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From Mustapha Kessous, Special correspondent

Marc Madiot, president of the National Cycling League and directeur-sportif of the Français des jeux team

### **“Armstrong’s return isn’t good for cycling”**

CLAPIERS (HÉRAULT)—The start of the cycling season has been eclipsed by Lance Armstrong’s return, a media come-back which had the ability to irritate Marc Madiot, president of the National Cycling League and directeur-sportif of the Français des jeux team.

### **What does Lance Armstrong’s return in the Tour Down Under (which ended Sunday, January 25 in Australia) mean to you?**

I don’t pay much attention to him. I say “Bravo Armstrong” when he gets himself involved in the struggle against cancer. But I’m not convinced that racing again is the best means of promoting that. He should have been able to get involved in a different way, telling young people how racing enabled him to get over his illness. But not by coming back to the peloton.

### **What bothers you about his return?**

There was an Armstrong era. He even moved me to tears, in the 1995 Tour, when he won the Limoges stage, two days after the death of his teammate Fabio Casatelli (in a fall in the Pyrenees). Afterwards, he became a machine.

### **You seem angry . . .**

No, but Armstrong’s return isn’t good for cycling, but for himself. When you read *L’Équipe*, and you find two pages about him and three lines about the race. . . . In a car, you don’t make progress by going backwards. We need to add some dynamism to cycling, and not by the past, but by the future. I want the current generation to forget. We have to get over the doping trauma.

### **But in Australia the cameras were back en masse for the peloton, thanks to Armstrong.**

Cycling doesn’t need stars, it needs riders and new faces. This isn’t Hollywood. Cycling is your old home, not glitter.

### **There’s also Ivan Basso’s return. He was suspended for two years for doping, and he’s promising to post his blood test on the Internet. How far are riders ready to go to be free of all suspicion?**

We’re always doing more, but not getting anywhere: it’s madness. With the biometric passport, I can know at any moment where my riders are. That’s a very fine thing, but individual liberties are trampled on. And when you see teams putting phenomenal amounts of money into internal controls, I don’t understand it. When you give someone an initial contract, you put at least a

minimum of confidence in him. You pay one fortune to a rider and another for in-house testing of him: there's no logic to it.

**It's to be above reproach . . .**

For public opinion, maybe. The ICU and WADA are charged with testing. I have confidence in them. I pay 120,000 euros per year for a biometric passport, I'm not going to toss in another 200,000 euros just to have a clean conscience. Would you like it if your editor-in-chief paid someone outside the paper to go over your stories?

**Will you be leaving to race in China or Russia, as the UCI would like?**

I'm not saying No, but it can't be at the expense of races in old Europe. When a race disappears, it never comes back. I'm thinking of the Midi-Libre, of Bordeaux-Paris. We have to preserve this patrimony. These are our roots.

The problem is that cycling is becoming a sport for the rich. There are fewer races, therefore less money to win. In my time, an amateur could live on racing. And this is without talking about the organizers' problems: the difficulty of getting administrative authorizations, insurance which is too costly. . . . Our sport is more and more expensive and less and less attractive. We have to look for new populations.

**In the suburbs, for example?**

We are going to develop BMX in the residential districts. that can bring in some people. Paradoxically, we will have a future only on the condition that we don't become a "sanitized" sport. I oppose headsets. Cycling has to remain a sport of suffering.

**But you don't see suffering on the riders' faces anymore . . .**

That's true. We need to see those twisted faces like Luis Ocaña on the Orcières-Merlette stage in 1971.