed in- and out-of-competition testing for U.S. national-team athletes since 1982. Catlin has been heralded for discovering methods to detect doping, such as the test to determine the difference between synthetic and natural testosterone. He is also credited with having identified the illicit performance enhancer THG produced by the infamous BALCO lab in Burlingame, Calif. And for a decade Catlin has served as an expert in cases brought by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) and as a witness in federal investigations such as the BALCO case, which was spearheaded by Novitzky.

Catlin left the Olympic lab at UCLA in 2007, after forming two companies: a for-profit consulting and testing business called Anti-Doping Science, and the nonprofit Anti-Doping Research (ADR), which explores the science of doping. According to tax records for 2007 and '08, Major League Baseball gave Catlin's ADR a \$287,335 grant for the primary purpose of developing a urine test for human growth hormone (HGH). The lab has not produced the test, but Don Catlin's son Oliver, the CFO of ADR, says the grant was insufficient to solve such a difficult doping problem. The NFL, which gave ADR grants of as much as \$200,000 per year for the same reason as baseball did, recently ended their relationship a year early, according to NFL spokesman Greg Aiello, because Catlin's work had reached what Aiello calls a "dead end."

Catlin's UCLA lab did the testing for the U.S. Olympic Committee during the nine years that Wade Exum was the organization's doping control director. Exum resigned in June 2000 in protest against what he alleged was the USOC's practice of letting positive drug tests slide. In a subsequent lawsuit claiming that he had been the victim of wrongful termination and racial discrimination, Exum said that 19 U.S. Olympic medalists from 1984 to 2000 had been allowed to compete in the Games despite having failed drug tests. "The welfare of the athlete was not first," says Exum, now a psychiatrist in Nevada. (The USOC denied Exum's

allegation about the 19 athletes; Exum's lawsuit was dismissed for lack of evidence.)

Exum's allegations appear to be supported by minutes of USOC anti-doping committee meetings from 1999 and 2000, recently reviewed by SI. In the minutes, officials discuss how to informally test athletes for marijuana and performance-enhancing drugs—not to sanction them but to help them to avoid testing positive at the Olympics. In 2000, according to the minutes, a debate arose within the committee over whether to use Catlin's testosterone testing method (CIR) before the Sydney Games. Baaron Pittenger, the committee chair, said, "We can handle CIR in the same way we're handling marijuana in terms of notifying the athletes." In reply, Catlin said, "Just don't connect the CIR result to the athlete. Do it as a research experience." (Catlin says he doesn't recall that discussion and adds, "I was always fighting to expose the USOC and all its diddling around with everything.")

Lance Armstrong entered the Olympic world around 1990, at age 19, after a transition from competing in the triathlon. Two of his teammates on the 1990 U.S. junior team, Greg Strock and Erich Kaiter, claimed in a suit against USA Cycling in 2000 that coaches administered steroids to them in 1990, damaging their immune systems and cutting short their careers, according to documents from the suit. Neither Strock nor Kaiter ever tested positive. The suit was settled in November 2006; USA Cycling paid each rider \$250,000.

From 1990 to 2000, Armstrong was tested more than two dozen times by Catlin's UCLA lab, according to Catlin's estimate. In May 1999, USA Cycling sent a formal request to Catlin for past test results—specifically, testosterone-epitestosterone ratios—for a cyclist identified only by his drug-testing code numbers. A source with knowledge of the request says that the cyclist was Lance Armstrong. In a letter dated June 4, 1999, Catlin responded that the lab couldn't recover a total of five of the cyclist's test results from 1990, 1992 and 1993, adding, "The likelihood that we will be able to recover these old files is low." The letter went on to detail the cyclist's testosterone-epitestosterone results from 1991 to 1998, with one missing season: 1997, the only year during that span in which Armstrong didn't compete. Three results stand out: a 9.0-to-1 ratio from a sample collected on June 23, 1993; a 7.6-to-1 from July 7, 1994; and a 6.5-to-1 from June 4, 1996. Most people have a ratio of 1-to-1. Prior to 2005, any ratio above 6.0-to-1 was considered abnormally high and evidence of doping; in 2005 that ratio was lowered to 4.0-to-1.

But the high ratios had not led to sanctions. In his letter Catlin did not address the 6.5-to-1 result, but he wrote that he had attempted confirmation (a required step) on the 9.0-to-1 and 7.6-to-1 samples, and "in both cases the confirmation was unsuccessful and the samples were reported negative."

Armstrong has long maintained that he has never tested positive for a performance-enhancing drug, and since the A samples were not confirmed by positive follow-up samples, in this case he's right. The 1993, '94 and '96 tests were not reported as positive nor, according to Armstrong, were they brought to his attention. In fact, says Exum, "Out of tens of thousands of tests purchased during my tenure as Director of Drug Control at the USOC, I can remember only one T/E ratio being called positive."

During an interview with SI last week, Catlin was read his 1999 letter. He said that because he tested by code and not by name, he has "no clue which sample belonged to Lance," but he admits the data are disturbing. He explains that one failed confirmation would be a "once-in-a-blue-moon" occurrence. As for the three high T/E ratio results detailed in the letter, he says,

"that's very strange." When Catlin's letter was read to Breidbach recently, he too expressed concern, saying, "Wow, that should not happen. If you find a nine and can't confirm, then something is very wrong with your screening test."

In 2005, Armstrong's camp approached Catlin for help in addressing doping allegations against the Texan. On Aug. 23 of that year the French sports daily *L'Equipe* reported, under the headline LE MENSONGE ARMSTRONG (The Armstrong Lie), that retesting by an IOC-certified Paris lab of urine samples taken from Armstrong and other cyclists during the 1999 Tour de France had indicated positive results for EPO. The retesting was done for research purposes, not for sanctioning, but Armstrong said on *Larry King Live*, "Do you think I'm going to trust some guy in a French lab to open my samples and say they're positive ... and not give me the chance to defend myself?" His advisers turned to Catlin.

A lawyer arrived at the UCLA lab in the fall of 2005. "My belief was that the lawyer was from USADA," says Breidbach, adding that Catlin asked him to show the lawyer around. Breidbach says they discussed the French lab's results. "I said that if the Paris lab had done it, it was probably correct," Breidbach says. "If there was a lab that could test for EPO at that time, it was the Paris lab." Weeks later, Breidbach says, "someone told me that this lawyer was working for Armstrong. It became clear to me that Catlin was trying to make a case for Armstrong." Catlin says the lawyer was identified as working for Armstrong and that Catlin viewed his visit as educational. The lawyer, Mark Levinstein, says he did not discuss the Paris lab with Breidbach. He and Breidbach agree only that they discussed EPO testing in general.

The following summer, Dutch lawyer Emile Vrijman, who was hired by the International Cycling Union (UCI) to lead an investigation into the French lab's findings, issued a 132-page report citing a "complete absence" of a chain of custody of the urine samples and a lack of proper record security.

In February 2009, five months after announcing their drug-testing venture, Catlin and Armstrong ended it. In a statement to SI, Armstrong's lawyer explained, "When we announced the program with Dr. Catlin, we were unaware of the details of the rigorous independent program already in place on the Astana team. In addition, Dr. Catlin's program would have been very costly (at least \$600,000)."

Says Catlin, "When you try to do a business deal with Lance, you're dealing with an entity that's got lots of lawyers and lots of issues. The cost kept going up and up as we got into those discussions. Astana [was] involved, and when I finally figured that out, I wasn't sure we'd ever get paid."

In its months of overseeing Armstrong's testing program, Catlin's lab had collected only one urine sample from him, says Oliver Catlin. The sample remains in the lab, Oliver says, and he says that it is clean.

In November 2009 *Forbes* magazine asked the world's movers and shakers a question: Who is the most powerful person in your field? Lance Armstrong's answer: Don Catlin.

For almost two decades Stephanie McIlvain, a marketing rep for Oakley sunglasses, dutifully trailed Armstrong on the cycling circuit, providing him with the latest eyewear and clothing from the manufacturer and becoming one of his confidants. She flew on private planes with him and delivered sunglasses to him etched with the word *livestrong*. At charity events she

and Armstrong were photographed on the red carpet arm in arm, with their spouses alongside.

On Oct. 2, 1996, Armstrong, then 25, was found to have stage III testicular cancer. Twenty-five days later McIlvain was one of several people by Armstrong's side as he recovered from surgery at a hospital in Indianapolis. What was said there has long been in dispute. It was a key part of a 2005 arbitration hearing in a suit filed by Armstrong and Tailwind against SCA Promotions, Inc., and Hamman Insurance Services, Inc., after SCA withheld a \$5 million bonus from Armstrong because of doping allegations made against him in the book *LA Confidential*, written by British cycling journalist David Walsh and published in French. In a sworn deposition Betsy Andreu, wife of Frankie Andreu, a longtime teammate of Armstrong's, said that she and several others, including McIlvain, were with Armstrong in a conference room at Indiana University Medical Center, watching the Cowboys play the Dolphins on television, when two hospital doctors walked in to discuss Armstrong's medical history with him. According to Betsy Andreu's statement, Armstrong was asked, "Have you ever done any performance-enhancing drugs?" By Andreu's account, Armstrong said yes and then listed them: EPO, growth hormone, cortisone, steroids and testosterone.

In a separate sworn statement, Frankie Andreu corroborated his wife's recollection. McIlvain, however, refuted it in her deposition, saying she never heard Armstrong admit to taking PEDs. In his deposition Armstrong said that no one from the hospital asked him if he had ever used performance-enhancing drugs or substances. The case was settled before it went to a panel of judges. SCA Promotions paid Armstrong the bonus plus lawyers' costs and fees—a total of \$7.5 million.

For years Armstrong has disparaged Betsy Andreu's testimony, telling SI in 2007 that Andreu was motivated by "bitterness, jealousy and hatred" and claiming to *The Guardian* a year later, "Betsy blogs 24 hours a day about me. If that ain't sick, what is?" For her part, Andreu says, "Soon after I testified, I realized why people were so afraid of Lance. The vast majority of American journalists bought the Lance lie hook, line and sinker, and either dismissed the truth I spoke or were openly hostile toward me. The cycling world was filled with fans and people within the industry insulting me, questioning my motives or inventing outright lies about me. The sheer quality and quantity of the vitriol was overwhelming at times... I wasn't going to compromise my integrity. I didn't decide to 'take Lance on,' I decided not to lie for him; there's a difference."

McIlvain's testimony certainly helped Armstrong. But according to Betsy Andreu, three-time Tour de France winner Greg LeMond and cycling journalist James Startt, McIlvain told them that she had in fact heard Armstrong say what the Andreus recounted. In a phone conversation with LeMond 14 months before the SCA deposition, secretly taped by LeMond, McIlvain is heard saying, in reference to Armstrong's statement, "You know I was in that room. I heard it, you know." She also says of Armstrong, "So many people [are] protecting him that it is just sickening, you know."

McIlvain did not return calls for comment, but in 2007 she told SI, "I do stand by my [court] testimony." At the time of the conversation with LeMond, she said, she was "in a bad place in my life." She added, "I've never seen Lance Armstrong do drugs, never heard of him doing drugs."

As part of their inquiry, federal investigators have reviewed all the documents, tapes and information related to the SCA arbitration hearing. In September, McIlvain appeared before the grand jury in Los Angeles under subpoena. Her deposition in the SCA case had lasted 103

minutes; her appearance in the federal inquiry lasted seven hours.

Pinpricks to the finger were an off-day ritual for the Motorola team during the 1995 Tour de France. This wasn't a blood brothers' sacrament—but it was close to that for those riders who participated. According to Stephen Swart, a cyclist on the team, they were preparing to check their hematocrit levels (percentage of red cells) to determine how much of the banned blood-boosting drug EPO to inject. Swart says that on a recovery ride after a race in Italy that March, Armstrong, disappointed with the team's result, had suggested that riders start taking EPO, which was banned by the IOC in 1990. "He was the instigator," Swart says. "It was his words that pushed us toward doing it. It was his advice, his discussions."

Frankie Andreu, another member of the Motorola team, who participated in the conversation between Armstrong and Swart in Italy, says the Texan "determined what riders were hired and fired. Everybody knew he was calling the shots. You didn't want to get on his bad side. He was the boss."

Swart, who admits to having taken EPO when he rode with Motorola, says that blood-testing machines no bigger than a toaster would be brought into a hotel room. One by one, a half-dozen cyclists, including Armstrong, would prick a finger, put the blood into a vial and place it in a centrifuge. The red blood cells would separate from the white ones, and the machine would measure the rider's hematocrit level. The readings were important in helping regulate the intake of EPO, a drug that can cause the body to produce so many oxygen-carrying red cells that the blood can thicken and the user can suffer a stroke.

Swart recalls a specific day, July 17, 1995, that his hematocrit level was 48. "Lance was at 54 or 56," he says. Swart also remembers Italian cyclists joking about their high hematocrit levels as they rushed to hotel ice machines to fill EPO-carrying thermoses. (Once cycling introduced a test for EPO, in 2001, a reading higher than 50 resulted in a 15-day ban.) Swart says he never saw Armstrong or any other rider inject EPO, nor did Armstrong provide him with it.

By the mid-1990s, according to Armstrong's deposition in the SCA case, he had begun a relationship with Michele Ferrari, the Italian physician who publicly defended EPO use. Ferrari, an omnipresent figure on the Tour de France, told *L'Equipe* in 1994, "EPO is not dangerous, it's the abuse that is. It's also dangerous to drink 10 liters of orange juice." Nonetheless the doctor, who did not respond to SI's requests for comment, has always denied allegations that he doped riders, once telling *USA Today*, "I'm totally against administration of any kind of medicines with the intent of artificially enhancing performance."

According to Landis, however, "[Ferrari] was matter-of-fact about [doping]." Landis, who was a client of Ferrari's, says the doctor helped him transfuse his own blood to boost his performance. "It was like, This is what we have to do to win," Landis says. "He wasn't a thrill-seeker about it. He got satisfaction from winning the Tour de France, but he wasn't flamboyant or boastful. He was very calculated about what he did."

Two cyclists say Ferrari used coded language and symbols to detail doping regimens. A dot, for example, represented EPO. Sources with knowledge of the federal investigation say agents have been provided with cyclists' training logs and alleged doping programs handwritten by Ferrari. These notes could be relevant to the government's inquiry if the details match records about Armstrong's last three teams—Radio Shack, Astana and Discovery—found in the raid

in Italy.

Once the press discovered Armstrong's relationship with Ferrari, in 2001, the Texan described his visits to the doctor as routine checkups. Three years later Armstrong announced that he had instructed U.S. Postal team members to cut ties with Ferrari after he was found guilty in an Italian court of "sports fraud."

Armstrong said in a statement, "Dr. Ferrari has been a long-time friend and trusted adviser to me and the USPS team, during which time he never suggested, prescribed or provided me with any performance-enhancing drugs. I have always said that I have zero tolerance for anyone convicted of using or facilitating the use of performance-enhancing drugs."

The verdict against Ferrari was overturned two years later on a technicality—it was discovered that the statute of limitations had expired before his trial—but the view of the doctor as a doping specialist remained. People close to the investigation believe that the raid on Popovych's house links Armstrong's teams to Ferrari as recently as 2009, the year Armstrong returned from retirement to bring attention to the war on cancer.

After Armstrong's cancer diagnosis, former teammates say, even Ferrari questioned his methods. "I remember when we were on a training ride in 2002, Lance told me that Ferrari had been paranoid that he had helped cause the cancer and became more conservative after that," says Landis. (Ferrari, again, declined to talk to SI for this story.)

A few years earlier, according to a source familiar with the government's investigation of Armstrong, the Texan became interested in Baxter Healthcare Corp., a company based in Deerfield, Ill., that focuses in part on developing drugs to treat hemophilia. According to that source, the FDA has information that Armstrong gained access to a Baxter-made drug in clinical trial in the U.S. and Europe in the late 1990s. According to public records, a study on a drug called Diaspirin Cross-Linked Hemoglobin (DCLHb) began in early 1997 and ended in 1998. Baxter developed the drug, whose trade name is HemAssist, for use in cases of extreme blood loss, such as by shock and trauma victims; in animal studies it was shown to boost the blood's oxygen-carrying capacity without the thickening caused by EPO. The human trials were ended, however, after a number of patients died—though not necessarily from the drug's effects; some of the trauma victims were likely to have died anyway.

Armstrong's lawyers say that he denies ever having taken HemAssist, and they claim it was impossible for him to have had access to the drug after the clinical trials ended and Baxter abandoned development in September 1998. Still, stockpiles of the drug may have remained, says Dr. Robert Przybelski, an associate professor at Wisconsin who was the director of hemoglobin therapeutics at Baxter in the late '90s, although he adds that he doesn't know of any missing quantities. What would a cyclist want with the drug? "If somebody was going to design something better than EPO, this would be the ideal product," says Przybelski. DCLHb would certainly give the endurance-starved cyclist a push in the Pyrenees. "[Hemoglobin-based oxygen carriers] do everything they want EPO to do without the potential side effects of increased blood viscosity and strokes," says Przybelski. "And it doesn't last long [in the body], 12 to 24 hours, which is ideal for an event."

Mike Anderson says he felt a dull sadness as he stared at the little white cardboard box in Armstrong's bathroom cabinet. His eyes focused on the word ANDRO written on the label. Anderson tried to rationalize it. Maybe it was leftover cancer medication, but this was 2004,

long after Armstrong's disease had been defeated, and there was no prescription attached.

Anderson knew there were drugs in cycling, but as Armstrong's bike mechanic and personal assistant from 2002 to '04, he had seen no hard evidence against his boss. There was, of course, the conversation that year on a training ride near Austin in which they discussed Belgian cyclist Johan Museeuw, who had been accused of doping. "Everyone does it," Armstrong said matter-of-factly, according to Anderson. And later in '04 there would be the day Armstrong seemed to evaporate from his ranch—the first time in two years he'd left without alerting Anderson—when USADA drug testers showed up at the gate. Still, that seemed circumstantial to Anderson. So that day in Armstrong's apartment in Girona, Spain, where Anderson had been sent to remove all traces of Armstrong's ex-wife, Kristin, before Armstrong arrived with his girlfriend, Sheryl Crow, Anderson didn't look inside the box. Still, the box was, well, tangible.

Anderson never mentioned the box to Armstrong, but in papers filed in the spring of 2005, when Anderson sued Armstrong for allegedly reneging on a business deal to help him build a bike shop, Anderson's lawyers would write the name of the substance as "Androstenin, or something very close to this." Anderson's account in legal documents piqued the interest of the FDA. Six months ago, Novitzky interviewed Anderson about his time working for Armstrong. Novitzky pronounced the word as *An-droh-steen-die-own* (Androstenedione), the steroid that became infamous when it was found in Mark McGwire's locker. Androstenedione has been on the IOC list of banned substances since 1997. Through his lawyers, Armstrong denies ever having taken andro.

Federal investigators have access to the documents filed in the Anderson-Armstrong lawsuit. According to those papers, shortly after Armstrong won his sixth Tour de France, in 2004, Anderson, who was back home in Austin, says he got a call from Armstrong's friend Derek Russey, alerting him that USADA drug testers had shown up at the Armstrong ranch in Dripping Springs, Texas, and Lance wasn't there. Athletes subject to USADA testing are required to notify the agency of their whereabouts, and missing three random tests over 18 months can count as a violation. Anderson says he became involved in a plan to fool the testers. His job was to keep an eye on the USADA officials—a man and a woman in a white SUV—while Armstrong's friend John Koriath retrieved the cyclist's black Suburban from the private terminal at the Austin airport and drove it to the ranch. The idea was for Koriath, posing as Armstrong behind the tinted windows of the car, to drive past the testers on the road and give the impression that Armstrong had been around all along and they simply could not get hold of him.

In an affidavit in the case, Russey denied calling Anderson. When contacted by SI, Koriath denied that the incident had occurred, saying, "It was proven through USADA that that didn't happen. Mike Anderson fabricated that out of thin air." In response to Koriath's assertion, Travis Tygart, USADA's CEO, says, "USADA has never concluded that Mike Anderson fabricated the story."

Through his lawyer, Armstrong says he never participated in an attempt to avoid USADA testers at his ranch. In an affidavit filed in the SCA case, Tygart said that USADA had tested Armstrong 12 times from 2001 to 2005 and that he had "never had an adverse analytical finding reported to USADA."

Anderson's lawsuit against Armstrong was settled for an undisclosed amount, but his prospects in the bike industry around Austin were no longer bright. Today Anderson runs The

Bike Hutt in Wellington, New Zealand. He still remembers opening the cabinet as the day "I found proof that there is no Santa Claus." (Armstrong's legal counsel has described Anderson as "discredited.")

During the years Armstrong rode for USPS, he flew on private charters such as NetJets. One feature of flying into private airports is less stringent customs checks. "We went from place to place with no problems, using private airports," says Landis. Customs agents, he says, rarely asked questions. "You'd walk into a small building and were asked for your passport, if that," says Landis. "I remember one time Lance said, 'I don't have time for this' and kept walking."

Customs agents at the airport in St. Moritz, Switzerland, stopped Armstrong in 2003, according to Landis. Armstrong, Landis and other members of the USPS team walked off the plane, headed for customs and were asked to open their duffel bags for a search. "Lance had a bag of drugs and s---," says Landis. "They wanted to search it, which was out of the ordinary."

The agents looked through the bag and found syringes and drugs with labels written in Spanish. As Landis recounts, Armstrong then asked a member of the contingent to talk to the agents and persuade them that the drugs were vitamins and that the syringes were for vitamin injections. Says Landis, "The agents looked at us sideways but let us through."

When asked if the incident in St. Moritz described by Landis happened, Armstrong's lawyer said, "No."

Novitzky's investigations of the use of performance-enhancing drugs date back to baseball's so-called steroids era, during which the federal agent led the BALCO inquiry that resulted in the prosecution and conviction of former Olympic gold medalist Marion Jones for lying about her use of PEDs, and the upcoming trial of retired baseball star Barry Bonds on perjury charges. Armstrong is determined to keep his legacy from crumbling under Novitzky's investigation, but there have been times when he has seemed to treat his adversary as if he were an inferior cyclist in a road race rather than a formidable investigator.

Just after the raid on Popovych's house, and following a meeting Novitzky had in Lyon, France, with Interpol, Armstrong unleashed his cheeky Twitter alter ego, Juan Pelota (a pun on the English word *one* and the Spanish word for *ball*, in reference to Armstrong's testicular cancer surgery). Pelota tweeted: *Hey Jeff, como estan los hoteles de cuatro estrellas y el classe de business in el aeroplano? Que mas necesitan?* Translated, the mangled Spanish tweaks Novitzky by asking, "How are the four-star hotels and business class in the airplane? What more do you need?"

That is a question for the grand jury.

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