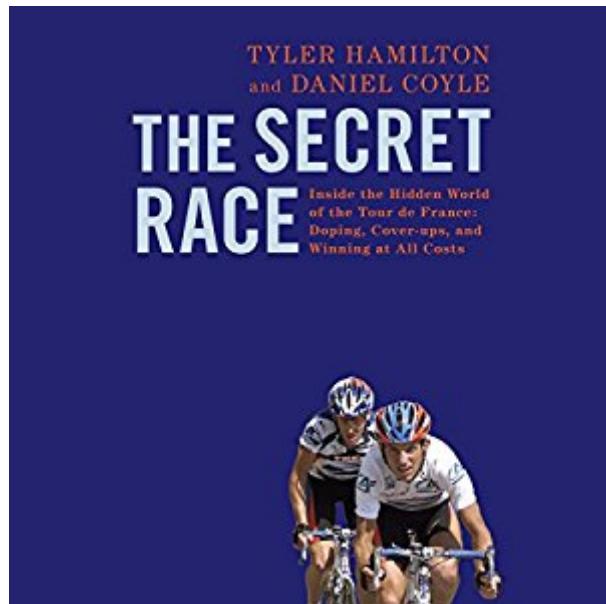


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The Secret Race: Inside The Hidden World Of The Tour De France: Doping, Cover-ups, And Winning At All Costs



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, nail-biting 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

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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.

Strongly recommend. Well-written and well documented. The specifics of the how, when and where of the all-encompassing doping program at the US Postal Cycling team make for very interesting reading. Entirely believable. The book is filled with extended quotes from other Postal riders, Landis, VandeVelde, Vaughters, Andreu, confirming portions of Hamilton's account. What strikes me is how pervasive the ethic of doping was throughout the Peloton. Literally everyone who was competitive in the mid-1990s to 2006 (and anyone on a competitive team) had to be on some kind of program -- whether EPO, transfusions, testosterone or something else. And everyone knew about it -- all the

team members, all the staff, all the spouses/girlfriends -- including Hamilton's ex Haven and by implication Kristin Armstrong. [The only wife who was intolerant was the brave and principled Betsy Andreu.] The UCI repeatedly turned a blind eye, whether because of outright corruption (promised payments by Armstrong after a positive test at the Tour of Switzerland) or because of the need for the public perception of a "clean" sport. Therefore unwritten rules governed the ethic of doping within the Peloton. The testers would only show up at certain times. Don't get caught with a hematocrit over 50 and regardless of how suspicious, there would be no violation. As Hamilton says, the dope testing regime became more of an IQ test than a doping test. If you were clever, had the right doctor, or had enough money to cover the logistics of a sophisticated doping program, you would likely not get caught. (transfusing, storing and reinfusing blood before and during the course of the Tour without the blood "going bad" was a complicated process--with life threatening consequences if there was a mistake).

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