

AMGEN TOUR OF CALIFORNIA

# Cycling race returns

Santa Cruz to host finish of Stage Three as event moves to May



SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL

Despite being outfitted in his best Tour of California garb, Ronan Karno finds his attention diverted to his mother Jennifer's earrings as Matt Twisselman, far left, speaks about the upcoming Stage 3 finish in Santa Cruz during a press conference on Thursday. Cycling enthusiast Mary Alsip is second from left, and Bart Coddington stands at right.

Local fans raise thousands to host leg of race; Lance Armstrong expected



SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL

Officials from the city of Santa Cruz and law enforcement were joined by media representatives and cycling enthusiasts at a press conference at the Bicycle Trip on Thursday to confirm that Santa Cruz will again host a finish to a stage of the Amgen Tour of California.

**MORE INSIDE** Tour of California organizers have a lot of work ahead of them, B7

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*Bicycle races*  
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✓ **SANTA CRUZ** — Lance Armstrong and the Amgen Tour of California will roll through Surf City again next year, and supporters hope the new May date will draw twice the number of spectators as this year's event when 15,000 people watched top cyclists whiz across the finish line on a rainy February day.

Santa Cruz will host the finish line on May 18 for the third stage of the fifth annual race. That stage will begin in San Francisco.

Andrew Messick, president of AEG Sports, which puts on the event, said Thursday he anticipates the route will include three ascents into the Santa Cruz Mountains and possibly finish in front of the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. The route for the stage is not finalized.

This year, the local stage included two ascents. Levi Leipheimer of Santa Rosa, the race's overall winner, took

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STEVE JONSSON, local director of sponsorship

# AMGEN

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his lead in Bonny Doon. Both Leipheimer and seven-time Tour de France winner Armstrong on Thursday committed to riding the Tour of California again next year.

That excited Jim Gentes, founder of Scotts Valley helmet maker Giro and a volunteer with the race.

"This is a chance for America to see (Armstrong) while he's still racing, on our soil," Gentes said.

Meanwhile, local race sponsors said they are on track to raise the \$245,000 they committed to bring the Tour of California to town. City leaders said earlier this year they could not afford to kick in the money necessary to host the race and told local

promoters they must help pay for hotel rooms for race officials and riders, supplies and law enforcement overtime, among other expenses.

So far, said Aptos resident Steve Jonsson, local director of sponsorship, said they have raised \$160,000.

"We are well on our way," Jonsson said. "We expect not to cost the city anything."

To help save Santa Cruz money on hotel rooms last February, athletes and race officials drove over the hill after the Front Street finish and spent the night there because the next stage began in San Jose the following morning.

Next year, said Tina Shull, a city spokeswoman, sponsors will help pay for hotel rooms in Santa Cruz, which in turn should contribute more money to the local economy as guests go out for

dinner and take in the sights before the next day's start in San Jose.

Jonsson said the Boardwalk is the 2010 "title sponsor" for the stage finish and its financial commitment gave supporters the confidence to promise the city they could fund it.

Boardwalk spokesman Kris Reyes said details are still being worked out on the exact amount that Seaside Co. will chip in, and whether the finish line will be in front of the 102-year-old amusement park.

"We're very excited to be involved with Amgen this year. We think it's a wonderful event that showcases all the great things about Santa Cruz," Reyes said.

Matt Twisselman, who lobbied for years to bring the race through town, said organizers were so impressed with Santa Cruz's Stage 2 fin-

ish on Front Street this year that they decided to return.

"We did a fantastic job," Twisselman said. "We hope to build on that."

The Amgen Tour of California will cover 750 miles over eight days, with cyclists traveling between two cities on most days.

The race shifted to May 16-23 this year to take advantage of better weather and route riders up Sierra Nevada peaks, which in previous years were snow-capped for the February event, organizers said.

Along with Leipheimer and Armstrong, cyclists Dave Zabriskie and George Hincapie are expected to ride, along with Watsonville twins Ben and Andy Jacques-Maynes.

Santa Cruz Mayor Cynthia Mathews said the city was "delighted to be bringing this event back."