

# 'Tour de Lance' comes to familiar end

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THE GAMECOCK

Michael Jordan couldn't top six championships. Wayne Gretzky won many scoring titles but only skated in four Stanley Cups. Troy Aikman and the Cowboys only captured three Super Bowl rings. Tiger Woods is still searching for his fifth Masters jacket.

It was Lance Armstrong who did the unthinkable in cycling to his seventh consecutive Tour de France victory — quickly following the announcement of his retirement.

To put his feat in perspective consider what happened to Armstrong after capturing the title in Paris this past Sunday — he took a congratulatory phone call from the President of the United States just minutes after being declared the victor.

"Our country and the world are incredibly proud of you," President Bush told Armstrong, a fellow Texas resident.

According to White House reports, the president called Paris from his retreat at Camp David to congratulate Armstrong for "a great triumph of the human spirit."

Bush said the victory was "a testament not only to your athletic talent but to your courage."

The Tour de France is a grueling, 20-stage race that covers 2,131 miles in 22 days. Armstrong, the 33-year-old testicular cancer survivor, has achieved acclaim for his dominance of the sport, prompting many fans to nickname the premier event the "Tour de Lance."

The national media has taken a favorable view towards the cyclist, naming him the Associated Press Male Athlete of the Year in 2002, 2003 and 2004, with a high possibility that he will also take home the award at the conclusion of this year. ESPN awarded him its ESPY Best Male Athlete award each year from 2002 to 2004, while BBC News named him the Sports

Personality of the Year in 2003.

Even with the national acclaim in the media, Armstrong is perhaps best known for the "Livestrong" yellow wristbands. The wristbands were introduced as part of an effort to raise \$5 million for the Lance Armstrong Foundation, intended to support cancer victims and raise its awareness.

To date, more than 50 million wristbands have been sold at a dollar each, far surpassing the intended goal.

Cycling for the U.S. Postal Service for each of his first six wins, he finished his final tour representing the Discovery Channel Pro Cycling Team. In an effort to make a point and go out in the best possible way, Armstrong's final Tour de France was his best yet, as he managed to capture five stage victories en route to finishing 4:40 ahead of runner-up Ivan Basso. His previous margins ranged from one minute in 2003 to a high of 7:37 in



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Lance Armstrong celebrates his seventh straight win at the Tour de France alongside teammate Yaroslav Popovitch in Paris.

his first victory in 1999.

Standing at the top of the victor's podium for the last time, Armstrong was afforded the rare opportunity to make a speech following his victory.

"This is a hell of a race. I'll be a fan of the Tour de France for as

long as I live. And there are no secrets — this is a hard sporting event, and hard work wins it. Vive le Tour! Forever!"

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