

U.S. Cycling Team, Led by Lance Armstrong, Relied on Silver-Coated Fabrics

By Samuel Etris, Senior Technical Consultant to The Silver Institute

Lance Armstrong, leader of the U.S. Cycling Team, crossed the finish line of the Tour de France on July 28, achieving his fourth successive victory. He and his team did so in good health thanks in part to silver coated fabrics.

The Tour de France bicycle competition causes massive toll on the body," says Jeff Spencer, a former champion cyclist who serves as chiropractor for the U.S. Postal Service Professional Cycling Team, the only U.S. team participating in the 2002 Tour. Cyclists faced 22 days of grueling physical exertion and every evening their bodies had to recover from 8 hours of steady, intense effort for the 2,036 mile course. Spencer and his staff had to provide a support system to enhance ongoing recovery and they used silver-coated fabrics.

Spencer chose a product that both reduced the effects of traumatic injuries and promoted the recovery of participants in the midst of competition. His requirements were: the product must promote recovery without failure, be easily portable, be easy to apply and accommodate body parts in motion. The silver-coated nylon 'Silverlon,' supplied by Argentum Medical in Lakemont, Georgia, (www.silverlon.com), met all these requirements.

"Silver coated nylon provided both antimicrobial action and the ability to promote healing while allowing the cyclist to remain active on his bicycle, both very important considerations," says Spencer "If a cyclist is injured and it is not a performance-terminating injury it is important to make use of his time on the bike to not only compete, but recover as well.

"Silverlon appears to control pain and inflammation, minimizes or eliminates the risk of infection, and allows one to stay active while at the same time healing is maintained. Silverlon is important as it re-establishes the skin's electrical potential that appears to alter the bias of the injured nerve endings, resulting in a pain decreasing function. The antimicrobial activity of the silver ion, passively released from the Silverlon, offers an anti-inflammatory benefit. It is a first line



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The U.S. Cycling Team relied on silver-laced fabrics to help them compete.

of defense when you are dealing with an injury."

Top cyclists are often plagued by skin wounds and musculoskeletal injuries. Rapid resolution of such problems is key to achieving maximum performance and winning races. Properly moistened Silverlon proved to be excellent wraps and orthotics for both skin wounds and musculoskeletal injuries. It was applied to open wounds such as abrasions and road burn – common in bicycle racing — as well as muscle and ligament strains and sprains.

Spencer also used Silverlon to control low-grade muscular and tendon inflammatory processes. It was applied to specific body regions on several cyclists who were prone to repetitive musculoskeletal strains as a preventive intervention prior to occurrence of the pathology. For example, Silverlon orthotics and wraps were placed over wrists, fingers, toes, ankles, and heels to reduce the risk of inflammation and optimize recovery.

Silverlon wound dressings, held in place by flexible tubular stretch knits, allowed the athlete to achieve maximum performance with minimum interference. In many instances with the dressing in place and properly moistened, the athletes became unaware of the injury "Silverlon's role was like an essential nutrient in the fabric of the life of the cyclist," said Spencer. The Silverlon wraps were reused up to 50 times by simply washing in clean water, then reapplied to provide equal efficacy. Spencer added, "It is a wonderful product — the best of all worlds."