

BOND OF BROTHERS

LAST YEAR'S TOUR WAS FAMOUSLY FILLED WITH ANGER, PAIN, AND HEARTBREAK FOR THE SCHLECK BROTHERS. BUT THEY'RE NOT MAD ANYMORE. NOW IT'S ALL ABOUT GETTING EVEN.

Beloved Tour veteran and BICYCLING columnist Jens Voigt sat down with Luxembourgian brothers Fränk and Andy Schleck this past April in northern Spain the day before they were set to race the Tour of the Basque Country. In this BICYCLING exclusive, the Leopard-Trek teammates talk openly about childhood dreams, sibling rivalries, and bitter betrayals—and offer candid insights into what it might take for Andy to roll through Paris in yellow after two straight second-place finishes.



FRÄNK (LEFT) AND ANDY AT THE AMSTEL GOLD RACE IN THE NETHERLANDS, APRIL 17, 2011

JENS VOIGT What was it like growing up in a cycling family? Did you try other sports?

FRÄNK SCHLECK We played soccer, ice hockey, tennis. But with my father's past as a professional cyclist, there was always cycling. [Johnny Schleck raced professionally from 1965 to 1974, seven times in the Tour de France.] Our older brother [Steve, now a politician in Luxembourg] was racing, so every weekend we would go to the races. We'd get mad at him if he got dropped or even if he got second or third. So we definitely were keen on cycling. And Dad had these old boxes in the basement of magazines from the old days. I would catch myself sneaking down there to look through them.

JENS Andy, was it hard or complicated to grow up with older brothers?

ANDY SCHLECK Having two older brothers to protect me in school was easier than growing up alone. And you always look up to them. When they bring the first girlfriend home, you see yourself in five years' time.

JENS And Fränk helped you get your first professional contract?

FRÄNK After Andy won La Fleche Sud [in 2004], Bjarne Riis [Fränk's manager at CSC] told me that he would like to give Andy a tryout at the end of the season. So he made his own way.

ANDY Seriously, of course it was a help having Fränk. Bjarne could see Fränk developing. But still Bjarne says to me, "I'll



give you a tryout, but I want to see you racing." And he put me into five really hard Italian races at the end of the season. But at the end of the first race he said, "Yeah, I think you can race with the professionals next year." So it happened quickly.

JENS Those are hard races, even for us today. That was a sink-or-swim approach. You two are so close that you can barely fit a piece of paper between you. Fränk, what was it like the first time your brother passed you and dropped you in a race?

FRÄNK I knew that Andy had talent and was going to be a good rider. So I just said to myself, "Okay, now I'll work for him." But I never really thought, Wow, he's dropped me.

ANDY Well, you do in training sometimes!

FRÄNK (smiles) The first time I really was stunned was when he got second in the Giro [in 2007]. Then everybody was talking about Andy. All of a sudden I had become Fränk, the older brother of Andy. It had always been the other way around. That was a shock, but we laughed. And he doesn't drop me all the time.

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JENS Fränk, you had a unique opportunity

AT THE TEAM HOTEL ON APRIL 3, 2011, THE DAY BEFORE THE TOUR OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY, AZPEITIA, SPAIN.

to win the Tour in 2008. You were wearing the yellow jersey on the stage that finished on the Alpe d'Huez, but instead it was our [then] teammate Carlos Sastre who attacked and eventually won the Tour. How do you feel looking back on it today?

ANDY I can answer that. We definitely lost an opportunity and we could see it the moment he went away. But we were loyal. For me, at the time, it had always been a childhood dream to be in the team that wins the Tour. I had never really pictured myself winning it all. And I don't even think Fränk saw himself winning the Tour even though he had won a stage and was in yellow. So at the time, even when the Tour finished in Paris, we were happy.

But what was really hard were the comments that Carlos made afterward, after he announced that he had changed teams. I think he had a problem, some voice telling him something, because anybody that knows cycling, even just a little bit, saw that we were riding our asses off for him and sacrificing everything for him.

JENS I know. I was there.

ANDY And Carlos knows that he would not have won the Tour without Fränk and me. So to say that we were riding against him, that was a big punch in the face for Fränk and me. I mean, he gave a little present to everybody on the team except Fränk and me.

FRÄNK Going into the Alpe d'Huez, I had yellow and Andy was sacrificing himself like he had on all the stages. And on that

KNOW YOUR SCHLECK BROTHER by Emily Furia

ANDY, 26

TWITTER FOLLOWERS 134,278 (and counting)

HEIGHT 6-foot-1

BEST TDF FINISH 2nd (2009 and 2010)

TDF STAGE WINS 2 (in 2010)

BAD-BOY MOMENT Kicked out of the 2010 Vuelta a España by his then-director Bjarne Riis after enjoying a late-night beer (or few) with teammate Stuart O'Grady.

TABLOID CLAIM TO FAME When he was involved in a car accident, a Luxembourgian radio station offered free concert tickets to any witness who would send pictures.

NEVER RACES WITHOUT His cross necklace



FRÄNK, 31

TWITTER FOLLOWERS 66,666 (and counting)

HEIGHT 6-foot-1

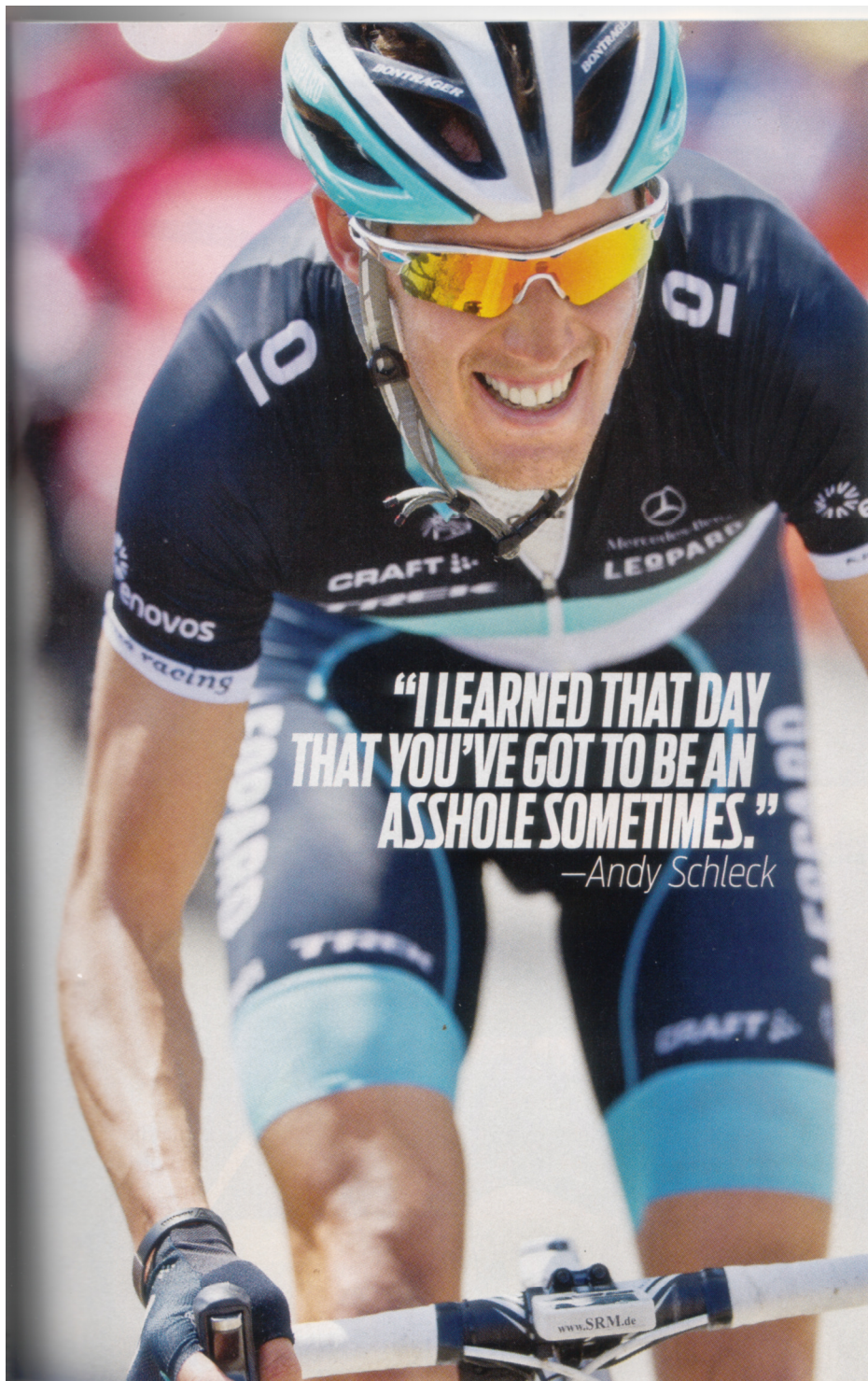
BEST TDF FINISH 5th (2009)

TDF STAGE WINS 2 (one each in 2006 and 2009)

BAD-BOY MOMENT 2011 Criterium International win investigated after he rode with a CamelBak strapped to his belly. Rumors that he was merely paying homage to Jan Ullrich could not be confirmed.

TABLOID CLAIM TO FAME Had surgery—and eight stitches—in late 2009 after being bitten by a poisonous fish

NEVER RACES WITHOUT His guardian-angel medallion



**"I LEARNED THAT DAY
THAT YOU'VE GOT TO BE AN
ASSHOLE SOMETIMES."**

—Andy Schleck

day we really sacrificed. Andy gave up the white jersey as best young rider and I gave up the yellow jersey. I mean, how often do you see a teammate attack the yellow jersey? Now, I am not saying that I would have won the Tour de France, but yes we lost an opportunity. Again, I was very happy that we won the Tour de France and it showed that, as a team, we did the right thing. But now I wish that somebody else had won the Tour that year.

ANDY Let's put it this way. If we had known his thoughts, we would have done

JENS Yeah, but it is true, it seemed to be our best solution to win the Tour at the time. At that point, to get Carlos in yellow before the final time trial just seemed to be the best option.

ANDY Yeah, it did. But we don't know. Fränk and me were going up the Alpe d'Huez, well I wouldn't say easily, but we were not on the limit. Maybe we could have gone away and we don't know how the Tour would have finished. In the end, it was good for the team. I was happy in Paris. But we were not happy with the announcements

in the Tour. Fränk is my brother. I'm close to all of the guys, but with him I am even closer. But regardless, we always ride for the team.

FRÄNK So it is just sad that he never thanked us afterward.

JENS Andy, what about that stupid chain drop in the Tour last year [when Alberto Contador attacked on the Port de Bales and ultimately took the yellow jersey from Andy]? People still ask me about my crash in the Tour two years ago. It's one of those things that stays with me, and I bet the chain drop will be one of the things that stays with you for the rest of your career—

ANDY Or my life, really.

JENS How did the events of that day change you? Did you learn anything?

ANDY Well, I learned from Alberto's action to attack when a rival drops a chain. I mean, you've never seen that before from a big champion. Armstrong waited for Ullrich when he fell in a ditch [in the 2001 Tour], and Hamilton and Ullrich waited for Armstrong when he crashed on Luz-Ardiden [in 2003]. So what can I say? I learned that day that you've got to be an asshole sometimes. And if the same thing happens to certain riders in the future, I won't wait. You can forgive someone, but I won't forget that he attacked while I was standing there with a mechanical.

FRÄNK Yeah, but that's not the way you are. Okay, you might not wait for Alberto this year. But if it is me?

JENS Well, then Andy would just fall off his bike because he is laughing so hard!

FRÄNK Yeah, but you would have waited for him.

ANDY Sure, or at least I would have kept riding at the same speed. But I would not have attacked. Many riders, big riders, told me afterward, "Don't let him off the hook so quick." But I just wanted to get it out of the way.

Alberto came to me the next day to apologize and I said, "Yeah, but you have the yellow jersey now. It was supposed to be on my shoulders." He said, "I know, but I was under so much pressure and stress." And I just said, "I know. We're okay. I forgive you. But I don't forget." **B**