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ARMSTRONG COMES TO SA FOR LAST RIDE

Lance Armstrong will compete in his last professional race on international soil at the 2011 Santos Tour Down Under in Adelaide.

On a Bicycle SA ride with South Australia's own international cycling star Stuart O'Grady today, Premier Mike Rann and Race Director Mike Turtur today confirmed that Lance Armstrong will ride in the elite UCI ProTour race from 16 to 23 January 2011 - for the third and final time.

"This is an amazing opportunity for cycling fans across the globe to head to Adelaide and be part of history as Lance competes in his farewell ride as a professional on international soil," Mr Rann said.

"Lance is a true hero of the sport and we are delighted he has chosen to compete again in South Australia and make his international farewell here."

Lance Armstrong launched his comeback to professional cycling at the 2009 Santos Tour Down Under, and returned in 2010 to debut his new team, Team RadioShack.

"The impact Lance has had on the Santos Tour Down Under and the interest in cycling in South Australia has been astounding," Mr Rann said.

"I would encourage people not to miss this once in a lifetime opportunity to watch Lance compete for the very last time here in Adelaide in January."

Lance Armstrong said he was looking forward to coming back to Adelaide.

"I'm excited to be competing in my last professional ride outside the US at the Santos Tour Down Under," he said.

"It will be my third time to the event, and I'm sure I will enjoy it as much as I have the first two times.

"I will never forget the reception we received in Adelaide when we kicked off the LIVESTRONG global campaign.

"I look forward to racing and also checking in on the progress in South Australia."

Mr Rann says South Australia was the first place outside of Europe to run a ProTour bike race when the State Government achieved ProTour status for the Tour Down Under for the 2008 race.

"This first ProTour race resulted in more than 15,000 people coming to South Australia from interstate and overseas to see the race - a 50 per cent increase from the previous year which injected more than \$17 million into the local economy.

“To grow the race further, and give it greater prestige and international attention, we decided to go after the biggest name in cycling.

“That we were able to attract Lance Armstrong to South Australia to stage his first come-back ride in 2009 after a hiatus of some years from pro-tour racing was a real coup – paid real dividends.

“The 2009 Tour Down Under was, at the time, the biggest event ever staged in South Australia. It contributed \$39 million to our local economy - an increase of 125 per cent from 2008.

“A total of 36,200 people from interstate and overseas travelled here specifically to watch the event, compared with 15,100 people the year before.

“His involvement also enabled Lance to bring greater attention to his cause to successfully raise more funds for cancer research and cancer victims.

“TV and media coverage of South Australia and its magnificent scenery and natural assets were seen by hundreds of millions of people worldwide.

“Lance returned to South Australia this year - and more than 39,000 people from interstate and overseas travelled here specifically to watch the event, injecting an additional \$41.5 million into the State’s economy.

“The 2010 Tour overtook the previous year’s record and became the biggest sporting event in SA history.

“We are well aware that now the Santos Tour Down Under is a roaring success, other States would poach this event given half a chance.

“But like anyone running a competitive business – this State Government has no intention of tipping off other States as to how we run our events. That would only serve to lose us our competitive advantage and all that comes with it,” Mr Rann said.

Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Santos David Knox congratulated the State Government and race organisers for securing Lance Armstrong.

“In the past two years, a strong and mutual affection has developed between Lance and South Australians.

“I have no doubt his presence will once again attract worldwide media coverage and a huge audience for the 2011 Santos Tour Down Under,” Mr Knox said.