

My story

Monday, 09 February 2009

I started riding bicycles in 1982, at the age of eight, the year that Ángel Arroyo won the Tour of Spain “Vuelta España”. At first, cycling was only a pastime for me, for I also enjoyed other physical activities such as gymnastics and soccer. Soon I realized that I was good at cycling, and this in turn increased my dedication to it. I began to love and enjoy it more than all my other activities and I began to set my eyes on the future as a cyclist.

In retrospect, I was fortunate to be influenced by a chain of accomplished cyclists, beginning with Ángel Arroyo, and followed by Francisco Ignacio San Román, who actually lived at my parents’ house during his military service, and for whom I have a great affection and personal regard. At the beginning of my professional career José M^a Jiménez “El Chava” also helped me a lot. Eventually, through their influences and my dedication I was able to break out on my own and become a part of the difficult and complicated world of professional cycling.

In addition to the great cyclists above, in whose footsteps I aspired to follow, there were other important people in my personal and professional life who influenced and helped me to understand the necessary standards of work and sacrifice to become what I am today. First and foremost, I must mention my father Víctor Sastre. It was my father who introduced me to the sport of cycling and taught me that it was a means to my mental and physical development.

My father established the Cycling School of the Barraco “Escuela de Ciclismo de El Barraco” in Ávila, Spain, to provide a positive influence to the children of Avila who were sometimes beset by the negative influences of drugs and violence.

His advice, support, and guidance inspired me and others to commence to practice this sport. This I did until I had reached the rank of amateur.

My ability discovered; my father eventually guided me to one of the best cyclist trainers in Spain, José Luis Pascua. I trained under Jose for three years and refined my cycling skills so much that in a period of three years I was able to reach the rank of professional cyclist.

My transition from an amateur to a professional cyclist wasn’t easy in the beginning, for I had to adapt and learn the hard task of being an assistant “gregario” to the leader of the bicycle team.

I had great team leaders such as, Laurent Jalabert, Abraham Olano and Joseba Beloki. In time I learned the strategies that the leaders needed from their team members during the race and at the end of each race. The understanding that I too would someday become a leader drove me. I want to thank the leaders and team members for helping me to understand the elements of being a team member. On a more personal level I want to thank my wife Piedad who was able to understand the sacrifice and necessity of training to a professional athlete.

She has always been patient and supportive of my efforts and desire to compete. So, my father, and my family, to Francisco Ignacio San Román, to Jose Pascua, my former team leaders Laurent Jalabert, Abraham Olano and Joseba Beloki: I must thank you for your support in my bid to become and continue as a professional cyclist.

In time I signed up with Bjarne Riis, former winner of a Tour de France, and manager of CSC Tiscali team. At times I had to forgo for my friend and teammate Tyler Hamilton, however I had much more freedom to accomplish my own objectives. This change in team has brought a different perspective of my career, so that I can continue pursuing my childhood dreams.