



Cyclist Floyd Landis, left, addresses the crowd at a fundraiser for the Floyd Fairness Fund, Wednesday in the Brooklyn borough of New York.

Landis won't race in France

Cyclist makes deal to delay hearing

By JEROME PUGMIRE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PARIS

Floyd Landis will skip the Tour de France and all races in France this year, as part of an agreement with French doping authorities in a case that could strip him of cycling's most prestigious title.

Last year's Tour champion had hip-replacement surgery 4½ months ago and was unlikely to have competed in this year's Tour.

He agreed Thursday not to race again in France until 2008, and in return the French anti-doping agency postponed its decision on whether to suspend him from competing in France for a maximum of two years because of a positive doping test.

"Floyd is pleased that the (French Anti-Doping Agency) has agreed with his council's request that they suspend this proceeding," spokesman Michael Henson said.

Earlier, the agency's president Pierre Bordry said Landis "understood perfectly that if he didn't act today, we would start the procedure immediately."

Landis will go before the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency on May 14 and, following that, the French agency will deliver its verdict in June.

"We will let Landis defend himself as he wishes," Bordry said.

The American, who has denied wrongdoing, did not appear at Thursday's meeting of the agency's nine-member panel, but sent a lawyer who read his request for a delay.

In the letter, a copy of which was obtained by The Associated Press, Landis said the parallel cases in France and the United States were complicating matters. He asked the French agency to hold off until after the U.S. agency rules.

The USADA will conduct its hearings May 14.

"In this case, and in order to avoid any misunderstanding, I agree to voluntarily not participate in any professional or amateur cycling event in France until December 31, 2007, and in particular the Tour de France 2007," Landis said in the letter.

Bordry said Landis deserves to be heard by the USADA. However, Bordry echoed Tour de France president Christian Prudhomme's

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Michael Henson
Spokesman for Floyd Landis

sentiment that the American agency was dragging out its process.

Michael Henson, a spokesman for Landis, said Landis was happy with the French agency's decision.

Landis' urine sample after a 17th-stage win in last year's Tour de France was found to contain elevated testosterone to epitestosterone levels. He risks being the first rider in the 104-year history of the race to be stripped of his title. Prudhomme has said the Tour no longer considers him the winner.

Landis argues that the Chatenay-Malabry laboratory which carried out the tests is unreliable, a view shared by seven-time Tour champion Lance Armstrong.

Landis insisted again on his innocence at a fundraising rally in New York on Wednesday night. He vowed to fight the lack of leadership at the top of cycling and at the top of the anti-doping agencies.

Bordry said Landis reserves the right to contest the French lab, but maintains the "A" and "B" samples both showed positive readings.

"The 'A' sample tested positive for testosterone. So we asked Mr. Landis, at the time, if he wanted to do a 'B' sample test," Bordry said. "A 'B'-sample test was done at Chatenay-Malabry in the presence of an expert nominated by Mr. Landis, (and) paid by him."

Also present, Bordry said, were an expert nominated by the USADA, and an expert nominated by the International Cycling Union.

He said all "these experts signed the report" agreeing that the tests showed a positive reading.

Had disciplinary procedures started Thursday, Landis strongly risked a two-year suspension in accordance with French law applying WADA's maximum penalty for a first-time failed doping test.

Junior seeks control of team

Racer may not return to DEI, which his stepmother owns

By MARK LONG
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla.

Dale Earnhardt Jr. wants more than a piece of his father's company. He wants his stepmother to give him majority ownership, a negotiating demand that might force him to part ways with Dale Earnhardt Inc. after this season.

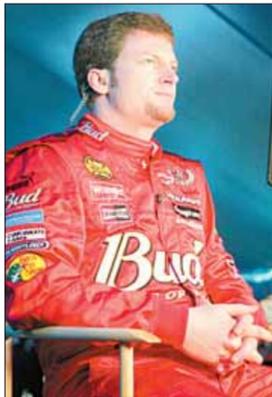
His DEI contract is up at the end of the year, and negotiations have been tense since Teresa Earnhardt seemingly questioned his commitment to the team in a December interview.

"The main factor is the ownership part," Earnhardt Jr. said Thursday at NASCAR's annual preseason media day at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway. "It has nothing to do with money and nothing else really. ... My father has been gone for five, six years now. I want majority ownership. That's basically it."

Earnhardt said he was unsure whether his stepmother would be willing to give up ownership.

But he seems determined to try.

If NASCAR's most popular driver were to leave DEI, he would become the sport's most sought-after free agent. Most people believe Earnhardt only would



AP PHOTO

Driver Dale Earnhardt Jr. hopes to take ownership of his father's racing company, DEI. His stepmother, Teresa, is the current owner.

part ways with DEI to drive for team owner Richard Childress, who fielded cars for the elder Earnhardt during six of his seven championship seasons.

Childress has said he would be interested in talking to Junior.

Kevin Harvick, who replaced Earnhardt's father at Richard Childress Racing, has said he would be thrilled to have Junior as a teammate. He even called

Teresa Earnhardt a "deadbeat owner that doesn't come to the racetrack" two weeks ago.

The widow of the late Dale Earnhardt, Teresa Earnhardt took over as DEI's chief executive officer after Earnhardt's death in 2001 at the Daytona 500.

Four-time NASCAR champion Jeff Gordon said the following day he expected Junior to leave DEI, adding he would have his pick of teams and that Teresa was making a big mistake if she didn't recognize her stepson was holding all the cards.

Earnhardt and his stepmother have had an up-and-down relationship for most of his life, and the frostiness between the two was revealed in December when she told The Wall Street Journal he needed to decide "whether he wants to be a NASCAR driver or whether he wants to be a public personality."

Earnhardt said the comment stung and said Thursday he has tried hard to "keep the bitterness out" when he discusses their relationship and his contract situation.

But he reiterated he didn't appreciate her remark, which he assumed was a jab at the time he spends working on his one-hour weekly radio show, his TV program and numerous commercials.

"I don't make ... it a habit of seeking out attention all the time," he said. "She portrayed it as I was out there waving a flag, 'Hey, look at me. I can dance, I can sing and check me out.'"

"I enjoy my radio show. It's an hour long. It takes no time to do. My TV show takes five days out of the year to shoot. Those things are easy."

Wednesday, Earnhardt and his sister and key business adviser, Kelley Earnhardt Elledge, met with new DEI president of global operations Max Siegel and team general manager Richie Gilmore.

Earnhardt said the meeting was an opportunity for him and his sister to speak with Siegel at length for the first time.

"It's one hell of a breakthrough for DEI," Earnhardt said. "This guy's pretty impressive. To sit down with him and talk with him a little bit, I think he brings a lot of integrity and credibility to wherever he's at. I'm excited that he's at DEI."

But will that change anything?

"I'll just have to see," Earnhardt said.

"I don't think that would affect my decisions. He's a great guy to talk and a great guy to work with, and he's going to speed things up."

Driven to help make racers go faster

Growing crop of schools preparing mechanics

By JOHN SEEWER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LIMA, Ohio

Michael Klenke learned in class how to assemble a racecar engine and tear apart its transmission. He also learned the best way to handle a problem that crops up when a stockcar is flying around a dirt racetrack at 60 mph.

"It's more than just step on the gas and turn left," Klenke said of driving for the University of Northwestern Ohio's stockcar team. "It makes you realize you really are going to use what you learn here."

Klenke's school is one of a handful of places where students

"It's more than just step on the gas and turn left."

Michael Klenke
Driver for the University of Northwestern Ohio's stockcar team on racing

can study how to build a race car from the bottom up. The high-performance motorsports program readies them for a career in auto racing, whether it be working in a pit crew or in the shop.

"A lot of people just see NASCAR on Sundays," said Steve Klausung, an instructor who works with the school's race club. "There's a lot that goes into the six days before the race."

Auto racing's growing pres-

ence on television and its widening appeal to mainstream fans has led to more leagues, teams and job opportunities in a sport that increasingly needs highly skilled crew members.

"It used to be that growing up with your dad in the garage was good enough to get you through," said Don Radebaugh, spokesman for the ARCA series. "But it requires more than turning wrenches in a garage. We're seeing more and more drivers and crew members who are college graduates."

ARCA has become a stepping stone race league for not only the drivers, but also crew members.

About 20 students from the Ohio school spent their weekends last year working with ARCA teams. A group from the school traveled to Florida this week to work at the ARCA 200

on Saturday at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway.

They'll work on the engines, clean the cars for the race and watch how the pros adjust the aerodynamics of the cars to make them run faster.

"It gives any racing program a place to look for help," said Bill Kimmel, crew chief for eight-time ARCA champion Frank Kimmel. "If you take a kid off the street, we have to show them every step of the way."

He usually pairs a student with an experienced crew member. Kimmel's team, based in New Albany, hired one of the students who worked for him a year ago to be a mechanic.

Motorsports students at IUPUI compete for internships in the Champ Car World Series and with the Panther Racing team in the Indy Racing League.

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