



kid Quick

TAYLOR PHINNEY

WHEN YOUR LAST NAME IS PHINNEY there are going to be some expectations thrust upon you. Both your parents are Olympians, your mother a gold medalist and your father is a stout, powerful cyclist who has racked up more sprint victories than any American cyclist in history. Almost immediately Taylor Phinney had success on the bike. With only a couple of years of riding under his belt he became a national champion, world champion and world record holder. Only one other accomplishment was before him: medaling at the Beijing Olympics. No matter how meteoric your rise is, the Olympics are the pinnacle of success for any athlete, and his fellow competitors came prepared. And while a seventh place in the pursuit for the 18-year old might seem like a great start to which seems to be a long career in front of him, that sub-par result haunts him. But that was 2008. In 2009 he will be riding for the Trek-Livestrong U23 squad with all different types of pressure and attention. How does a young man with just a few years experience handle this new found fame of being associated with Lance Armstrong? We sat down

with Taylor Phinney after a double day of training on the track and riding on the road to discuss the disappointment of his Olympic pursuit and riding on a team that is an extension of the Livestrong campaign.

Last time I saw you, you had broken the junior world record and then I saw you in Las Vegas at Lance's press conference. How much as your life changed since then? It has changed but it doesn't feel much different. I do have some more powerful friends and nicer places to stay, like Austin. It's definitely a different world I've entered into from being a track rider with my parents helping me out and pretty much solo on the road and trying to make my way to the Olympics. Now I have this whole team that I can hang out with. I really like that a lot more than being just by myself. This year is going to be more road oriented and I'm fine with that because I think that's where I'll be eventually. But there is a little bit of track that I will have to mix up in there just in the early season. I'm curious to see what happens. I'm going to go over to Europe a couple of times and do

some racing with the national team and the Trek-Livestrong team. I'm as curious as everyone else is as to how the year is going to pan out.

You mentioned it is a different world for you. What is it like now in this different world of yours? Just being linked with Lance and having my name in articles with Lance in *USA Today* is pretty huge for me. A lot of people follow Lance and want to know what he is doing. I was just walking down the street in Austin on Saturday night with some girls and this random guy stops me and asks for my autograph. That was the first time that has ever happened. I wasn't at a bike race, I was downtown. And the girls asked, 'Does that happen a lot?' And I was, 'Yeah, well you know...' [laughing]. I'm sort of getting used to this. Being with Lance there are some things I have to worry about saying and stuff like that, which is new to me. Because he is so huge and I have this access to his inner circle. I'm enjoying it and Lance is a cool guy. His whole crew: Bill Stapleton, Bart Knaggs who run CSE, which manages our team, are good friends of mine. I really like Austin too. I might end up moving there at some point.

You went from the Slipstream Team (now Garmin-Slipstream) to Trek-Livestrong. Why this switch? Slipstream was obviously going to nurture you and bring you along and put you in races here and there. There were a couple of reasons for the switch. One main reason was having Axel Merckx on board and having Lance as well. We were talking about 2009 and we were saying it would be awesome to get Axel as a director. Lance called the day after we talked about making a new team and he was totally down. So when you have Axel Merckx on board, Lance on board and the support group that follows Lance, it was a pretty big career move for me support-wise. And to be able to represent the foundation like Livestrong and ride a Trek and what they can build me, like a track bike to eventually win the Olympics, hopefully. Also the support crew that is around the team just felt right and it was something that I felt I needed to do. Both my parents felt the same way.

Lance's comeback involves cancer awareness. Has that mission statement also fallen on the Trek-Livestrong team as well? Definitely. We carry a Livestrong brand. It is a bit of a burden as we have more pressure on us as a team to represent what we're doing. We have Livestrong on our backs and collars, so it makes what we're doing much more important. We are riding for a cause. My grandfather died of prostate cancer. You get a room full of people and ask how many of them have been affected by cancer, a lot of people raise their hands. For me fighting this and riding my bike at the same time is pretty cool. I'm riding for Livestrong and also promoting my dad's foundation for Parkinson's. I think it is a good place to be for an up and coming bike racer. We're doing good things; we're not just riding our bikes, we're racing for a cause.

SOMETHING YOU NEED TO KNOW.

Even though he is a national champion and holds the junior 3000 meter world record on the track, Phinney is only ranked a category 5 track racer. He has no intention of trying to upgrade.

Speaking of your father, how is he doing? He's doing good. He got a little run down because it was a big summer. And he had the surgery which helped a lot. He had a couple of weeks that he thought he was cured and went out and did everything he could just like back in the day. But he can't do that, even with the surgery. He's learning his limits, but it is hard for him to be limited in any way. I think he is pretty happy with it (riding with Trek-Livestrong). He loves Lance and any time we get to hang out with Lance is an awesome time for him.

You mentioned racing in Europe for the Trek-Livestrong team. Do you know races you will be doing? We're talking to Axel about that. My schedule is a race in Mexico, the Vuelta Mexico Telmex and in April I'm going to go straight from track Worlds to the national team house in Belgium and race for the national team. And then come back in May to do the

Fleche du Sud in Luxembourg. It's a U23 stage race, and then after that the U23 Paris-Roubaix. The U23 Paris-Roubaix is a high priority for me, and I think we are 90% sure that that we will get into that race.

As the Trek-Livestrong team? Yeah. We'll do a couple of races as the Trek-Livestrong team internationally, but most of the European racing I'll be doing will be on the national team. This is the first year and we got the team started pretty late. I think next year we will have an easier time getting into the races by having a year under our belt and some results.

Has the Trek-Livestrong team come together in an official training camp? We just had an official meet and greet in Austin a couple weeks ago. And that was all the guys except the two New Zealanders, which I've met already. They were in Beijing for the World Cup and one of them won the individual pursuit and went really fast, a 4:17 which is a silver medal at the Olympics. That was impressive. And I met the Canadian guy Cody Campbell and the Japanese guy Ryohei Komori. We went to CSE (Trek-Livestrong management company) and that whole presentation totally blew our minds with their organizational skills. We hung out at Mellow Johnny's a lot and got some Juan Pelota coffee. There wasn't much training going on. We rode every day, but it wasn't much training.

How has your off-season been, putting aside all the hoopla of your association with the team? I've never really done any base miles in the off-season. I took two weeks off after track nationals which was the end of my season, and I started riding again and getting base miles. I'm really fit right now. I'm not tired. It's kind of weird to think about it. I've never done any base miles, but here I am.

How do you explain that? I've never really had to (do base miles). I've been doing all track training and that was pretty much how I made my name. It's working out nicely now. We'll see how this race in Mexico goes. I still have Copenhagen



to worry about (location of the next track World Cup that Phinney must participate in so he can be selected for the World Championships).

It seems to be bit of a jump to go from track to U23 Paris-Roubaix. I proved myself on the road in the time trial. I went to junior worlds last year with only track training and a little bit of road miles and I got third in the time trial against the best juniors in the world. I was pretty disappointed that I got third because I was the reigning World Champion and I wanted to win. But when I think back on that it was with zero training. I'm proud. Now this season, with the proper buildup with all these road miles, we will see. I feel there are some good things coming.

Do you feel the pressure of a meteoric rise from track racer winning world records to riding for the Trek-Livestrong team? I've read quotes saying you could be the next Armstrong. Do you feel like saying, 'Jeez, I've just started this sport three years ago!' Not really. I don't see myself as being new to the sport. I see myself as being a well-known name in this sport. What I want to bring is a lot of attention to this sport. I'm not really worried about this year, just curious about what will happen. This year is really only for developmental purposes for me. You can't really expect anyone to come up from the juniors and then start racing in the Tour de France and winning a stage so quickly. It's hard for people to know that just from hearing my name and reading about me. Last year I was a track racer, this year I'm going into road and seeing how everything works. I'm not promising any huge results, but I think we're going to have good time as a team and do some cool stuff because we have some good guys on the team. We'll see what happens. I had heard the next "Lance" or next "Who Ever" and I don't think that can be replicated. But I can do what I need to do. I like to put on a show and I think I can make a name for myself. It's going to take a couple of years but I think you can expect some good things. As for being the next Lance, I don't think that is possible, but I will be the best Taylor Phinney ever.

Being the best Taylor Phinney, what would be the best season you could have? My main goals for this year are the U23 Paris-Roubaix. Nationals (track) is not huge on my radar. I don't even know when nationals are. There's a stage race the Tour de l' Avenir which is a huge race for U23 riders. I have a choice between the Tour of Missouri or doing Tour de l' Avenir. We'll see. The tour of Missouri with Trek-Livestrong and Tour de l' Avenir with the national team. The Tour de l' Avenir is like the Tour de France for U23 riders. We'll see if I get selected for the national team for that. And then Worlds are in September and honestly I think just in the time trial I could do pretty well if I'm on the right form. I have a friend, Danny Somerville, who got seventh in the U23 Paris-Roubaix last year. We are pretty equal skill-wise and he'll be there with the VMG-Felt team. People have their doubts, people have expectations but really they will have to watch out.

You have a full season racing. As a professional cyclist you have to watch your lifestyle. You have to take care of yourself. Do you feel like you're missing anything for your age? Not really. I have seen



the nightlife of my friends who are between the ages of 18 and 22 and see what they do. It's nothing that I feel I am missing out on. We went to Austin and went to an 18-and-over club and we danced for an hour and a half straight. We're just dancing for the fun of dancing. You can have a good time without using some kind of substance. I was thinking during the off-season how fun it would be to be a ski bum or beach bum in the summer, but then I skied for two days straight, and I was so tired. I ski pretty hard and fast all the time. I don't think I can do that and party every night. That's something I'm just not capable of. Maybe it takes some kind of training. All I'm good at is riding my bike and maybe every other week going to the club and dancing.

Maybe "Dancing with the Stars" is in your future? I'd totally be down with that! I love that. I feel like I have two purposes on this earth. One is to race bikes and to entertain people by racing my bike and winning races. And the other is to just entertain and be a character that makes people laugh. I feel like I was born to entertain. If by chance my cycling career doesn't work out, then maybe I'll become one of those professional dancers on "Dancing with the Stars."

You mentioned skiing and only skiing fast. Becoming a professional dancer, not just dancing. It seems like things that you do you can't do casually. Is that just in you to do everything fast or go at it hard? I hate walking fast. That is one thing I can't do. I like to walk slowly. And I like to eat slowly and savor the food. When I went dancing and was pretty sure my heart rate was 160 beats a minute for

an hour and half straight. I don't know if it's just physical exercise or what. I actually ran for a semester in school and I wasn't that good. I guess I just hated running. Maybe I could have been good at running but I just can't stand being on my feet that long. That's why biking worked out. And there will be no IronMan in my future.

You and Lance are really into Twittering. Yeah, Lance is really a Twitter whore. He's way more into it than I am. I haven't updated my Twitter in two days.

Who can Twitter faster, you or Armstrong? Probably me. He was giving me crap about him being able to type faster on his Blackberry than I could on my iPhone. But we never really had a battle. Maybe that is something I will do with him in Santa Rosa (training camp) and I'll Twitter about it. I'm pretty sure I would win because you're asking me [laughing].

What are you looking forward to being on the Livestrong team? Having the association with Lance. I was never really friends with Lance. My parents were, but I was never close to him until now. He is an awesome guy. It is not just because he is Lance Armstrong, it's just the way he is. Being associated with him and his comeback is such a huge career move for me. I'm not using him for that, but it is definitely helpful. And being with Axel. I hung out with Axel in Austin and felt like I was talking to myself. I don't know if he thinks that I remind him of himself, but he reminds me of my myself in weird ways. That's just cool and I didn't know that until I got on the team. All the people that are in full team are so cool. I go down to Austin and hang out with people and I just love everyone there. It's something that I've never



experienced before. It's weird. I'm driving Lance's Suburban back to his house with a couple of teammates and I'm thinking, 'I love life right now!' That doesn't happen every day.

You have to pinch yourself? Kind of. I don't want to overthink it. I just let it flow and let it happen. And what is happening right now is pretty awesome. Sometimes I do that 'too cool my jets' thing and realize that it will not always be like this, so that's why I train and try to be the best I can be and not let people down. China took a lot out of me.

Mentally, physically? More mentally. It was not what I had planned on at all. It is such a different game there. You're not going to a bike race, you are going to the Olympics. It took me two months afterward to accept that and I did okay at the Olympics. Even now talking about it makes me uncomfortable. I don't know what it is. There were a lot of things that happened at the Olympics that were really stressful.

Like what? I broke up with my girlfriend right after the Olympics because of some things that happened at the Olympics. She was there with my family. And the whole mask thing that happened with the track riders (the American track riders wore masks over their mouths when they were disembarking at the Beijing airport due to air pollution. As a result the Americans received negative media attention as it was perceived as an insult to the Chinese and the effort they had done to correct the air pollution problem). I wasn't involved with that, but it set the whole team off. They were pretty down about it and when the whole team around you is depressed about something, it's not good for encouragement. I also wasn't as fit as I wanted to be. I really



don't know what I was doing still. It was tough, but I guess I have many more to come. It was a good learning experience.

In a weird way do you regret going to the Olympics? I don't regret going to the Olympics at all. I regret the weeks leading up to the Olympics and the way I prepared for the Olympics and the week before my race because I really didn't know what I was doing. It wasn't really my fault because it was my first year in track racing. And figuring out the pursuit is pretty hard. It's a horrible event!

Horrible in what sense? It is really painful and short but it is a long time for a track event to go around in circles. So just figuring out how to do that was pretty hard. I flew 100,000 miles last year and that that definitely took it out of me. There are a lot of things I now know that I don't need to do next time. I think we're going to have a really solid pursuit team in 2012.

I don't want to be beating you down with the Olympic questions. It's fine for me to talk about it. It helps to talk about it.

To get it off your chest? Yeah, to tell people about it. People say, 'Oh, the Olympics. That must have been awesome!' I'm not going to tell you that the Olympics sucked. The Olympics were awesome, but I'm not really proud of my Olympic experience.

Because of your performance? I wasn't as fit as I thought I was and also the media attention surrounding me. I had 24 people there watching the race. But I don't feel like I

will accept them saying that it was really exciting and they're proud of me. Well come on, I got seventh. That's not that great. I'm more disappointed in myself. It still haunts me to this day. It will take a while to get used to it.

You still have plenty of time and Olympics' in front of you. Yeah I know. People say you're only 18 and shouldn't worry about it. Yeah I'm only 18 but that doesn't mean I shouldn't be disappointed about it. I'm a professional athlete and not just an 18-year-old kid.

Do you feel the pressure of being a Phinney? Kind of. That's not the pressure that I feel from anyone else. It's only the pressure that I put on myself and my expectations to succeed. They're pretty high. I think that will help me in the future once I figure out how to do this pursuing thing. I'm still learning what I need to do and how to train for it. I did a huge track training block in France for China for a month. I didn't do so well in China. I took two weeks off and basically did base miles leading up to track nationals. At track nationals I went faster wattage-wise than I did in China and I didn't touch the track once since China. So I'm still figuring out how to do this. By 2012 they should have this locked down. Hopefully by 2012 with the camps we're doing here and Lance, maybe we'll get more interest in track racing and get some decent funding.

Speaking of track riding, before Lance retired there was talk of him doing the Hour Record. Do you have any insight on Lance or even yourself doing the Hour Record? All I can say is the Hour Record would suck! It would be so hard. But there is some

