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## The ABSA Cape Epic 2011: Lance Mania

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LET'S start with the big news... Lance Armstrong, the world-famous cyclist is riding the event next year! Armstrong won last year's Leadville 100 in a record time of 6:28:50 and beat six-time race winner Dave Wiens, who finished second.

Armstrong's Epic partner has not yet been announced and will play an important part of winning. What will be very interesting is how the Absa Cape Epic maintains the 'Lance Mania', as riders have always moved freely and mixed between each other throughout the event; World Champions riding shoulder to shoulder with the amateur riders has always been the appeal of the relaxed mountain biking way.

Karl Platt (currently 9th UCI ranking) and Stefan Sahn (currently 17th UCI ranking) are the defending Champions from 2007, 2009 and 2010 and this team, Team Bulls, appears unbeatable with so much experience behind them; surely another win in 2011 will be in their sights.

Jose Hermida: The current World Champion: Men Elite (Cross Country) is looking in top-form and the all important partner choice will swing the results. With the right partner this Multivan Merida team looks unstoppable and after a stage-win last year, the thirst for overall victory will be strong. Reading this morning's 'twitter' from Costa Rica, it seems Jose is toughening up on Le Ruta which will stand him in good stead for Epic.

Alban Lakata: The current Top UCI Ranking Men Elite (Marathon) performed very strongly with South African's top mountain biker with Kevin Evans. After finishing 3rd in the Epic in 2010, he stands a very good chance of winning in 2011.

Burry Stander: The current World Champion: U23 (Cross Country) and Christoph Sauser past World Champion (currently 21st UCI ranking) riding for Songo.info make for a formidable team after finishing second in 2010 but have struggled to complete in the past. Will 2011 be their year and deliver for this team what on paper



suggests a win and what an entire mountain biking community in South Africa would love to see – a South African on the podium at no one?!

Blind adventurer and motivational speaker Hein Wagner will take on next year's Absa Cape Epic with experienced cyclist Gerrie Olivier as Team Pragma Beyond Vision. It will be the first time in history that a blind person participates in this extreme endurance event.

Race Founder, Kevin Vermaak concludes "Even if we have all the world champions on the start line, the race remains absolutely achievable for anyone that sets his or her mind to do it. And riding alongside the world's best is something

you can only do at the Absa Cape Epic. Perhaps what is even more important to the amateurs that come from all over the world is the quality of the route and of our event services. This remains the core of what we're about."

Next month we will take a peek at the route and training!

The Absa Cape Epic, presented by Adidas, is the most televised mountain bike race in the world. It recently announced an increased prize purse of R500, 000 for next year, which consolidates the event's position as the largest prize purse in the world of endurance mountain biking. What an achievement for South Africa! [pedalstudio.com](http://pedalstudio.com)