



## QUOTES FROM 2011 AMGEN TOUR OF CALIFORNIA KICKOFF PRESS CONFERENCE

### RIDER QUOTES

#### **Levi Leipheimer (USA)**

*Team RadioShack*

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#### **On the Amgen Tour of California**

"The Amgen Tour of California is always a goal of mine every year; I always seem to find extra motivation in my training throughout the year. The race is always on my mind, everyday, rain or shine, and that has always helped me train hard, and it has always paid off."

#### **On the 2011 race**

"I'm here to do my best. I'm here to try and win the race for our team and our sponsors. We have a strong team here. It's a team that can defend, should we take the lead, and we have another rider who is capable of winning the General Classification, Chris Horner."

"The 2011 edition of the Amgen Tour of California is a mini Tour de France, and I don't think we could ask for anything more."

"This is by far the hardest edition of the Amgen Tour of California in six years. I rode Mt. Baldy last April before last year's Tour because I had gotten word that it might be added to the route. That is a real climb – worthy of the Tour de France. Now, all of the sudden we have two mountaintop finishes with Mt. Baldy and Sierra Road."

#### **On racing the Amgen Tour of California instead of the Giro d'Italia**

"I live in California so the choice is easy. I choose to race in the Amgen Tour of California, and it's hard to do both. I've done it a couple of times and every year it gets harder and harder and that just means you're more dead at the end. I'd rather do eight sunny days in California."

#### **On the time trial in Solvang**

"I'm looking forward to the time trial in Solvang. I think Solvang is the most beautiful time trial course you will see all year."

#### **On the safety of cycling**

"I think we as riders have a unique perspective, because we can do it [race] and then watch it on television. On television it looks fairly docile and at times boring – we want riders to attack. But then, when we race, it's nerve-wracking and stressful, and sometimes, a moment of relapse or loss of concentration can be serious. When riders talk about safety or danger, we're not doing that to gain sympathy or dramatize our sport. I've been scared on downhill – in the Giro d'Italia the roads are small and steep and the riders have a lot of skill, but there is not a lot of room for error. Safety is a big issue for us. It's not so much about complaining – safety is a real issue."

#### **On the weather**

"The group is, for the most part, experienced enough to know level of risk to take out on the course. The race organizers have our back, and we feel confident that they'll be able to assess the situation on Sunday morning and determine what is safe and what is not. When you have snow accumulating on the road – you just don't see that – going downhill is nearly impossible to navigate with snow on the road."

#### **Andy Schleck (LUX)**

*Leopard Trek*

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#### **On the 2011 Amgen Tour of California**

"This will be my fourth time racing in the Amgen Tour of California, and if I look at the profile for this year's race, it is by far the hardest."

"I plan to take the race as it comes. I would love to win a stage. I'm not going to sit back in the peloton and relax. If I can be up there, I will. I train good and feel good, so I'll have to take it how it comes on the road."

**On his season so far**

"I am pretty happy with my season so far. I was trying to do well in the Classics and tried to win. I kind of took a break, a few days off my bike, but I was not lazy so I came here early to get over the jet lag and get some good miles done. I feel alright. I have to see now. My goal is still the Tour de France, but I believe I can have a good race here."

**On the loss of teammate and friend Wouter Weylandt**

"The loss of Wouter last week was personally a big shock for me. He was a good friend of mine. There are no words to describe the feelings that were going through me, my brother and the team. The day after the crash, everyone at the Giro [d'Italia] showed respect and it was really nice to see."

"It has been hard for me to stay focused on training, but I'm sure he would have wanted me to stay in the race and do my best. The team is here and we ride for Wouter."

**On plans for honoring Wouter Weylandt at the Amgen Tour of California**

"For now, all the riders are going to have personalized wristbands – over here first and then over in Europe. Also, his girlfriend is five months pregnant, so a fund has been set up to support his family and his kid in the future."

**On the safety of cycling**

"I feel more nervous when I watch the race on television than when I'm racing it myself. I'm not scared for myself. I know that it's dangerous, but it's me in control. I get more nervous for my brother when we are racing together – he is my teammate, my family."

**On racing the Amgen Tour of California instead of the Giro d'Italia**

"It is a simple question for me – I can choose and I choose to come here. This is the best preparation for me for the Tour de France. Also, if you take the Tour de France and the Amgen Tour of California, in terms of organization and security, it's the best race of the year. I think the Giro d'Italia is just too hard, and it's getting harder and more stressful each year. If I want to do a good Tour de France, I can't do both."

**Ben King (USA)**

*BMC Racing Team*

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**On being the current U.S. National Road Race Champion**

"It's been a pretty special experience to start my first year as a professional wearing the stars and stripes jersey of the National Champion, and I'm excited to start the nation's biggest cycling race wearing this jersey. It was amazing to be in South Carolina with them then-teammate Taylor Phinney who took the Time Trial; it was a pretty incredible experience; one that I'll always remember."

**On the Amgen Tour of California**

"I'm really proud to be here to support the team at the Amgen Tour of California. There's definitely a lot of professionalism to learn from. I feel like I'm learning a lot and still developing. It has been a great experience and the teams' been really supportive."

**On preparing for the Amgen Tour of California**

"We study the course maps because they are pretty detailed and give you a good idea of what you'll be facing, and we get tips from teammates."

**Oscar Freire (ESP)**

*Rabobank Cycling Team*

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**On his goals for the Amgen Tour of California**

"The team's overall goal, as well as my personal goal, is to win a stage. We don't have a leader for the General Classification, but we have a lot of young riders so we will try to win a stage. It's a difficult race because we'll face really hard stages."

**Tejay Van Garderen (USA)**

*HTC-Highroad*

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**On the race**

“Winning this year’s Amgen Tour of California is definitely the goal for me. The goal could be to do well or win, so I’m going to try to win. If I fail, I fail. I know it’s going to be hard, but it’s what I’m going to try to do. It’s really cool to race the Amgen Tour of California because it is special to race in my home country.”

**On the weather**

“The peloton is pretty cautious in difficult weather situations. Usually when there are extreme conditions, the peloton has enough respect to take it a little easier.”

**Taylor Phinney (USA)**

*BMC Racing Team*

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**On his year so far**

“I’ve learned a lot this year. I’ve had a fair amount of injuries and a couple crashes. Now I have a good base underneath me, so I’m beyond excited to race in my home country and in California.”

“I’m really excited to be here. I get to ride in my stars and stripes (jersey) during the time trial, so I couldn’t be more excited about that.”

“We have a really strong team here with George (Hincapie) and a couple of younger guys. To be honest, I’m really excited to race with the guys at this table – legends of the sport and the younger guys coming up. It’s going to be a really cool race to watch. I don’t like to say that we enjoy beating up on the older guys, but we have a few private smiles afterwards if we do better than the guys who have been dominating the sport for a while. This is definitely one of those races where you can see some of the younger guys in the top-ten overall.”

**On the weather**

“I used to train at home in Colorado, so the altitude doesn’t bother me. There are guys who have been here for a couple weeks and then there are guys that are flying in tomorrow. It will be interesting to see how the altitude affects the race.”

**On the Stage 6 time trial in Solvang**

“I haven’t really had a good test in the time trial yet, so Solvang will be my first big test before Nationals. As a course, it kind of suits me. The time trial is my biggest goal here. I will be giving it my all for sure.”

**Johan Van Summeren (BEL)**

*Team Garmin-Cervelo*

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**On the Amgen Tour of California**

“The Amgen Tour of California is a big objective for Garmin. I think we have many riders who can do very well in the General Classification or going for a stage win. I’d like to give the best of myself and maybe try to win a stage, or at least help other team members to make it the best possible.”

**Andrew Talansky (USA)**

*Team Garmin-Cervelo*

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**On the Amgen Tour of California**

“The Amgen Tour of California is obviously a big objective for my team. Coming into this race, the depth and strength of our team is what we’re going to play off of. We have Dave [Zabriskie] coming back, who placed second overall in the race last year. The team has always been strong. We’re definitely one of the strongest teams in the race, and looking at it on paper, this is one of the strongest teams we’ve brought to this race. We want to win the overall [General Classification].”

**On the weather conditions**

“We were here on Monday and the conditions were very similar. We have to leave it to the race organizers. They have our safety in mind and we trust their decision. Everyone will have to deal with the same conditions, so it’s pretty fair.”

## **PARTNER QUOTES**

### **Phil Liggett, VERSUS Announcer**

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#### **On the Amgen Tour of California**

“This has been one of the best organized races since its inception; it has no rival. Looking at the Amgen Tour of California and the quality of cyclists sitting here – this is one of the best races in the world.”

#### **On broadcast coverage of the Amgen Tour of California**

“Over this last week I’ve been looking at the coverage VERSUS is going to give the Amgen Tour of California. For VERSUS, the Amgen Tour of California is a mini Tour de France and money is no object. The support and production team here is the same as the Tour de France. It is covered extremely well and it will be seen by more people than ever. We’re going to see it reach 216 nations and territories; we’ll be actively broadcasting to 18 networks, which is a 61 percent increase from last year.”

### **Andrew Messick, President, AEG Sports**

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#### **On the race overall**

“This year is going to be a pivotal year for us. We have a compelling route and we’re going to have a great race.”

#### **On the competition**

“In terms of the riders, we are going to have an exceptional competition. We have a variety of riders participating in the race, many of them young, such as Andy Schleck, who are poised to make an incredible impact on the world of cycling. We’re looking forward to watching them grow, but in order to do that they’re going to have to get through a group of established riders, such as Levi (Leipheimer) and George (Hincapie), who have carried the torch.”

#### **On Wouter Weylandt memorial plans**

“We will be commemorating Wouter Weylandt, the Leopard Trek rider who died tragically in the Giro d’Italia earlier this week. It’s a tragic thing and reminds all of us in the cycling community that this sport is dangerous. In honor of Wouter, there will be a moment of silence before the race and we are going to ask the team (Leopard Trek) to start the race for us and lead it out.”

#### **On the Amgen Tour of California Women’s International Time Trial Challenge**

“We will be having an invitational for the women’s time trial. I think it is a great opportunity to showcase women’s cycling and showcase how good the women really are. We are looking forward to having them and a great race.”

### **Stuart Arbuckle, Vice President & General Manager Oncology, Amgen, official race sponsor**

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#### **On Amgen**

“Amgen was born and is headquartered right here in California. We feel privileged to bring a world-class sporting event to our great state. Our company develops innovative medicines to help treat some of the most deadly diseases in the world. We’re proud of the work we do in helping our fellow man.”

#### **About Amgen’s sponsorship**

“The Amgen Tour of California is a great platform for us to get the word out there about what we do. I’m also proud to say it’s more than just a sponsorship; we celebrate cancer treatment with the Breakaway from Cancer initiative. Whoever wins this race is going to need an incredible support team, and you need a similar support team to fight cancer. That’s what the Breakaway from Cancer initiative is all about. Breakaway from Cancer will be hard to miss this year – we’ll have the Breakaway from Cancer Most Courageous Rider Jersey, a cancer survivor shooting the gun at each start, several breakaway miles and partners at each lifestyle festival.”

### **Carol Chaplin, Executive Director of the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority**

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#### **On being involved with the race**

“Welcome to Lake Tahoe and the start of the Amgen Tour of California. We’re all proud to have the race visit our city. The process of preparing for, and being involved with, the race has been an incredible experience. No matter what the weather brings, it will be memorable. We know these riders like a challenge and I think we’ll have that for them.”

**Andy Chapman, Director of Tourism, North Lake Tahoe Resort Association**

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**On being involved with the race**

“This community has really come together behind this event – from a 50-person bike parade to several other events leading up to race day – the athletes are touching this community as a whole.”

**Jim Birrell, Race Director, 2011 Amgen Tour of California**

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**On the race overall**

“To be able to bring a platform like the Amgen Tour of California to the Tahoe region is a great privilege and honor. The 2011 Amgen Tour of California will go down in the history books as the toughest edition thus far. The breakaway mile really resonates well with the health and wellness message of this race.”

**On the route**

“The race will showcase the state in such a unique way, including everything from the iconic imagery of what you can see here in South Lake Tahoe to Donner Pass; coming into Sacramento and then making our way down into gold rush country; returning to a community that’s been with us since the inception of the race (San Jose) via two serious climbs on Mt. Hamilton and Sierra Rd. We added a new element to Stage 4 with the mountaintop finish, so what you will see unfolding is a lot of courageous competition. From there we were originally going to take the coastal route, but due to a rough winter we developed a really compelling alternate stage. For the individual time trial, we’ll go back to a venue that has played host three times – all of which Levi won – Solvang. Next we’re on to the crown jewel of this race where we finish at the top of Mt. Baldy. We’ll conclude this great race with a wonderful story starting in Santa Clarita and finishing in the town of our title sponsor Amgen – Thousand Oaks.”

**On safety precautions**

“Safety is paramount. We do everything in our power to provide the best chances of success on the road. Our team and course directors spend countless hours identifying any danger out there. We really take it to heart.”

**On the weather**

“We’ve been watching the forecast and will continue to monitor the situation. Our team will come together tomorrow night (Saturday) and will determine our action plan. Our concern is going to be what’s on the road. If it’s just wet, it will be all systems go. We have the brightest and most experienced individuals on our team to help render the best decision given the circumstances. We’ll work with the Lake Tahoe local organizing committee to determine where there will be the most accumulation. Our partners will be able to guide us in the decision making process and we’ll figure out how to negate it. We’ll look at all the variables we can to make the decision that’s safest for these riders.”

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