

Lance Armstrong says no again to USADA

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Lance Armstrong declines to meet deadline imposed by USADA to come clean under oath



(Photo: Alessandro Trovati, AP)

Lance Armstrong once again has decided not to cooperate with the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency but said he still plans to "cooperate fully" with other anti-doping authorities instead.

For the second time in two weeks, the famed cyclist has rejected USADA's deadline to submit to a full debriefing about how he cheated on the bike and got away with it for years. If he had agreed to cooperate in time, his testimony could have paved the way for a reduction in his lifetime ban from sanctioned sporting events.

But Armstrong still has issues with USADA "for several reasons," according to a statement released Wednesday by Tim Herman, his attorney. And now he may pursue a different route, possibly through an independent international tribunal yet to be established.

DISCLOSURE: [Tyler Hamilton discusses doping payments \(http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/cycling/2013/02/19/tyler-hamilton-doping-doctor-epo-testosterone-hgh-cycling-operation-puerto/1931687/\)](http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/cycling/2013/02/19/tyler-hamilton-doping-doctor-epo-testosterone-hgh-cycling-operation-puerto/1931687/)

"Lance is willing to cooperate fully and has been very clear: He will be the first man through the door, and once inside will answer every question, at an international tribunal formed to comprehensively address pro cycling, an almost exclusively European sport," Herman's statement said. "We remain hopeful that an international effort will be mounted, and we will do everything we can to facilitate that result. In the meantime, for several reasons, Lance will not participate in USADA's efforts to selectively conduct American prosecutions that only demonize selected individuals while failing to address the 95% of the sport over which USADA has no jurisdiction."

For USADA and other anti-doping authorities, the goal is full disclosure. They want Armstrong to give a confession under oath without holding back on certain subjects as he did in his televised confession last month with Oprah Winfrey. In that interview, Armstrong did not want to discuss the role of his cycling team manager Johan Bruyneel, among other key figures and incidents.

Previously, USADA imposed a deadline of Feb. 6 but granted Armstrong a two-week extension at his request – until Wednesday, which he declined to meet.

Herman told USA TODAY Sports last month that Armstrong's offer to cooperate was not contingent on having his ban reduced.

But personal mistrust and other issues got in the way of Armstrong cooperating with USADA, whose chief executive officer, Travis Tygart, has long been Armstrong's nemesis.

USADA has said Armstrong was the ringleader of the "most sophisticated, professionalized and successful doping program that sport has ever seen." In October, the agency released a massive evidence file against Armstrong that spelled it all out, including statements from 26 witnesses that described how Armstrong doped, avoided detection and lied about it for several years.

After being banned for life and stripped of his seven titles in the Tour de France, Armstrong finally confessed last month in his interview with Winfrey. He said he used banned drugs and blood transfusions from the mid-1990s through 2005. But he still disputed key points of USADA's case against him. He denied being a ringleader in the scheme and said he stopped doping after 2005 – statements that Tygart said were not true based on the evidence.

Not surprisingly, Armstrong preferred to cooperate with other authorities on this issue. If the goal is to clean up cycling, Herman argued that USADA was not the proper organization to handle the task because doping is a mostly a European sport.

USADA didn't have much leverage with Armstrong anyway. Though Armstrong wants to compete again in sanctioned triathlons and marathons, the best USADA might be able to offer him was a reduction in his lifetime ban to eight years, when Armstrong, 41, would be near 50.

If Armstrong were to provide substantial assistance to anti-doping officials, a lifetime ban could be reduced to no less than eight years, according to the WADA code.

"An eight-year ban, that would be a lifetime ban (for Armstrong)," Herman recently told USA TODAY Sports last month.

