

Boggling
Broadcast

Tour de Failure

I've always imagined the field of psychology as being on the wacky end of the career spectrum—just a whole lot of overrated nonsense “loony” people lived up to. Psychologists, from what I understood, earned big bucks off other people's problems, and from my point of view seemed remote and almost heretical. Until, I recently realized, modern society could use an occasional bout of psychological counseling.

On Tuesday, Sept. 9, the aspiring scheme of a former cancer survivor was disclosed in an exclusive interview with *Vanity Fair* magazine reporter Douglas Brinkley. After a progression of fidgety moments, the interviewee revealed his innermost confidential ambition that had been nagging him for some time, an ambition that the world had thought (and still thinks) impossible.

It was enough to earn him a spot about one centimeter down from the “shocking” end of *TIME* magazine's Pop Chart.

The survivor was Lance Armstrong, who, in his now sensational line, sucked every pulp of courage into one juice of a sentence: “I'm going to try and win an eighth Tour de France.” It was a moment of spiritual rejuvenation, of sheer courage, of earsplitting shock; for those who've been living within the confines of a bike tire, Lance Armstrong has been retired for the past *three* years. That makes his career comeback all the more impressive, doesn't it?

Apparently some cyberspace souls beg to differ. Browsing through blogs and forums, I found nasty postings commenting on the seven-time Tour de France champion's return to professional cycling. People have indicted Armstrong's decision with accusations like his need for intensive training as an “excuse to be single,” ambitions to equal himself to eight-gold medalist Michael Phelps by winning an eighth Tour de France, and the desire to restore his fame and physical prominence. Some have even gone so far as to use Armstrong's unretirement as an opportunity to bring up doping accusations, for which he was never proven guilty. The big issue of age was brought up, as skeptics noted Armstrong's 37th birthday on Sept. 18 would make him older than cyclist Firmin Lambot, who was the oldest person in history to win the Tour de France at age 36 in 1922.

As I've looked into this issue, it seems to me that there is no fairness in chasing some gritty hardcore biker's heels, or, rather, wheels with discouraging commentary. Here is a retired man brave enough to venture the backward climb up to his youthful peak, with the knowledge that he could lose the battle, while pessimists condemn his efforts, accuse him of training to defend his marital status, and criticize him for “trying to get famous again.” With no offense intended, I would recommend the latter a visit to the psychologist. Maybe they had an extra dose of Hollywood corruption.

The point is, Armstrong doesn't deserve shame for committing to something a bit out of wack. And neither do students, teachers, and activists around the globe who strive to do things differently, like unretiring themselves. Even in smaller communities like MVHS, we should be supportive of the goals of other individuals, and value them with the same respect a psychologist would have. As cliché as it may sound, we need to walk a couple miles in another's shoes from time to time, pedal up some hills with their gear, imagine life from their point of view. With that being said, I've got my fingers crossed for ol' Armstrong to make it through the race and finish with a fine victory in the 2009 Tour de France.