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Anti-doping in Triathlon



Most people are familiar with the concept of doping and cheating in sport, it is an unfortunate side effect of competitive sport. Over recent decades there has been widespread abuse in several sports including cycling and athletics and this has been reported on widely. Most sports like to think that it does not affect them, but is there an issue in Triathlon?

Doping in Triathlon?

All Anti-doping rule violations (ADRVs) are listed on the WADA website. A cursory look shows that between 2004 and 2015 there have been at least 28 ADRVs for triathletes. The majority have ended with the athlete receiving a ban, which has on average been for 2 years.

Elite

Of the 28 ADRVs, twenty-two of these were by Elite athletes. So, it becomes clear that there is an issue within Triathlon, which is unfortunately not to surprising, given the issues that sister sports of cycling and athletics have suffered.

Age Group

Age-group has become a highly competitive area of the sport, with many athletes having high disposable incomes and the motivation to do well at Age Group world championships, or qualifying for other prestigious world championships. Whilst there were no recorded non-elite ADRVs before 2012, more recently the majority of ADRVs have come from age group sport, with 4 positive tests in 2015. It is not clear if doping has always been present in age-group triathlon, but increases in testing of age-group in recent years has shown that there is an issue in the age group sport.

Two pieces of research seem to back this up, with 13-15% of German recreational athletes admitting to taking what they believed to be performance enhancing drugs. ^[1,2]

Likelihood of testing

Many individuals assume that only Elite athletes are tested, however this is not the case, and there are many age groupers who now are tested. Additionally, under [WTC Ironman rules](#), age groupers may be tested by the WTC Anti-Doping Programme, this testing can occur between the time from entering a race until three months after the event. [Ironman Anti-Doping Rules Version 5.0 March 2015, page 4 item C].

References:

Lollies, F. (2014). Prevalence & determinants of doping in recreative triathlon. Master research paper.

Dietz, P., et al (2013). Associations between physical and cognitive doping – A cross-sectional study in 2,997 triathletes. www.plosone.org

Agencies

World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)

WADA's mission is to lead a collaborative worldwide movement for doping-free sport. WADA was established in 1999 as an international independent agency composed and funded equally by the sport movement and governments of the world. Its key activities include scientific research, education, development of anti-doping capacities, and monitoring of the [World Anti Doping Code \(Code\)](#) – the document harmonizing anti-doping policies in all sports and all countries.

National Federation Anti-Doping

India has their own anti-doping agencies - <https://www.nadaindia.org/> which is working in line and with WADA.

Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRV)

Often the perception is doping is concerned only with injecting or taking certain drugs that enhance performance, and indeed this is a large part of the issue. However, there are a number of other Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs) that athletes, coaches and team managers can fall foul of.

These include:

- The presence of a prohibited substance or its metabolites or markers in an athlete's sample.
- Use or attempted use by an athlete of a prohibited substance or a prohibited method.
- Evading, refusing, or failing to submit to sample collection.
- Whereabouts failures: any combination of three missed tests and/or filing failures within a 12-month period by an athlete in a registered testing pool.
- Tampering or attempted tampering with any part of doping control.
- Possession of a prohibited substance or prohibited method.
- Trafficking or attempted trafficking in any prohibited substance or prohibited method.
- Administration or attempted administration to any athlete in-competition of any prohibited method or prohibited substance, or administration or attempted administration to any athlete out-of-competition of any prohibited method or any prohibited substance that is prohibited out-of-competition.
- Complicity: assisting, encouraging, aiding, abetting, conspiring, covering up or any other type of intentional complicity involving an ADRV or any attempted ADRV.
- Prohibited Association: associating with a person such as a coach, doctor or physio who has been found guilty of a criminal or disciplinary offence equivalent to a doping violation.

[Source: UKAD Website](#)

The following sections provide general guidance for coaches on how to avoid falling foul of certain rules, which could cause issues through lack of knowledge or naivety.

Therapeutic Use Exemption (T.U.E.)

The Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) process is a means by which an athlete can obtain approval to use a prescribed prohibited substance or method for the treatment of a legitimate medical condition.

If the medication required by an athlete is prohibited, athletes should check with their prescribing physician or the sport's medical personnel to see if there are any alternative medications or treatments that are permitted.

If there are no permitted alternatives, athletes should contact their National Governing Body (NGB) or follow the guidance on the WADA website to find out what type of exemption is required and if a TUE should be applied for prior to use or after doping control.

Only in emergency situations should treatment begin without the necessary approval.

Coaches should be aware of this requirement and may be able to help athletes through the process.

Whereabouts



Whereabouts is a system designed to support testing programmes. The system allows testing agencies to know the location of all registered athletes for a 60-minute period every day. This aids agencies to track down and test athletes.

Only athletes who have been selected for the National Registered Testing Pool (NRTP) or International Registered Testing Pool (IRTP) are bound by the whereabouts rule. This usually only applies to elite athletes on performance programmes. Athletes nominated for inclusion in the NRTP or IRTP will be notified by their National Governing Body (NGB) or their International Federation.

Make sure that you know if any of the athletes you work with are part of the NRTP or the IRTP. If they are, it is advised that you ask when their designated 60-minute slot is, so you can ensure that they do not risk a missed test. Any combination of three missed tests or Whereabouts filing failures in a 12-month period is an Anti-Doping Rule Violation.

The whereabouts programme makes use of a system called Anti-Doping Administration and Management System (ADAMS).

Supplements

In modern sport, many athletes take supplements to aid their training. The vast majority is done in good faith and with no intention of cheating. Supplements range from sports drinks to aid performance while training and racing, recovery supplements to aid recovery post activity and health supplements, such as vitamin and mineral tablets aimed at maintaining general health.

There are predominantly potentially two issues with supplements of any kind:

- Unscrupulous or naive manufacturers produce a supplement which has banned substances contained within it.
- A product can be made, which on its own has no negative ingredients, but it is made on a production line which has been used to make another product which may contain a banned substance. This need not be under-hand in anyway, many medical products contained banned substances, e.g. Erythropoietin (EPO) is used to treat Anaemia related to kidney disease.

Informed Sport

Informed Sport is a private company, LGC, based in the UK and USA that has been manufacturing and testing products for many years. It has been testing supplements since 2002 and was granted international certification in 2008.

The certification was granted by the UK Accreditation Services and is referenced as ISO 17025 and is deemed as the gold standard within the industry. All WADA samples need to be analysed to ISO 17025 standard.

It was a WADA accredited lab where it analysed samples but in order to maintain its independence it withdrew from the WADA testing lab scheme in 2007.

The main point for Sports Coaches is that athletes need to check their supplements via Informed Sport. So, for athletes to avoid supplement based Anti-Doping Rule Violation (ADRV) they need to show due diligence and prove they have checked their supplements via Informed Sport.

For non-elite athletes, it may be prohibitively difficult to obtain guarantees that their supplement batch has been tested, however for coaches they should at least be aware, and only consider recommending products that are submitted to informed sport for testing.

Link: [Informed Sport Website](#)

Impact on Athletes and Coaches

Many coaches and athletes rightly believe that cheating in sport is unacceptable. There is a misconception that all ADRVs are a result of deliberate and proactive attempts to cheat.

There are many examples of athletes who have fallen foul of the rules because of a lack of knowledge or naivety. The following two stories highlight the impact this can have on the player, their families, and new rules mean that coaches can be implicated for the results of testing of their athletes, meaning the consequences can affect a wide range of people related to the athlete.

Ian Sibbet Story (UKAD)

Adam Dean Story

A video in which rugby player Adam Dean talks to UK Anti-Doping about the consequences of taking a nutritional supplement which led to a positive test result.

Watch the video on the [UKAD website](#).

Implications for Coaches

Coaches are in an important position with regard to anti-doping, they are able to set the ethical standard by which their athletes are likely to abide by. Additionally, coaches should make it their responsibility to understand the rules regarding anti-doping and help educate their athletes, parents and support staff to ensure that issues don't occur.

There have been several research studies that have shown the value of the coach in clean sport, some of the key findings include:

- Coaches are the main influence on an athletes' attitude to doping ^[1, 3].
- Education of an athlete at a young age (< 20) is key ^[1, 3, 4].
- 33% of athletes have had no education around Clean Sport or Anti-Doping ^[1, 4].
- 75% of athletes want information on supplements ^[1].
- Athlete support personnel need to be educated in Clean Sport/Anti-Doping ^[1].
- Approximately 19% of parents had no knowledge or education around doping ^[2].

It therefore seems clear that coaches have an important part to play in clean sport and should take a proactive lead and inspire others in the fight against doping. The following WADA video explains the need for a wider cohesive approach in sport; coaches are a key part of this plan.

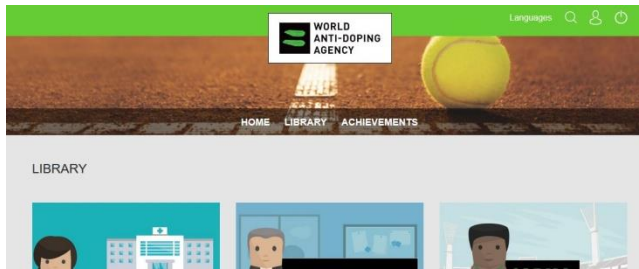
Parents

As well as ensuring their own understanding and that of their athletes to anti-doping coaches can also help parents support athletes. WADA have provided guidance that is appropriate for parents, which coaches could share with the parents of athletes they are involved with. [WADA Parents guide](#).

References:

1. Morente-Sanchez, J., & Zabala, M. (2013). Doping in Sport: A review of elite athletes' attitudes, beliefs and knowledge. *Journal of Sports Medicine*, S40279, pp 13-37.
2. Blank, C., Leichtfried, V., Scaiter, R., Furhapter, C., Muller, D., & Schobersberger, W. (2015). Doping in sports: Knowledge and attitudes among parents of Austrian junior athletes. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sport*. 25, pp. 116-124.
3. Morente-Sanchez, J., Leruite, M., Mateo-March, M., & Zabala, M. (2013). Attitudes towards doping in Spanish competitive female Cyclists-vs.-Triathletes. *Journal of Science and Cycling*. 2(2), pp. 40-48.
4. Johnson, J., Butryn, T., & Masucci, M. A. (2013). A focus group analysis of the US and Canadian female triathletes' knowledge of doping. *Sport in Society*, 16(5), pp. 654-671.

Develop your Knowledge



This section has provided a brief overview of the rules regarding anti-doping that may affect athletes competing domestically and internationally. More information can be found at the [WADA](#) website.

WADA provides free online interactive training and ITU requires all coaches to undertake this training to enhance their knowledge in this area. This is a separate task within the ITU Coaching Course.

WADA also has a [specific Library section](#) which has a range of useful information, please take a look. Note the coaching specific information is towards the bottom of the page so ensure you scroll down.

Working with Athletes

A key role of coaches in the fight against doping is to educate athletes, other coaches, parents and all involved in the sport, about the issues and be a role model in the fight against doping. WADA has provided a toolkit for coaches to help them get this message across to individuals and can be used by coaches. It provides lots of ideas of practical tasks coaches can undertake to help.

Follow this link to be able to download the WADA PDF document for coaches:

[WADA Coaches Toolkit](#)

Guiding and Supporting Athletes

In addition to educating athletes, coaches should be able to support athletes who are asked to undertake an anti-doping test. The following video by Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority shows the doping control process from the perspective of the athlete, highlighting key points.

Coaches should ensure that both they and their athletes are aware of the process and their rights. The coach may also perform the role of the chaperone.