



## **MAY 12: QUOTES FROM THE 2017 AMGEN TOUR OF CALIFORNIA KICKOFF PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Kristin Klein, President, Amgen Tour of California / Executive Vice President, AEG Sports**

“There is so much to celebrate this year – we started as a small but determined team with a big dream in 2006....This year all of us are very proud of what we have accomplished. Now we’re celebrating what we’ve all worked so hard to build. We’re excited to be back in Sacramento where some of the most memorable race moments have happened in the shadow of the Capitol Building.”

**Mike Sophia, Director, Sacramento Sports Commission**

“We love having the tour in Sacramento. It’s one of the events that connects with our community in a really significant way – Sacramento and the entire region is cycling crazy, and you can tell by the thousands of people that will be out on the course on Saturday and Sunday.”

**Lachlan Morton (Australia), Team Dimension Data**

*(On being back at the Amgen Tour of California with a WorldTour team):* “Obviously being back in the WorldTour is totally different [than last year when he raced on a UCI Continental team Jelly Belly p/b Maxxis] but it’s the same race, and I’ve been lucky enough to do this race three or four times now, and it’s always a highlight of the year.... I’m just excited to be back at it.”

**Elia Viviani (Italy), Team Sky**

“We are here...and I have never won in the [Amgen] Tour of California before so I hope this is a good chance to take the first.”

*(On chances for stage wins):* The best chance is the first stage, Stage 3 and Stage 7. I think for Stage 4 we need to look at the course before we decide if it’s a sprint or not. I think we are here with a really strong team for the sprints... At the moment we are really focused on Stage 1.”

*(On winning gold at the Olympic Games):* The country [Italy] won only eight gold medals, and I am one of those gold... When you win one cycling race, all the fans know you because they are fans of cycling; when you win the Olympics, all of Italy is behind the screen to be fans of the Italian rider. After the Olympics, my life changed, and also in my head I was ready to level up...”

**Evan Huffman (Roseville, Calif.), Rally Cycling**

*(On his recent Tour of the Gila win):* I’ve done Gila many times since I first started racing as a U23 guy, and it’s always been one of the hardest races on the domestic circuit so it was super

exciting to win the GC there... I'm excited to hopefully keep the good form rolling through this race."

*(On the team this year):* "We've had our core group of eight guys...everyone's working well together, everyone's super fit...last year I was second on the stage here but so was Adam de Vos. Everyone's really strong so hopefully we can play off each other and look for multiple opportunities."

*(On his time trial chances):* "That was how I won the GC in Gila was at the time trial – I'm time trialing good or better than I ever have, so I'm definitely looking forward to Stage 6 [at Big Bear Lake]."

### **Lawson Craddock (Austin, Texas), Cannondale-Drpac Pro Cycling Team**

"I feel like I'm a vet here almost, which is really exciting for me – I love coming back to this race... racing on American soil... on a WorldTour American team. I love this race, it almost feels like my home race, and every year I put it on my calendar to come back."

*(On his most memorable Amgen Tour of California moments):* "Every year you walk away with unique experiences...being on the podium here in 2014 was huge for me. I feel like I was able to take a step in my career...I love coming back to this race for the sole reason to make new memories, and that's the plan for this week as well."

*(On cycling in America and the next generation):* "I think it's a really exciting time to be an American in the sport... I think it's truly incredible to see how far the sport has come in America. Being a part of the group of young Americans that have helped bring it to that level has been really exciting."

### **Brent Bookwalter (Albuquerque, NM), BMC Racing Team**

*(On the 2017 Amgen Tour of California route):* "On paper Baldy is super decisive and the Big Bear Lake time trial is definitely really decisive too... but as we've seen at the Amgen Tour of California in years past, the race can turn on its head just about any day, and I think they did a great job with the route this year, got some dynamic stages in the first few days.... Especially Stage 2 in San Jose definitely could throw us a curve ball."

### **Rafal Majka (Poland), BORA-hansgrohe**

"Actually it was very nice [commenting on the altitude] and I remember my first year I came to [the Amgen] Tour of California in 2011. This year I also I wanted to come back. I like this weather – it's very warm and it should be very nice to race here. We see now it's a WorldTour race and for sure is becoming harder."

"We are happy and also we have Peter [Sagan] here – we want to try to win a stage and also we want to try to win the GC."

### **Travis McCabe (Prescott, Ariz.), UnitedHealthcare Pro Cycling**

*(On the Amgen Tour of California):* “For us it’s one of the biggest races we do all year, especially now that it’s a WorldTour race, it gives the team the opportunity to present itself and we’re able to show what we’re capable of doing... Especially being in the U.S. and being able to race at a world level. We’re coming in here to do pretty much all that we can.”

*(On his chances for this week):* “I think my best bet might be Pismo Beach, but I’m kinda just there to see what happens, and there is not really a lot of stress on me because I have all of these big hitters here...so we’ll just see what happens.”

**John Degenkolb (Germany), Trek-Segafredo**

*(On the Amgen Tour of California):* “For me it’s always a great race in the season because it’s kind of different than all of the races... it’s a little bit of a relaxed atmosphere and gives a good recharging of the batteries for what’s coming afterwards [Tour de France]. It’s nice to stay in the U.S. and enjoy the lifestyle and enjoy the atmosphere.”

“It is a big event for the whole team and we are here to fight for the victories on the stages but, also I think we have some outsiders for the GC who are capable to make a good result after next week.”

*(On the team’s two young U.S. riders Gregory Daniel and Kiel Reijnen):* “For me it’s always great to see how motivated they are in their own country – it’s something different when they can have the opportunity to race, especially now on the WorldTour level in their own country. It’s something that’s special for them and makes them even stronger than under normal circumstances. It’s great to have two American riders now on the team.”

**Marcel Kittel (Germany), Quick-Step Floors**

*(On the state of cycling in America):* “I think the people in the U.S. are very interested in sports in general, and you could see with everything that was going on in American cycling, all the success American cycling had, it also brought interest from the U.S. to Europe. When I was in Colorado last week I was really impressed how many people were on the bike there. It’s really cool to see... For sure cycling in the U.S. is very, very big.”

*(On his form coming into the race):* “I did some training on altitude and I’m looking forward now to the race because it’s nice, and it has a nice sprint at beginning, so I want to go for that.”

*(On the strength of the field and preparation for the Tour de France):* “I think with this field when you get a victory here you can be very confident for the following weeks.”

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**Alexander Kristoff (Norway), Team KATUSHA ALPECIN**

*(On what is his California dream):* “I always look forward to the sunshine...”

**Peter Sagan (Slovakia), BORA-hansgrohe**

*(On his new BORA-hansgrohe team):* “It’s a really good team and they grow up pretty fast... I am very satisfied with the team.”

*(On the Amgen Tour of California):* “It’s important because it’s a very nice race, the organization is very good... I can prepare myself very well in America. I stay here [the U.S.] also after the Tour of California [has trained in Lake Tahoe and Utah].I just like to be here, and it’s a good atmosphere, good weather.”

*(On expectations to contend for the GC this week):* “Everything is possible. But we have to see day by day how the race is going.”

*(On what his first Amgen Tour of California meant when he was 19):* “Memories. I was very happy to be in America for the first time... Nice people, very good atmosphere.”

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### **Taylor Phinney (Boulder, Colo.; Los Angeles, Calif.), Cannondale-Drpac Pro Cycling Team**

*(On the Amgen Tour of California):* “I deeply appreciate that this event exists and that we are all able to come here and race our bike in California and be supported by such a great staff.”

“It’s easy to have fun at this race [Amgen Tour of California]. The level is increasing every year. I think we have a strong team, I think that Andrew Talansky is feeling good, looking good...he’s got such a fire, such a passion he can tap into” [the two last raced for the same team in 2011].

*(On his new Cannondale-Drpac team):* “I’m really liking being in green... I really love the riders and the staff.... Every team is so different and so unique and has their own weird eccentricities and ways they do things, and it’s cool to add a second perspective to professional cycling.”

### **About the Amgen Tour of California**

The Amgen Tour of California is a Tour de France-style cycling road race created and presented by AEG that challenges the world's top professional cycling teams to compete along a demanding course that traverses hundreds of miles of California's iconic highways, byways and coastlines each spring. The teams chosen to participate have included Olympic medalists, Tour de France contenders and World Champions. More information is available at [amgentourofcalifornia.com](http://amgentourofcalifornia.com).

The first-ever U.S. UCI WorldTour course will cover more than 583 miles through 12 Host Cities May 14-20, including Sacramento, Modesto, San Jose, Pismo Beach, Morro Bay, Santa Barbara, Santa Clarita, Ontario, Mt. Baldy, Big Bear Lake, Mountain High and Pasadena. The Amgen *Breakaway from Heart Disease*<sup>™</sup> Women's Race empowered with SRAM May 11-14 will cover 256.6 miles through South Lake Tahoe, Elk Grove and Sacramento, concluding as the men's race gets underway.