

Contador's tour despite rough ride

CYCLING

ALBERTO CONTADOR won the Tour de France for a second time yesterday, and Lance Armstrong capped his return to the race with an impressive third-place finish.

Mark Cavendish, of Britain, collected his sixth stage win of this year's tour in a sprint after the 164km course ride from Montreaux-Fault-Yonne to the Champs Elysees.

Over nearly 3500km and 21 stages of racing over three weeks, Contador repelled many challenges in the mountains, excelled in the two time-trials – winning a pivotal race against the clock in the 18th stage – and won the first Alpine stage.

Andy Schleck, of Luxembourg, Contador's biggest rival among title contenders in the mountains, was second overall.

Contador, the 2007 champion, also had to battle a rearguard action within his Astana team, where the comeback of Armstrong to the tour after 3½ years of retirement raised questions about who would be the team leader.

"It has been an especially difficult tour for me, but I savour it and it is more special because of it," Contador said after the prize ceremony.

The subtext to the race was the open tension between Armstrong and Contador within Astana – a battle of egos between a proven cycling giant and another making the strong case that he's one, too.

The body language on the winner's

WRONG ANTHEM

SPANIARD Alberto Contador had to wait to fully savour his second Tour de France title after organisers played the Danish national anthem during the podium ceremony. The 26-year-old looked surprised when the wrong national anthem started to play on the Champs Elysees.

"There was a bug," the organisers' general director, Yann Le Moenner, said. "Our provider played the Danish anthem but once it was realised it was the wrong one, the Spanish anthem was finally played."

Reuters

podium said it all. As he climbed on to the victor's stage, Armstrong gave a perfunctory handshake to Contador, then heartily shook Schleck's hand.

Asked what was the hardest moment in this race, Contador replied: "It was in the [team] hotel," without elaborating.

Contador and Armstrong reportedly had differences early in the race, as tensions grew over who was the No 1 Astana rider.

"We are totally incompatible. In the end, Armstrong will go his way and I'll go mine," Contador said.

Some old habits died hard for the Texan. On the ride into Paris, Armstrong – reviving a habit from his heyday – sipped champagne in the saddle, only this time it was to cel-



Champagne time: Alberto Contador, right, and Lance Armstrong enjoy a glass of bubbly as they ride during the 21st stage towards Paris. Photo: REUTERS

brate Contador's win and their collective win as a team.

Armstrong and Contador both took a few sips and posed with glass in one hand, handlebar in the other, but then tipped away the rest of the bubbly half-drunk and threw away the glasses.

Contador began the tour on July 4 as the pre-race favourite. At only 26 years old, he is already one of cycling's greats, having won all three Grand Tours, of France, Italy and Spain.

He had to sit out last year because of a doping scandal at Astana before he joined. Contador finished in 85hr 48min 35sec.

The race looped from Monaco, across the Mediterranean rim into Spain, up the Pyrenees, diagonally across central and northeastern France to the Alps, and then down to Sunday's race climax on the dreaded Mont Ventoux in southeast France before the Paris finish.

Schleck was 4:11 seconds behind. Armstrong was 5:24 back.

The 24-year-old Schleck won the white jersey awarded to the tour's best young rider. Franco Pellizotti, of Italy, picked up the polka-dot jersey given to the race's King of the Mountains, while Thor Hushovd, of Norway, won the sprinter's title. AP.

Now for the real big event

I HAD goosebumps coming into the streets of Paris and then along the Champs Elysees. The finale for the Tour de France was an amazing experience.

It had been a bit of a dawdle over the first 100 kilometres yesterday, a bit of goofing around and we were averaging only 33kmh – it's very, very relaxed and a chance to soak up the atmosphere before the show starts in Paris.

Traditionally the team of the yellow jersey holder gets to cross the line first to the Champs Elysees after the opening lap of the 7km circuit, then it's a free-for-all.

I didn't get to celebrate with the team at the finish line, however, as I had a plane to catch.

My partner, Ange, is pregnant with our first child and due to give birth any day now so my priority was to get back to our base in Lucca, Italy, to be with her – the birth of my son is far more important.

It was absolute mayhem for me straight after the stage, as I tried to make it through hundreds of thousands of people and the road blocks to bike back to our hotel.

It was all a bit of a rush and I wasn't there to celebrate the green jersey win for Thor Hushovd, but the team had come together earlier in the morning for a few words.

It was a great feeling coming into Paris and finishing the tour, but for me, it never was just about completing the Tour de France. This was the start of my future.

I didn't have the best of legs during the last week and I had been troubled with a bit of a head cold – so for me, it all ended too soon.

But in saying that, it's my first grand tour and I think I can be pretty satisfied with the three



Hayden Roulston ON THE TOUR

weeks that I've had. Finishing third on a stage was definitely something special and something I won't forget.

It's also something that I'll aim to improve on next year. This tour has definitely set me in the right direction in terms of securing a good contract. I'm pretty happy.

There will always be a lot of talk about the Tour de France and whether for us as a team it was successful or not. We did achieve a lot of our goals – we got the green jersey and we got a couple of stage wins so the tour's been pretty successful, if you ask me.

Now that I'm back in Lucca, I don't think I'll stay off the bike for too long because I don't want to waste what I've gained over the past three weeks.

I've learnt a lot about myself as a rider and I want to capitalise on it. My big goal now is the world championships but there are some pretty important races first.

We hope to come home, maybe in October, and catch up with friends and family – the support from back in New Zealand during the tour has just been amazing and a huge boost.

Of course, before all of that, there will be a few nappy changes ahead.

College Sport

Divers among medals

Wellington's divers were among the medals in Australia last week. Gabe Armstrong-Scott (St Catherine's), Ollie Armstrong-Scott (St Pat's Town), Kate Irving (Wellington East) and Fiona Cameron (Marsden Collegiate) represented New Zealand at the Australian Junior Elite Championships in Sydney. Gabe Armstrong-Scott won under-13 1m springboard gold, with silver in the platform and 3m events. Ollie Armstrong-Scott won bronze in the 1m springboard for 16-18 years.

Lee, Hind shine

Surf lifesaving representatives Samantha Lee and Georgia Hind (pictured) helped New Zealand to third overall at the World Games in Taiwan last week. New Zealand amassed 485 points for the

combined pool and beach competition, behind Australia (634) and Italy (521). Lee and Hind added strong individual swims in the

pool competition. Lee's best was a sixth place in the A final of the 100m rescue medley, while Hind won the B final of the 200m obstacles. In the beach competition, the Wellington East Girls' duo combined with the Kiwi team for sixth in the tube rescue.

Wgtn Coll too good

Wellington College first XV beat Christ's College 33-3 at Nelson College yesterday. The final of the quadrangular tournament, which also includes Nelson College and Wanganui Collegiate, will be played tomorrow.

Capital named host

Wellington will host the national secondary schools cross-country championships in Waikanae next year. About 700 athletes competed in Nelson at the same event this year, and the Kapiti Harrier and Multisport Club expects strong interest next July.



Big unit: St Pat's Silverstream's 130kg prop Atilla Va'a, right, is tackled by Town's Donald Brighthouse in the rivals' traditional clash last week. Photo: CRAIG SIMCOX

Silverstream ready to topple champions

RUGBY PENNY MILES

ST PATRICK'S Silverstream are primed to topple super-power Wellington College, says optimistic Silverstream coach Dave Cournane.

St Pat's Silverstream hit form in their traditional clash against St Pat's Town at Silverstream last Wednesday to wrap up the round-robin competition in second. Cournane was on a high after the 26-15 win.

Silverstream are expected to brush aside Kapiti in their quarter-final on Saturday. Whether they can book a finals appearance, however, hinges on beating talented Mana College in the semis, but Cournane believes only his side can test Wellington for the trophy. "If we aren't able to knock Wel-

lington College over, they will probably win the national competition," he said. "On our day we would give ourselves a crack against Wellington."

Improved movement from Silverstream prop Atilla Va'a provided the impetus for last week's traditional win.

"Our big 130kg prop Atilla Va'a doesn't normally get across the field so well," Cournane said.

"Christian Lloyd had a great game leading in the second row." Rongotai College picked up the pace on Saturday with an upset 24-19 win over Mana. The win promotes Rongotai to fourth and clinches the all-important quarterfinal hosting rights.

Mana slipped to third, with St Pat's Town back to fifth. Defending champions Well-

ington College, sitting in the top spot, are heavy favourites for a successive title. With five Hurricanes Schools representatives and without injuries, they welcome the challengers.

"We've got a good side and our chances depend on how we travel for the next few weeks in terms of injuries," said Wellington coach Lincoln Rawles.

The toughest quarterfinal on Saturday will see Rongotai host St Pat's Town. St Pat's won 22-10 in their earlier meeting, but Rongotai have the home advantage and plenty of confidence from their win over Mana.

Premier rugby quarterfinals on Saturday (bold denotes host)

Wellington College v Taika College
St Patrick's Silverstream v Kapiti College
Mana College v St Bernard's College
Rongotai College v St Patrick's Town

RESULTS

BASKETBALL

Senior Premier Boys: St Bernard's 72 Waiuimata 70; Newlands 85 (C McIntyre 23, K Le'aupepe 20, L Thompson 11, A Lantin 11) HVHS 57; Well. College 107 (A Curtis 28, J Webb 18, J Stirling 14, T Paima-Lewington 14) Onslow 71 (N Davies 36, J Wright 12).

Senior Girls: St Mary's 56 (K Kinivg 17, L Hallagan 13, A Fernandez 10) Aotea 45.

FOOTBALL

Boys premier youth championship: Well. College 1 (C Sanders) Tawa 0; Rongotai 0 Onslow 0.

Girls regional premier 1: Well East 3 (E Millynn, C O'Callaghan, J Bone) HVHS 2 (K Phipps, E Stirling).

NETBALL

Hutt Valley Schools:
Premier 1 Championship: St Oran's 1 48 Heretaunga 1 11; Taika 1 30 Waiuimata 1 23; Sacred Heart 1 35 Upper Hutt 1 18.

RUGBY

Wellington Secondary Schools Boys Premier 1: Silverstream 26 St Pat's Wgtn 15; Rongotai 24 (Tries: C Eric, R Leota, D Ene, J Henry. Conv: E Russell 2) Mana 19.

Hard training pays off for Hutt gymnasts

GYMNASTICS PENNY MILES

THE camaraderie of training in Wellington's biggest senior squad paid dividends at the Wellington Open Championships for Hutt Valley's Nadine Manning and Danielle Jellicoe.

Jellicoe (Hutt Valley High School) and Manning (Sacred Heart) were among the medals at Te Rauparaha Arena last weekend, and head this weekend to the Canterbury championships.

Competing against elite gymnasts from Christchurch, Auckland and throughout Wellington, Manning (level 9) and Jellicoe (level 8) cleaned up in their events.

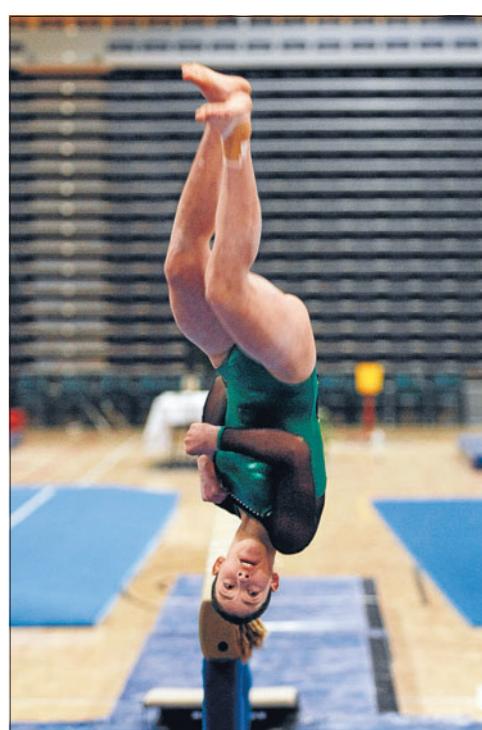
Manning was awarded the highest overall score by the judging panel. The 16-year-old won her specialty event, the floor exercise, was third on beam, and collected four individual trophies, including the Level 9 Cup.

Jellicoe's beam routine claimed the highest mark for any senior, and she added two further trophies, including the Level 8 Cup, and highest senior average.

Training at Hutt Valley Gym Sports made all the difference, said Manning, who trains for about 20 hours a week. "There's quite a few seniors at our club compared to other clubs."

She competes regularly with the best gymnasts in the country and aims to make the New Zealand levels team to compete in Hawaii in January.

"You compete against everyone



Happy landings: Hutt Valley High School's Danielle Jellicoe dismounts from her beam routine, which was awarded the highest senior score at the Wellington Open Championships on Saturday. Photo: KENT BLECHYNDEN

all year, so you kind of know where you're at." She was pleased with her floor routine, which went "pretty smoothly".

Jellicoe and Manning will be in the Wellington team for the national championships at Hamilton in September.

Also at the Wellington championships, senior international Olivia Trigg (Wellington Girls) came back from injury to claim the Wellington gymnast of the year award, while level 8 Sarah Dunn (Wellington Girls) won two trophies, including the highest senior vault score.