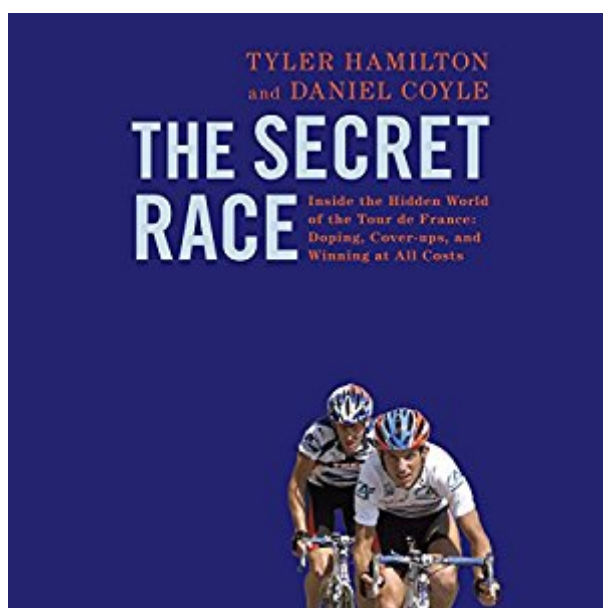


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The Secret Race: Inside The Hidden World Of The Tour De France: Doping, Cover-ups, And Winning At All Costs



Synopsis

The Secret Race is a definitive look at the world of professional cycling-and the doping issue surrounding this sport and its most iconic rider, Lance Armstrong-by former Olympic gold medalist Tyler Hamilton and New York Times best-selling author Daniel Coyle. Over the course of two years, Coyle conducted more than 200 hours of interviews with Hamilton and spoke candidly with numerous teammates, rivals, and friends. The result is an explosive book that takes us, for the first time, deep inside a shadowy, fascinating, and surreal world of unscrupulous doctors, anything-goes team directors, and athletes so relentlessly driven to succeed that they would do anything-and take any risk, physical, mental, or moral-to gain the edge they needed to win. Tyler Hamilton was once one of the world's best-liked and top-ranked cyclists-a fierce competitor renowned among his peers for his uncanny endurance and epic tolerance for pain. In the 2003 Tour de France, he finished fourth despite breaking his collarbone in the early stages-and grinding 11 of his teeth down to the nerves along the way. He started his career with the U.S. Postal Service team in the 1990s and quickly rose to become Lance Armstrong's most trusted lieutenant and a member of his inner circle. For the first three of Armstrong's record seven Tour de France victories, Hamilton was by Armstrong's side, clearing his way. But just weeks after Hamilton reached his own personal pinnacle-winning the gold medal at the 2004 Olympics-his career came to a sudden, ignominious end: He was found guilty of doping and exiled from the sport. From the exhilaration of his early, naÃƒfÆ'Ã ˆve days in the peloton, Hamilton chronicles his ascent to the uppermost reaches of this unforgiving sport. In the mid-1990s, the advent of a powerful new blood-boosting drug called EPO reshaped the world of cycling, and a relentless, win-at-any-cost ethos took root. Its psychological toll would drive many of the sport's top performers to substance abuse, depression, even suicide. For the first time ever, Hamilton recounts his own battle with clinical depression, speaks frankly about the agonizing choices that go along with the decision to compete at a world-class level, and tells the story of his complicated relationship with Lance Armstrong. A journey into the heart of a never-before-seen world, The Secret Race is a riveting, courageous act of witness from a man who is as determined to reveal the hard truth about his sport as he once was to win the Tour de France.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 11 hoursÃ ˆ andÃ ˆ 23 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Random House Audio

Audible.com Release Date: September 5, 2012

Language: English

ASIN: B0097DM8LU

Best Sellers Rank: #32 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Miscellaneous > Sociology of Sports](#)
#34 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Individual Sports > Cycling](#) #106 in [Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > Sports & Recreation](#)

Customer Reviews

This is the most devastating chronicle yet of the recent history of pro bike racing, for several reasons:- First, the co-author, Daniel Coyle, knows his way around pro bike racing. He wrote *Lance Armstrong's War: One Man's Battle Against Fate, Fame, Love, Death, Scandal, and a Few Other Rivals on the Road to the Tour de France*, and his experience shows. More than just a story about Hamilton, "The Secret Race" weaves in all the significant doping scandals of the past 15 years. Although the publicity surrounding this book is driven by the interest in Lance Armstrong, the book exposes a sport-wide culture where doping was expected and the infrastructure to support it was easily accessible to the best riders.- Second, the level of prosaic detail adds credibility. It's more than just a chronicle of what drugs were taken -- but also detail on how they worked; how they were concealed; how tests were beaten; the logistics of getting to and from the doping doctors; and the strategy of timing blood doping sessions to correspond with key stages of big races. Hamilton even details the bonus schedule he paid to his doping doctors for each major victory. Although I've read previous books on the topic, I was still surprised by the intensity of doping activities outlined here. It's the difference between having the story told by "outsiders" (investigators, journalists, team assistants) vs. "insiders" (someone like Hamilton who is finally willing to tell the story).- Third, Hamilton's own personal story is believable. He helps explain why bike racers decide to dope, why lying about it becomes so central to their day to day lives, and what it takes to turn the corner and start telling the truth. The co-author's key challenge in this book is to make the reader accept the story of someone who lied for so long, and inevitably we have to wonder, "He lied then, is he telling the truth now?" The context provided here allows the reader to make that leap. Two other individuals are worth mentioning. The first is David Walsh, the London Times journalist who wrote *From Lance to Landis: Inside the American Doping Controversy at the Tour de France*, which outlined way back in 2007 what was happening inside pro racing during the "Lance Armstrong era." None of the recent doping scandals has been a real surprise to anyone

who read Walsh's book. "The Secret Race" has a lot more detail, since it's told by a true insider, but without David Walsh, Paul Kimmage and a few others continuing to tell this story the facts likely would have never come out (One thing that's clear from "The Secret Race" is that the sport's governing body, the UCI, was never going to blow the whistle on itself).[Nov. 2012 update: David Walsh's stories that laid out the original allegations against Lance Armstrong have just been released in a Kindle edition, *Lanced: The shaming of Lance Armstrong*, and coming soon is his new e-book, *Seven Deadly Sins*]The second person to mention is Andy Hampsten, another American cycling hero whose 1988 ride in the Tour of Italy is still legendary. Hampsten was competing at the top level of international cycling before the EPO era but then found himself out-muscled by back-of-the-pack competitors who suddenly transformed themselves, turbocharged by EPO and blood transfusions. For anyone who thinks that it's OK to excuse continuing coverups because "it was a level playing field; they all doped," it's worth reading Andy Hampsten's quotes: "In the mid eighties, when I came up, riders were doping but it was still possible to compete with them...bottom line, a clean rider could compete in the big three-week races. EPO changed everything...all of a sudden whole teams were ragingly fast, all of a sudden I was struggling to make time limits. By 1994, I'd be on climbs, working as hard as I've ever worked, producing exactly the same power, at the same weight, and right alongside me would be these big-assed guys, and they'd be chatting like we were on the flats! It was completely crazy. As the 1996 season went by...everybody knew what was up, everybody was talking about EPO, everybody could see the writing on the wall."Hampsten retired from pro bike racing at that time. Other racers made a different decision, and signed up for in-depth doping regimes; their story is told here. To believe that anyone raced clean and then won the Tour de France 7 times in a row at the height of the doping era seems to defy reality. To use a term repeated often in "The Secret Race," it would have to be "extraterrestrial."

Like many of the cycling fans in the US, I was a big fan of Lance during his first few Tours de France. But after a few years his arrogance got to me, and instead I started liking another American cyclist, Tyler Hamilton. I was devastated in 2004 when Hamilton tested positive for a blood transfusion. I lost a huge amount of respect for Tyler Hamilton at that point. Well, after reading this book, I have regained much of the respect that was lost back in 2004. When the news broke that the USADA was going to take away all seven of Lance Armstrong's Tour de France wins, I thought it was unfair. At this point I knew he probably taken doping products, but I still thought it was water under the bridge and time to move forward. Not after reading Hamilton and Coyle's book! There are

just too many details in the book about the teams, the conversations, the locations, and the methods of doping for it all to be a lie. There are also too many current or former cyclists coming out to confess about their doping in that era. I no longer see Hamilton or Armstrong in the same light after reading this book. I almost understand how a cyclist like Hamilton had to cheat in order to even survive in the pro peloton. Some refused too, and ended up retiring because they could no longer compete. Perhaps we all would have done the same given the situation. I also see more than ever how arrogant Armstrong was, and still is. And, yes, now I completely feel the USADA is 100% justified in taking away Lance's 7 Tour de France wins. Finally, I think Hamilton is brave to publish this book. There is still a lot of pressure on former cyclist to keep the secret race just that... a secret. Hamilton has broken through the silence and shown the rest of the world the truth about cycling. If you have any doubts, read the book yourself. It will open your eyes.

Wow is all I can say and I am in the medical profession and no stranger to PEDs. I am also a competitive cyclist and have been a fan of the sport for a long time. As a famous rider in the 70s said "Of course I'm on drugs, I race a bicycle 300 days a year, no one can do that without drugs." I found Tyler's book very well written and easy to read. You can tell right away his ulterior motive is to set himself free from the effects living a double life have had on him. Of course he is no fan of Lance Armstrong but it doesn't come off as him being vindictive. In a way you can tell he feels sorry for Lance and the others who continue to live the lie. The minute, comprehensive details in this book and the authors credibility leave no doubt to the reader as to what happens in the pro peloton. It is an amazingly quick read, one I couldn't put down and one I will never forget. Thank you Tyler for being courageous enough to write this book.

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