

County will likely host Amgen stage finish

Race operator set to announce cities today

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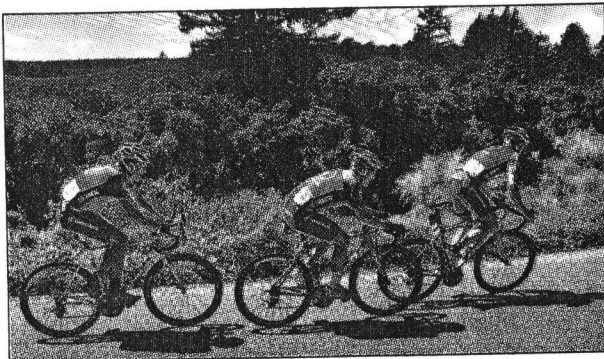
SANTA CRUZ — Operators of the Amgen Tour of California are expected to announce early today that Santa Cruz County has been selected to host a stage finish for the 2012 cycling contest.

Abe Lincoln, who chaired a

committee for Monterey County's stage finish in 2011 and is helping with this year's effort, wouldn't confirm whether Santa Cruz County was chosen. But he said organizers anticipate getting a thumbs-up.

"It looks pretty good," he said. "To be honest, Santa Cruz

SEE AMGEN ON A2



A trio of Radio Shack riders, including Lance Armstrong, left, climb the Bonny Doon Road grade during the 2010 Amgen Tour of California.

SHMUEL THALER/
SENTINEL FILE

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Beach Street in front of the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk is filled with spectators as David Zabriskie beats out Michael Rogers in a photo finish at the end of Stage 3 of the Amgen Tour of California in May 2010.

SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL FILE

AMGEN

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has been a stage finish and has had a lot of success. There are a lot of good signs."

Another official close to the effort made by the Santa Cruz County Cycling Club to bring the race back to this area confirmed tour operators have notified local organizers that their bid was successful.

The date of the race's visit is expected to be May 14. A route and stage finish location have not been finalized, the official said.

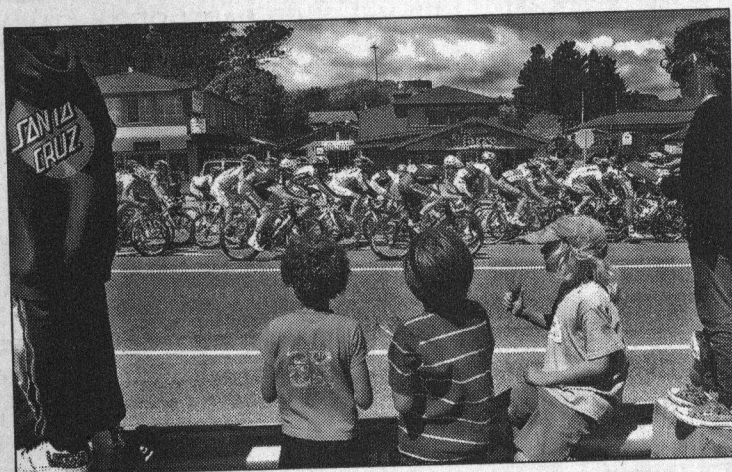
Members of the local organizing committee have been told by tour operator AEG Worldwide to keep details under wraps until today. The committee has planned a press conference for today at California Giant Berry Farms, a Watsonville-based producer that has pledged financial support.

Maura Noel, a member of the Santa Cruz County Cycling Club who will serve as chair of the local committee, said Wednesday she could make no statement about AEG's announcement. She said the Los Angeles-based firm is expected to release the list of host cities at 5:30 a.m. today.

Despite the secrecy surrounding the announcement, AEG officials have not disguised their desire in the past to revisit the Santa Cruz area.

The race, which has attracted world-class riders such as Lance Armstrong and Levi Leipheimer, came through the city of Santa Cruz in 2009 and 2010. Tour officials chose Seaside for 2011 after Santa Cruz declined to apply, citing financial constraints.

In August, when Noel announced her grass-roots bid to get the race back, Kristin Bachochin, a vice president for AEG, welcomed the application, saying, "We



Pacific Elementary School students cheer on the 2010 Amgen Tour of California racers as they speed through Davenport.

SHMUEL
THALER/
SENTINEL FILE

AT A GLANCE

AMGEN TOUR OF CALIFORNIA

WHAT: Nation's premier cycling event that attracts world-class riders

WHEN: Tour operator AEG Worldwide is expected to announce 2012 host cities at 5:30 a.m. today; local organizing committee has planned a press conference for 10 a.m. today.

HISTORY: Santa Cruz hosted stage finishes in 2009 and 2010, but decided not to apply in 2011 due to financial constraints. Santa Cruz County Cycling Club launched effort to bring the race back in May 2012.

COST: Local organizing committees have to raise about \$200,000 for public safety, public works and other logistical costs associated with the contest, as well as some lodging and meal expenses for tour participants.

tions about the company's decision on 2012 host cities to a spokesman for the firm. He did not return several messages.

After the 2009 race ended in downtown Santa Cruz, city and tour officials decided in 2010 to send riders along West Cliff Drive to the Boardwalk, a move that transmitted images of Santa Cruz's iconic beachfront around the world. The 2010 finish represented the only coastal end point during the eight-day race that year.

Facing labor layoffs and service cuts, the city bowed out of competition for 2011 and other groups weren't ready to pick up the baton until this year. The county has agreed to provide — and be reimbursed for — public safety and other logistical resources required to host the race.

The local organizing committee has pledged to raise an estimated \$200,000. As of last month, Noel said she had received \$70,000 in pledges from California Giant Berry Farms, Palo Alto Medical Foundation and other donors.

would obviously love to come back to Santa Cruz."

Wednesday, Bachochin referred ques-