THE LANCE ARMSTRONG CASE
AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SPORT
(9TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “SPORT AND QUALITY OF LIFE”, BRNO, MASARYK UNIVERSITY, NOVEMBER 7TH–8TH 2013)

AUTHOR: MICHAL POLÁK, EDUCATION MANAGER
CZECH ANTI-DOPING COMMITTEE, ZA CÍSAŘSKÝM MLÝNEM 1063/5, 170 00 PRAGUE 7 – BUBENEČ, CZECH REPUBLIC
CONTACT: POLAK@ANTIDOPING.CZ
A. INTRODUCTION

“USADA has shown that no-one is above the rules of sport, that no-one – no matter how well connected or powerful they seem to be – is beyond the reach of the world’s anti-doping authorities,” the Hon. John Fahey, WADA President, March 2013.

On 22 October, 2012, the UCI accepted the USADA findings and formally stripped Lance Armstrong of his seven Tour de France titles.

Public is disappointed that such a well-known athlete managed to get away with cheating for so long, but the case has also shown the increasing effectiveness of non-analytical anti-doping investigations.
B. METHODS

The World Anti-Doping Code specifies that doping can be proved by “any reliable means”. There were a number of strands to the evidence presented by USADA:

- Sworn statements from professional cyclists
- Banking and accounting records
- Email communications
- Laboratory tests results and expert analysis
C. RESULTS

1. Sworn statements

Sworn statements were presented from more than two dozen witnesses, including 15 professional cyclists.

2. Banking and accounting records

Banking and accounting records were from a Swiss company controlled by Doctor Michele Ferrari, a member of the US Postal Service team, reflecting more than one million US dollars in payments by Armstrong.

3. Email communications

Email communication between Dr Ferrari and his son and Armstrong.
4. Laboratory test results

The Reasoned Decision report stated that the core of USADA’s case was witness testimony and documentary evidence. Samples from the 1999 Tour de France

A validated test for Erythropoietin (EPO) was not available prior to 2000.

In 2004, the French Anti-Doping Laboratory conducted a research project on stored urine samples from 1999 Tour de France, including a retrospective analysis of EPO use.

USADA’s Reasoned Decision concluded that “while French Anti-Doping Laboratory’s analysis of the 1999 samples may not stand alone to establish a positive test under the Code, the analysis is consistent with and corroborates the numerous written statements recently obtained by USADA.”
Samples from the 2001 Tour of Switzerland

At the 2001 Tour of Switzerland, the director of the Lausanne anti-doping laboratory reported to USADA that the laboratory had detected a number of samples in the Tour that were suspicious for the presence of EPO. These samples were labelled “suspect”. USADA considered that the evidence from the 2001 Tour of Switzerland samples strongly corroborates eyewitness evidence of Armstrong’s possession and use of EPO.

Author: Miloslav Slejška
Blood test results during the 2009 and 2010 Tour de France

It was reported that WADA’s Anti-Doping Administration and Management System (ADAMS) contained results of blood samples from Armstrong, including 29 collected by UCI between 16 October, 2008 and January 2011, and nine samples collected by USADA between 13 February 2009 and April, 2012.

It was observed that five samples during the 2009 Tour de France and two samples during the 2010 Tour de France contained an unusually low percentage of reticulocytes. It was concluded that Lance Armstrong engaged in blood transfusion during this period.
Why was Lance Armstrong not sanctioned earlier?

There are two principal reasons why Armstrong and his team avoided earlier sanctioning:

- The nature of the substances and method used.
- The inadequacies of the testing procedures.
1. Substances and method used

Substances and methods that appear on the WADA Prohibited List can be categorised as:

- Those substances that not occur naturally in the body (i.e. anabolic steroids, diuretics, stimulants, beta blockers)
- Those substances and methods that naturally occurring in the body (testosterone, erythropoietin, human growth hormone, corticosteroids)

It is not surprising that the prohibited substances and methods fell into the second category.

Erythropoietin (EPO)

An effective test for EPO was not available until 2000. Therefore the use of EPO prior to this date went virtually unchallenged.
Testosterone

A similar strategy of taking small doses sublingually (i.e. under the tongue) or through wearing patches for a few hours in the evening was adopted for testosterone.

Human growth hormone

An effective validated test for human growth hormone was not available at the time. Autologous blood transfusion was difficult to detect.

Cortisone

A false declaration of medical need was easy to obtain for therapeutic use exemption.
2. Inadequacies of the testing procedures

- The team riders were using their wits to avoid the testers.
- They were staying in accommodation where testing was unlikely to be conducted.
- Where necessary, the withdrawal from a competition.
- Surveillance by team members looking out for UCI or USADA testers.
- Delaying the haematocrit test.
The wider consequences to the Lance Armstrong Case

In addition to the sanctions imposed on Lance Armstrong, there have been a significant number of additional consequences resulting from this case.

- The eleven teammates who decided to break the Code of Silence (Omerta) have been given 6-month suspension.
- UCI have formally stripped Armstrong of his seven Tour de France titles.
- USADA concluded that it had more than enough evidence to proceed with charges against team personnel including.
- Following the publication of the USADA report, there have been a number of resignations of high profile administrator in cycling organizations.
The UCI has been questioned over a 100,000 USD donation made by Armstrong to the UCI in 2002.

Many sponsors, such as Rabobank, Nike and insurance companies have ended their multi-million euro support.

Lance Armstrong has concluded his chairmanship of the Livestrong Foundation (cancer research and cancer patient-support services).
D. CONCLUSIONS – Is there hope for the future of sport?

There is no question that the Lance Armstrong case has cast a huge shadow over the sport.

Sport must continue to fully embrace the World Anti-Doping Code.

With increasing emphasis being put on “prevention”.

The key to success is to ensure an understanding of why rules are in place and communication of what those rules mean.

The new Code Drafting Team is preparing a new version of this material. Major changes to 2015 Code can be as follow:

- Sanctions increased to four years for serious doping violations
- Substance or method now needs to be performance enhancing for inclusion on the List
- WADA empowered to instigate investigations
PLAY TRUE GENERATION

THERE IS ONLY A CHANCE FOR CLEAN SPORT AND DOPING-FREE SPORT TO BE DEVELOPED.

KEY TO THE SUCCESS:

TO PROVIDE YOUNG ATHLETES WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ANTI-DOPING, IN ONE WORD – EDUCATION.
LANCE ARMSTRONG CASE
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION
ANY QUESTIONS?

Michal Polák | Education Manager