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## SPORTS

July 19, 2005

### TOUR DE FRANCE

## Cancer survivor eager to cheer on Armstrong

Cyclist Cindi Hart heads to France to encourage man who provided inspiration.

By **Matthew Glenesk**  
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As far as Indianapolis cyclist Cindi Hart knew, she was perfectly healthy. She didn't smoke or drink. She exercised more than regularly. So the news last year that she had invasive and aggressive breast cancer requiring immediate treatment came as a complete shock.

"I walked around for a couple of days going in my head, 'I have breast cancer.' I couldn't believe it," she said.

A champion cyclist and speed skater, Hart, who turns 43 Thursday, drew inspiration from another cancer survivor -- six-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong.

"Last summer, when I was in the midst of going through chemotherapy and my hair was falling out and I was sick, being able to see Lance ride and win his sixth Tour de France on TV, I was ready to do cartwheels in the living room," Hart said.

A year later and cancer-free, Hart has been given the opportunity to cheer her hero in person as he attempts to capture a seventh Tour de France title this weekend.

The Discovery Channel, Armstrong's team sponsor, chose Hart as one of four cancer survivors to travel to Paris as part of a one-hour "Lance's



Back on track: Cindi Hart of Indianapolis has become more dedicated to competing since her treatment for breast cancer. -- Gary Schmitt / For The Star

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Army" special that is scheduled to air in September on The Discovery Travel Channel. The channel learned of Hart through a news release from the IU School of Medicine, in which her surgeon, Robert Goulet Jr., said, "Cindi Hart is to breast cancer what Lance Armstrong is to testicular cancer."

Hart leaves today with her husband of 15 years, Ken, and their 10-year-old daughter, Madison.

Hart calls it a dream come true. During her chemotherapy treatment, Hart watched a television program about the Make-A-Wish Foundation and knew what her wish would be if her illness progressed to terminal.

"It took me all of two seconds," she said.

"I wanted to take my family to France and watch the Tour. And so by this coming up in my life, it's a blessing -- an answer to a prayer."

### Similar goals

Diagnosed with breast cancer on May 19, 2004, Hart turned to the IU Cancer Center for treatment. That facility treated Armstrong for advanced testicular cancer in 1996.

"We fixed Lance," Hart's oncologist, Kathy Miller, told her. "We'll fix you."

That was all Hart needed to hear. She yearned to ride and compete despite the cancer and subsequent chemotherapy.

"I sat in the physician's office and I realized it was important to me that I was an athlete," Hart said. Competing "was extremely important for me to maintain my focus and my identity."

Said Miller: "Our goal was to allow her to keep cycling for the rest of her life. We wanted to get her back out there as soon as possible."

Hart began chemotherapy in June 2004.

Two days after her second round of treatment, she won a track cycling gold medal in statewide competition. Three days after her third round, she captained the winning team of a 17-mile time trial in Ohio.

Eighteen days after her final session, she won a national racing title.

A week later, she underwent a mastectomy.

"I gave up my hair. I gave up my breast. I gave up my fingernails and my sense of taste, but one of the things I was willing to fight for was the ability to continue being an athlete," Hart said.

With her hair grown back and surgical reconstruction of her breasts, Hart looks similar to how she did before her illness.

During her treatment, Hart's mother, Sydney Pfaff, moved from Ohio to Indianapolis to take care of Madison and the Harts' Northwestside home. That allowed Hart to focus on treatment and training.

"I've seen so many quotes where they say, 'Cancer made me stronger.' Cancer didn't make me stronger. Cancer tried to kill me!" Hart said. "It's

people that made me stronger. My family, friends and physicians, not cancer."

On Sunday, when Armstrong nears the finish line at the Champs-Elysees, Hart will be waiting, family in tow, with words of encouragement for a man who has provided her with so much:

"Come on, Lance! You beat cancer; you can beat them."

**Call Star reporter Matthew Glenesk at (317) 444-6492.**

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