



ENHANCING THE FIGHT AGAINST
DOPING THROUGH ATHLETE INTEGRITY
AND PREVENTION

Author: JOSUE EMANUEL ARROYO ANGULO

March 2025

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

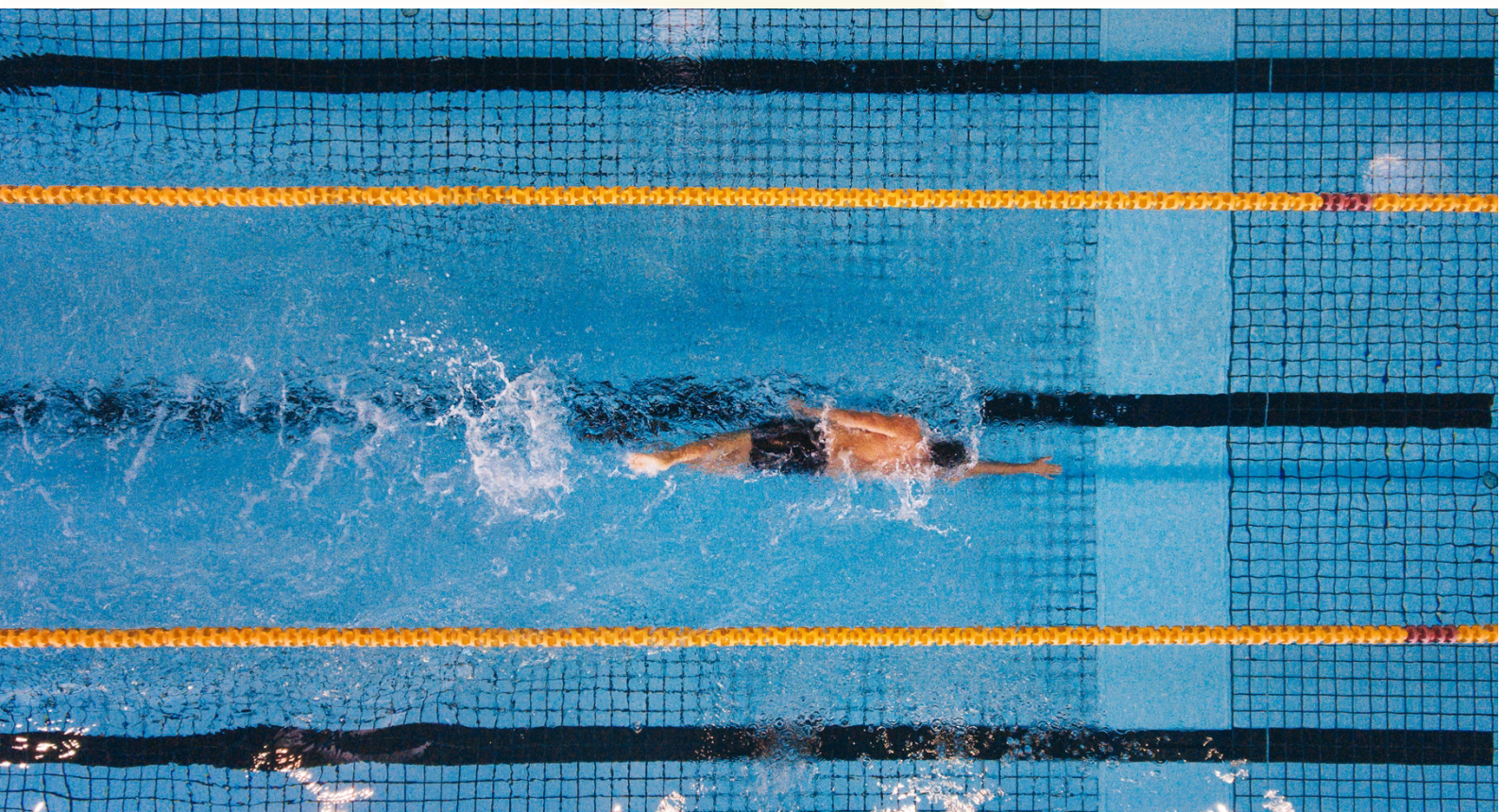
I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Gianluca Siracusano for his invaluable assistance in refining my research and for his thoughtful advice throughout my journey.

Thanks to my family and friends for their support and encouragement, which helped me give my best until the end.

Finally, I would like to thank the entire team at O REI Sports Law Institute for their patience and their guidance.

ABSTRACT

The fight against doping remains a global challenge marked by unequal cooperation, insufficient funding and gaps in education. This thesis aims to examine the current weaknesses and what could be done to enhance the actual scheme. This work is divided into three sections: an introduction, a legal analysis and selected cases studies. This thesis explores why a global and efficient measure had not been reached yet. This thesis concludes with a set of short-term and long-term recommendations, aimed at reinforcing integrity protection and collective commitment.



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I. GLOSSARY

ADEL	Anti-Doping Education and Learning Platform
ADO(s)	Anti-Doping Organization(s)
ASP	Athlete Support Personnel
CAS	Court of Arbitration for Sport
DCO	Doping Control Officer
IOC	International Olympic Committee
ISCCS	International Standard for Code Compliance by Signatories
ITA	International Testing Agency
NADO(s)	National Anti-Doping Organization(s)
NF(s)	National Federation(s)
NOC	National Olympic Committee
RADO(s)	Regional Anti-Doping Organizations
RPC	Russian Paralympic Committee
RUSADA	Russian Anti-Doping Agency

USADA	United States Anti-Doping Agency
WADA	World Anti-Doping Agency
WADA Code	World Anti-Doping Code



II. INTRODUCTION

A. Scope of the Research

In a context where doping has become a pressing concern in contemporary sports, the protection of athletes is of its most crucial importance. States, sports organizations, the International Olympic Committee (hereinafter ‘IOC’), the International Testing Agency (hereinafter ‘ITA’) and the World Anti-Doping Agency (hereinafter ‘WADA’) must work together to ensure robust protection for athletes, thereby safeguarding fair competition, athlete health, and maintaining public trust in sport.

Although comprehensive and stringent regulations have been adopted by WADA and national anti-doping organizations (hereinafter ‘NADOs’), the fight against doping has seen some scandals that have exposed the weaknesses in detection, enforcement, and governance.¹ Several cases show us the complexity of this field and that traditional anti-doping measures like anti-doping tests are not enough to win this fight.

To fight doping by promoting the spirit of sport, the Code requires each Anti-Doping Organization to develop and implement education and prevention programs for Athletes, including youth, and Athlete Support Personnel.²

Although enforcement mechanisms have evolved under the WADA Code, the need for robust prevention strategies remains critical. This thesis will focus on two pillars of anti-doping prevention: **education and whistleblowing**.

B. Research Question

This research aims to examine how a prevention-oriented battle can create a more effective and ethical anti-doping system. To achieve this goal, the main question is: *How can education and whistleblowing enhance the fight against doping by promoting athlete integrity and prevention.*

To explore this question, the analysis will proceed in three key stages. First, it will explore the current legal framework and the aim of the creation of World Anti-Doping Agency. Second, it will then analyze the effectiveness of education and prevention. Finally, it will propose solutions to better protect athletes, staff and members involved in sport.

A transition from a purely punitive model to one that is proactive, preventive, and ethically grounded requires a greater emphasis on education. The goal is finding the right balance between integrity in sports and the protection of athletes' rights. Let's dive into the goals of WADA and possible impediments of implementing such programs.

Statement on the use of artificial intelligence: *In the preparation of this thesis, artificial intelligence has been used for proofreading and rewording as English is not the primary language of the author and not his primary working language. The content, the analysis, ideas and arguments presented in this thesis remain the research and the critical thinking of the author. All used sources have been cited in accordance with the applicable, academic or international standards.*

III. THE CREATION OF WADA

A. Overview of the WADA Code

*The world anti-doping agency (WADA) was established in 1999, in an atmosphere that combined frustration with the lack of leadership on anti-doping provided by the International Olympic committee (hereinafter: IOC) and optimism that at long last clean athletes would have protection from corrupt sports organizations, athletes coaches and medical staff.*³

The adoption and the implementation of World Anti-Doping Code took place in a distrust atmosphere. At that time, the Council of Europe pointed out the evidence of widespread doping practices. In response, WADA, International sports organizations and governments started to create a more harmonized commitment to a clean sport.⁴ Nevertheless, the recognition of WADA as lead global organization happened in a moment where Russia was recovering of the collapse of the Soviet-union and China was building its new elite sports.⁵

The fight against doping cannot be won by a single entity. Therefore, during the 1990s the fight against doping gained of support not only by the sport community but also by the stakeholders.⁶ *WADA is today carrying on the fight supported by the universally accepted WADA code and international Doping Convention under UNESCO.*⁷

B. Historical Role and Objectives of the WADA Code

Prior to the implementation of the WADA code, there were no existence of such unified regulations governing anti-doping efforts at the global level. The majority of

the international federations and national Olympic committees had already some anti-doping rules that were based on the International Olympic Committee Olympic Movement Anti-Doping Code.⁸

Despite a shared intention to address doping, there was no harmonized framework or collective agreement on how to effectively tackle the issue, which ultimately proved to be far more extensive and complex than initially anticipated. All the rules were uncoordinated. Therefore, there was an urgent need to create a movement among all stakeholders to fight this battle against anti-doping.⁹ At first, none of the stakeholders were ready to negotiate a code applied overall.¹⁰

Before the WADA Code, it was possible that sportsmen and sportswomen could be applied different sanctions because of the different rules existing in their respective international federations. The sanctions could therefore be drastically different, when the doping offense was the same.¹¹

In 2003, WADA was formally mandated to harmonize anti-doping regulations at the international level, creating a framework that all anti-doping organizations (hereinafter 'ADOs') would be expected to follow. To create the code, it required an extensive consultation process involving a wide range of stakeholders, including governments, international sports bodies, athlete representatives and scientific experts.¹²

Through these consultations, it became evident that a standalone code would not be sufficient to ensure global consistency and effectiveness. As a result, stakeholders agreed not only a single code, but also international standards and best practice models, thereby establishing a more robust and uniform anti-doping framework across all sports.¹³

C. WADA Through the Years

In 2003, one of the most significant legal innovations introduced by the World Anti-Doping Code was the principle of strict liability. Under this principle, any athlete

who tests positive for a prohibited substance is deemed to have committed an anti-doping rule violation, regardless of intent, fault, or negligence. First, it provided a clear and objective definition of what constitutes a doping offense, focusing on the presence of a prohibited substance rather than the subjective intention of the athlete.¹⁴ Secondly, it also permits the establishment of anti-doping rule violations across all sports and jurisdictions, reducing disparities among sports and sanctioning.

Another key element introduced by the 2003 Code was the prohibited list criteria, if a substance meets at least two of the three following criteria: *i) potential to enhance performance, ii) potential to harm performance, or iii) violation of the spirit of sport*, it can be considered as a prohibited substance.¹⁵ The implementation of this code was a turning point in the foundation of the harmonization of sanctioning doping.¹⁶

However, by 2009, after several years of practical application, the WADA Code has undergone some significant refinement. The principal elements considered were fairness. In the sense, that the code was inflexible when a sanction was imposed. The punitive effect was functioning, but it was also producing unfair results in the outcome. One of the most notable reforms was the adjustment of sanction lengths: whereas a standard two-year ban had been the norm under the 2003 Code, the 2009 version allowed more nuanced sanctions, better tailored to the specific of each case.¹⁷

Another important change was the definition of a “specified substances” in a more expanded way. In parallel, the lower threshold of sanctions was also revised: the minimum penalty for certain violations was reduced from three months to a mere reprimand, where appropriate.¹⁸

The rules about the whereabouts have been reinforced. For the first time, a harmonized standard was introduced: three missed tests or filing failures within 18 months period would constitute a violation. This time frame period is now reduced to 12 months.¹⁹

As years passed and doping practices became increasingly sophisticated, WADA was obliged to update the Code. The complexity of emerging doping networks required

not only updated list and stricter protocols but also more robust education programs. Between 2012 and 2013, another round of extensive consultations took place to address these evolving challenges. During this process, legal expert Jean-Paul Costa emphasized the delicate balance between the disciplinary nature of anti-doping sanctions and their potential civil consequences. In his consultation Jean-Paul Costa pointed out the fine margin between the consequences of a doping offense and the civil nature of the sanctions.²⁰

D. The UNESCO International Convention

The International Convention against Doping in Sport entered into force on 1 February 2007. The governments decided to help the fight against doping by having a binding international instrument.²¹ While the WADA Code serves as the principal legal framework for sports organizations, it is not binding upon States. The Convention thus fills a crucial legal gap by ensuring intergovernmental harmonization and by aligning public authorities with the obligations already assumed by the sporting movement.²²

This convention is essential, because it allows governments not only to support testing and education programs, but also to regulate trafficking, possession, and use of prohibited substances, areas often beyond the jurisdiction of sports bodies. Furthermore, the Convention reinforces national and international cooperation in areas such as scientific research and public policy, making it a cornerstone of comprehensive anti-doping strategies.²³

At the heart of the Convention lies the commitment to uphold the core values of sport: honesty, fairness and respect for rules.²⁴ Everyone has an important position. Athletes are seen as role models, and as such, the use of sports athletes to promote health among young athlete can be as effective as an Anti-Doping program.

As the WADA code was not binding for governments. The Convention became necessary to ensure that governments would be bound by obligations complementary

to those of sports organizations.²⁵ Finally, a group of experts and intergovernmental organizations met to create a legal text binding for governmental. The aim was: *(1) ensure that governments take actions against doping in sport that are complementary to those already being taken by the sporting movement, including anti-doping activities at the national level, international cooperation, education and training, and research; (2) provide support for the Code and for other international standards developed by WADA, recognising the importance of these documents in harmonising policy and practice worldwide.*²⁶

The fight against doping extends far beyond the sports atmosphere, it intersects with public health concerns, legal enforcement and criminal offenses. Therefore, there was a necessity to create a legal framework designed to coordinate government actions.

Although the Convention exists today, it adopts a flexible approach to implementation. Rather than imposing a rigid legal system, it allows States to fulfill their commitments through legislation, regulation, or policy, depending on their legal context.²⁷

Article 12 of the UNESCO Convention explicitly promotes cooperation between anti-doping organizations, public authorities and sports institutions. This provision gained particular importance after WADA observed that in some countries, athletes were not being tested at all. In response, WADA initiated the creation of Regional Anti-Doping Organizations (RADOs). Those organizations are composed by governments and sports representatives to ensure coordinated testing and program delivery in small or resources constrained countries.²⁸

The Convention also emphasizes the importance of education and training. Athletes must have accurate education on the consequences of doping. They must be informed about the risks and consequences of doping. However, for an effective education the program must include coaches, medical staff and all support personnel. Their ethical awareness is vital to building a clean sporting environment.²⁹

Nevertheless, funding remains a major barrier to anti-doping education. Resources are often limited, and testing alone is costly. Moreover, education takes time to demonstrate measurable impact. Governments are therefore encouraging to adopt some skill-based education programs, integrating anti-doping awareness into broader public health and youth development strategies.³⁰

E. Current Challenges

The primary objective behind the creation of the WADA code was: to safeguard athletes' fundamental right to participate in a doping-free sport and the promotion while simultaneously promoting health and fairness. A secondary goal was to ensure harmonization across national and international anti-doping programs at the international and national level.³¹

WADA is considered as a leader by the stakeholders, as a leader authority in anti-doping governance. Therefore, it should be the one entity monitoring the fight against doping. All measures implemented under its leadership are aimed at maximizing effectiveness and integrity in sport.³²

One of the most powerful tools in exposing systemic doping has been whistleblowing. Several major doping scandals, particularly those involving high level officials were uncovered only because of brave individuals from within the system came forward. In one of these cases, athletes had no voice or means to oppose the institutionalized and in other they were aware of the cheat. For this reason, it is imperative that sports organizations adopt programs that prioritize whistleblower protection and integrate secure reporting mechanisms into their anti-doping strategies.³³

Given their financial and institutional capacity, governments should play a leading role in supporting the efficiency of testing programs coordinated by WADA. Beyond enforcement, States also have a duty to invest in values-based education. From

an athlete perspective, it is essential that they feel empowered and protected when reporting suspected doping activities, whether involving coaches or institutions.³⁴

Anti-doping responsibilities are primarily assigned to international federations, although these may delegate specific powers to their affiliated national federations (NFs). NOC bears significant responsibilities, particularly in the context of Olympic Games participation.³⁵

However, a critical gap remains: there is currently no positive legal obligation for athletes or support personnel to report suspicious of doping, nor are there clear and accessible mechanisms for doing so. Moreover, when allegations are raised, they are often not taken seriously, particularly when voiced by athletes, officials, or insiders.³⁶

Another serious concern involves the harassment and attempted bribery of doping control officers.³⁷

The lack of interest on the part of many stakeholders in catching athletes is a real issue because to be effective, everyone should be involved. This lack of engagement in identifying and sanctioning doping represents a threat to the effectiveness of anti-doping systems.

IV. EDUCATION AND AWARENESS AS PREVENTIVE TOOLS

A. Defining Compliance in Sports: Education and Awareness Programs

Compliance in sports refers to the adherence to legal, ethical and regulatory standards. The aim is to establish fair play, integrity, and accountability across all levels of sports governance.³⁸

Within the specific context of anti-doping, the compliance entails not only observance of the WADA Code, but also the implementation of robust internal control mechanisms and the promotion of a culture rooted in ethical conduct and sportsmanship.³⁹

According to WADA, compliance is the obligation of all Code signatories to effectively implement the provisions of the Code.⁴⁰ However, as studies on some countries, anti-doping organizations shows some, compliance challenges often stem from the inadequate legislation, insufficient resources and lack of awareness among authorities and athletes.⁴¹

In this regard, education is a fundamental pillar of anti-doping compliance by athletes. By education, it is possible to reduce the risk of both intentional and unintentional violations. To support this, WADA has developed the Anti-Doping Education and learning platform (hereinafter: ADEL) which provides athletes and personnel with accessible resources aimed at enhancing responsible behavior and informed decision-making in the context of sport performance.⁴²

National Anti-Doping Organizations play a key role in implementing such programs. As an example, United States Anti-Doping Agency (hereinafter : USADA) offers athletes guidance on their rights, duties and testing procedures.⁴³ This is

particularly important in light of the principle of strict liability, which holds athletes accountable for any prohibited substance found in their body, regardless of intent or fault.⁴⁴ Additionally, the International Testing Agency (hereinafter: ITA) has introduced an international clean Sport Educator Program which target athletes' support environment. The program equips educators and mentors with the knowledge and tools required to deliver effective anti-doping sessions, reinforcing the broader responsibility of the entire athlete entourage to uphold WADA standards.⁴⁵

The collaboration between organizations can develop and enhance the awareness of the programs. A notable example is the memorandum of understanding of WADA and the World Health Organization, a four-year agreement facilitating the exchange of expertise in areas where public health and anti-doping intersect. The agreement runs until 1st of October 2027 and shows the goal of WADA to lead a collaborative framework of a doping-free sport.⁴⁶

Despite these efforts, diverging interests and operational disparities between stakeholders still hinder the effectiveness of current education programs. Without collaboration among all stakeholders, we won't never be able to promote a clean sport.⁴⁷

To date, doping prevention at the elite level has relied primarily on the identification and prohibition of specific substances ad method.⁴⁸ A doping violation is understood as: the use of a banned substance, several missed tests or the misuse of recreational drugs.⁴⁹

B. Prevention Programs for Amateur and Youth Sport

An often overlooked but critical dimension in the fight against doping lies outside the realm of professional sports within the amateur and youth sport sectors. While doping among elite athletes is frequently attributed to intense pressure to perform

and secure career advancement, amateur athletes may also turn to doping, driven by a desire to outperform or satisfy personal or societal expectation.⁵⁰

At the amateur level, the competitive spirit is already awakened, but it has yet no impact on the career. Somehow, this can lead to frustration, particularly among young athletes who excelled at junior levels but struggle to maintain their position as the competition becomes tougher with age. The transition from amateur to professional sport is thus a vulnerable period during which athletes may feel tempted to resort to enhanced performance substances.⁵¹

In this context, education emerges as one of the most powerful tools to prevent doping. Well-structured effective educational programs, delivered by qualified and experienced educators, are essential for raising awareness and support young athletes.⁵² A knowledgeable, trust and experienced staff can truly have an impact on the support of the athletes.⁵³ The key objective is to build trust and familiarity with the anti-doping processes. Educational efforts should strive to create an environment where athletes do not fear doping controls but instead accepts them as a routine and necessary part of clean sport. This approach outlines that anti-doping is not only about protecting the integrity of competitions but also a matter of athletes' emphasizing the need for collaborative and incentive-based prevention programs.⁵⁴

Some schools and academic institutions have already reflected this anti-doping education into their school program. The idea is promoting clean sports and values, regardless of if a young athlete will become a professional or not.⁵⁵

WADA has long recognized the issue and maintains that education is the most effective pathway for reducing doping prevalence among young athletes.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, such programs are not limited to young athletes engaged in competitive environments but also extend to the general school population, thereby instilling the value of clean sport in broader society.⁵⁷

However, the implementation of anti-doping education remains uneven across countries. For instance, in Spain in 2019 there were no comprehensive national anti-

doping education program existed, in contrast to countries such as the United States, where educational efforts have been implemented even outside traditional sports contexts.⁵⁸ As an example a study showed, that increasing the knowledge about doping, athletes significantly influence their willingness to reject substances that will enhance performance.⁵⁹

Consequently, school based anti-doping programs is not to only an approach to young athletes but also non athletes. At the end, the biggest achievement of education is bringing knowledge, attitude and belief about doping.⁶⁰

C. Models of Anti-Doping Programs

Education has become a core element of WADA's anti-doping strategy. In the 2021, the last version of the WADA Code, new international standards for Education were implemented. These standards provide a structured framework designed to encourage Code signatories to develop and implement comprehensive education programs.⁶¹

The inclusion of Article 18 in the latest version of the Code marked a significant shift. This article institutionalizes education as a legal obligation within the anti-doping framework, placing it as a pillar of clean sport. This evolution reflects WADA's ongoing efforts to adapt its regulatory instruments in response to real-world challenges.⁶²

Knowledge has not proven yet to be sufficient to eradicate doping from sport. However, the aim of information is to remind the athlete about the consequences of doping. Even if education cannot be the only way to eradicate doping, its consequences can be helpful, because it helps to decrease the intentions to dope.⁶³ They exist different forms of knowledge: *factual knowledge* (e.g., knowing what substances and methods are prohibited), *conceptual knowledge* (e.g., understanding the rationale for prohibition), *procedural knowledge* (e.g., knowing the doping control process), and *metacognitive knowledge* (e.g., knowledge of what one knows). Thus, effective anti-

doping education must go beyond health-related warnings. It should address the full scope of issue, from preserving the integrity of competition to protecting the well-being of the athlete.⁶⁴

In his sporting experience, an athlete will face doping through testing. It is important to learn early in a career to make the athlete aware. It is then crucial to educate them at an early stage. Despite the absence of intent, such infractions can have serious and irreversible consequences on an athlete's career due to the principle of strict liability.⁶⁵

Introducing testing and education programs at the amateur or youth level serves broader purpose. Today's young athlete may become tomorrow's professional, coach, or support personnel. Early education thus contributes to shaping not only clean athletes, but also a generation of ethical leaders in sports.

D. The Role of the Doping Control Officer

Doping Control Officers (hereinafter 'DCOs') play a critical role in the operational execution of anti-doping programs, particularly during sample collection. Their mission is strictly defined: to ensure integrity, security and legality of the testing process, without exceeding the scope of their assigned duties. Before becoming an authorized DCO, they must complete a full online training program, undergo background checks and participate in supervised observation sessions. This preparation ensure they fully understand the expectations and legal responsibilities attached to their role.⁶⁶

A DCO is entrusted with managing all steps of a sample collection session, in accordance with the International Standard for Testing and Investigations (ISTI). This includes securing the testing site, verifying athlete identity, witnessing the sample process, documenting every stage and reporting any irregularities.⁶⁷

The DCO must operate with full independence, neutrality and professionalism. If a conflict of interest arises, whether personal, ethical or financial, they are obliged to withdraw from the assignment to preserve the integrity of the process.⁶⁸

Furthermore, DCOs must refrain from accepting gifts or favors and must report any instance of attempted bribery, threat, or inappropriate behavior. Their status is formalized through an official accreditation by a recognized Anti-Doping Organization. They are subject to continuous evaluation to ensure compliance with evolving international standards.⁶⁹

Whether conducting in or out competition testing, DCOs must demonstrate the highest level of diligence. To support this, WADA launched the 2021 Code Implementation Support Program, providing tools and resources for ADOs.⁷⁰

Art. G.4.4.2 states:⁷¹

“The training program for DCOs shall include, as a minimum:

- a) Comprehensive theoretical training in those Doping Control activities relevant to the DCO position;*
- b) Observation of all Sample Collection Session activities that are the responsibility of the DCO as set out in this International Standard for Testing and Investigations, preferably on-site; and*
- c) The satisfactory performance of one complete Sample Collection Session on-site under observation by a qualified DCO or similar. The requirement related to the actual passing of a urine Sample shall not be included in the on-site observations.”*

Thus, it requires to have a real comprehensive theoretical training program with a complete understanding of the sample collection. There are thorough requirements to comply from the preparation to equipment to have. This educational program is completed by a practical training called observation.⁷²

Since many DCOs operate on a part-time basis, they must be thoroughly prepared to carry out their responsibilities with professionalism and diligence. Their role is critical, and accurate reporting serves not only as a protective measure in the event of a contested test, such as a missed test allegation, but also as a means of safeguarding the integrity and the rights of the athlete.

E. Who Should Implement Anti-Doping Programs?

According to article 18.1 of the World Anti-Doping Code:

“All Signatories shall, within their scope of responsibility and in cooperation with each other, plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and promote Education programs in line with the requirements set out in the International Standard for Education.”⁷³

This provision clearly designated National Anti-Doping Organizations (NADOs) as the primary implementers of anti-doping programs at the national level. As signatories of the Code, NADOs are legally bound to fulfill these obligations and are subject to compliance review.⁷⁴

For instance, the United Kingdom Anti-Doping (UKAD) agency acts under a legal framework set by the British government, which through its ratification of the UNESCO Convention has committed to promoting clean sport and delegating anti-doping activities to competent national entities.⁷⁵

However, the implementation of such programs faces multiple challenges, particularly in resource-limited countries. Financial constraints are a persistent obstacle. Despite high revenues in professional sports, national anti-doping budgets often remain limited, especially in developing regions.⁷⁶

A striking example is Africa: while 52 countries have ratified the UNESCO Convention against Doping in Sport, only 25 among them, have effectively established

a functioning NADO. This gap is largely due to a shortage of experienced personnel and structural support. In many cases, existing staff can only work on a part-time basis, making it nearly impossible to develop comprehensive anti-doping strategies.⁷⁷

Moreover, some countries may prioritize other urgent issues, such as public health crises, sexual abuse in sport, or basic infrastructure, ahead of doping control. While such prioritization is understandable, it shows the need for international solidarity and support to ensure that anti-doping principles are not neglected.⁷⁸

In short, the lack of human and financial resources, compounded by institutional weaknesses, remains a major barrier to the full realization of global anti-doping goals.⁷⁹

The UNESCO convention against Doping in Sport, serves as a key tool in this process. It formalized each government's responsibility to create a framework of cooperation, enabling specialized agencies to carry out testing, education and enforcement activities nationwide.

F. Strengthening Education Programs

To strengthen anti-doping education programs, it is essential to promote and invest in research. Scientific inquiry plays a crucial role in identifying priority areas, evaluating potential health risks associated with substance use and developing targeted strategies for prevention. Effective policies must be guided by evidence and not assumptions.⁸⁰

Moreover, athletes must be included in this process as active participants, former and retired athletes. Their life experience and visibility make them the most powerful advocates for clean sport. Athletes are both the beneficiaries and the first line of defense for anti-doping programs. For instance, Petroczi's Performance Enhancement Attitude Scale has contributed to better understanding athletes' attitudes and has informed anti-doping intervention design by offering measurable indicators of behavioral risk.⁸¹ WADA as the global authority overseeing anti-doping activities, measures the impact

of its programs primarily through the degree of adherence to the Code and its associated international standards.⁸²

To optimize educational outcomes, there should be greater consensus and coordination between Anti-doping Organizations, sports federations and governments. Programs that have demonstrated success in one context should be adapted and replicated when necessary.⁸³

ADOs have shown progress in recent years, especially through the implementation of recommendation issued by the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF) and through the periodic amendments made to the WADA Code.

Nonetheless, including individual athletes requires collective effort. All stakeholders, must contribute to the open exchange of knowledge regarding educational initiatives, prohibited substance updates and reporting mechanisms.

G. Understanding the Source of the Problem

Effective anti-doping assessment in anti-doping not only relies on identifying objective factors such as sport specific risks but also understand the level of education and awareness about doping within a given country or community. Studies have shown that there is a correlation between low levels of anti-doping education and higher risks of doping practices.⁸⁴

In this context, Athlete Support Personnel (hereinafter ‘ASP’) including coaches, managers, medical staff and psychologists play a fundamental and influential role in promoting a drug-free sport.⁸⁵ Their role goes far beyond technical training, they are a key actors in guiding athletes toward compliance with anti-doping policies and supporting them through the psychological and social pressure inherent in high-level competition.⁸⁶ Athletes and entourages face intense internal and external pressures, including personal ambitions, nationalism and commercial interests.⁸⁷ All the staff play

an important goal: protect the integrity of a sport.⁸⁸ ASP brings to the athlete a calm decision-making and the will of a long-term integrity over short term performance. They help them to develop as individuals. Thus, ASP are on the frontline of anti-doping prevention. They must be trained and educated on anti-doping issues to provide ethical guidance.⁸⁹





V. THE ROLE OF WHISTLEBLOWING IN ANTI-DOPING EFFORTS

A. Whistleblower Protection and Encouragement

*Whistleblowing against doping refers to the reporting of anti-doping rule violations (ADRVs) and related doping misconduct, and it plays an important role in de-normalizing doping use in sport, promoting a clean sport culture, and preserving sport integrity and reducing cheating behavior.*⁹⁰

Anti-Doping organizations (ADOs) must acknowledge that, reporting Anti-Doping Violation Rules (ADRVs) extends beyond the spirit of sport. It is deeply shaped by psychological, social and relational barriers that often discourage individuals from disclosing misconduct.⁹¹

Recognizing these obstacles, WADA made significant progress in 2021 by formally introducing provisions to protect whistleblowers within its regulatory framework. This step reflects a growing institutional awareness of the importance of whistleblowing in safeguarding sport integrity.⁹²

However, some concerns remain. Whistleblowing inherently involves complex and social dynamics, including fear of retaliation, loss of trust by peers and the potential breakdown of personal relationships. Despite the creation of reporting platforms, full anonymity is not always perceived as guaranteed. Therefore, potential Whistleblowers hesitate to come forward.⁹³

The decision to report is rarely neutral or procedural act. It is often shaped by intrinsic motivations, personal beliefs and moral judgment. The participation depends then on a largely personal's ethical reasoning and perceived risk. Research shows that

awareness and trust in whistleblowing channels varies widely across regions and cultures.⁹⁴

B. Challenges and Future Improvements

The most probable reasons for reporting doping misconduct are:⁹⁵

- It's not my problem
- Fear of consequences
- Team code of silence
- Lack of knowledge or trust
- Reluctance due to lack of evidence

On the other side, the reasons to whistle an ADRV:

- Sportspersonship
- Confidence in resources
- Personal benefits

Although whistleblowing is part of the effectiveness of uncovering doping practices, this research confirms that athletes are reluctant to come forwards, even when aware of official reporting channels.⁹⁶

The reluctance stems largely from individual concerns. Athletes may fear the impact on their careers, including potential exclusion, loss of sponsorship or any other consequence similar as bullying and isolation from teammates. While reporting can benefit to the ADO and help to strengthened global enforcement, it may come at a significant personal cost to the whistleblower.⁹⁷

It is therefore crucial to recognize that athletes are not only sources of information, but also individuals deserving protection. They must be supported before, during and after disclosure. Whistleblowing should not be limited to athletes; members

of the staff may also witness misconduct and should be empowered to report without fear of reprisal.



VI. CASE-STUDY: THE RUSSIAN SCANDALS

A. CAS 2020/O/6689 World Anti-Doping Agency v. Russian Anti-Doping Agency

(i) Facts

It all started in 2014 when a German investigative documentary first revealed the existence of a sophisticated systemic doping practice within Russia Athletics Federation.⁹⁸ These revelations prompted global concern and led the World Anti-Doping Agency to commission an Independent Commission tasked with verifying the allegations presented in the broadcast.⁹⁹

The findings of the investigations were: both the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) and the Moscow Laboratory, the only WADA accredited laboratory in the country had systemically violated the WADA Code.

In 2016, WADA appointed Professor Richard McLaren to lead an independent investigations. These allegations reinterred the existence of an elaborate and centralized doping scheme, this time suggesting the involvement of high-level officials. The report by the professor confirmed the state doping that occurred during several years.¹⁰⁰

The key issue of that case was¹⁰¹ :

“1. The Moscow Laboratory operated, for the protection of doped Russian athletes, within a State-dictated failsafe system, described in the report as the Disappearing Positive Methodology.

2. The Sochi Laboratory operated a unique sample swapping methodology to enable doped Russian athletes to compete at the Games.

3. The Ministry of Sport directed, controlled and oversaw the manipulation of athlete's analytical results or sample swapping, with the active participation and assistance of the FSB, CSP, and both Moscow and Sochi Laboratories."

Following the McLaren Report, the Moscow Anti-Doping Laboratory operated by RUSADA was accused of employing different types of techniques to falsify doping test results. As a result, RUSADA was declared non-compliant with the World Anti-Doping Code. Willig to be reinstated, RUSADA agree on the submission of laboratory data and athlete samples for analysis. However, the data provided by the Moscow Laboratory had been deliberately altered.¹⁰²

(ii) Analysis

The establishment of WADA was accelerated after the IOC pointed out the careless and few attention of the governments into doping.¹⁰³ Governments mainly focus on political strategy, soft power projection and national prestige, rather than on ensuring sport integrity. This represent a conflict of interest which can undermine WADA's global vision of a unified commitment against doping.¹⁰⁴ This case is the perfect example of a poor governance and what are the consequences of failure to confront cheating. It highlights how unqualified personnel can facilitate widespread regulatory violations and encouraged complicity among individuals in the position of power.¹⁰⁵

The International standard for Code Compliance (ISCCS) by Signatories provides a clear legal framework outlining the rights and responsibilities, compliance and the consequences of non-compliance by the signatories.¹⁰⁶ RUSADA challenge the validity of these ISCCS. However, WADA reaffirmed that, as a signatory, RUSADA

was fully subject to the Code and its associated standards, regardless of whether the procedural failure was directly attributable to RUSADA or the Moscow laboratory.¹⁰⁷

As the global regulator of anti-doping, WADA is empowered to act decisively when a breach occurs, this includes immediate or discretionary sanctions.¹⁰⁸ This position was reinforced in a similar case involving the Russian Paralympic Committee (RPC). The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) held that, even if the RPC was not directly involved in the doping violation, it had failed in its duty to ensure a functioning and compliant national anti-doping program.¹⁰⁹

(iii) Critical thinking

Dr. Grigory Rodchenkov, the former Director of the Moscow Laboratory, played a pivotal role in exposing Russia's state doping. His testimony and the evidences he provided became instrumental in enabling WADA and the international community to sanction Russia, not only for systemic doping, but also for the failures of governance. We will see below in the case of Yuliy Stepanova that, Whistleblowing is essential, but can be risky as athletes or staff are reporting sensible information and putting in danger their integrity.¹¹⁰

Rodchenkov's revelations triggered major reforms in global anti-doping policies and were a turning point for whistleblower protection initiatives. However, the personal cost of his actions was enormous. Rodchenkov was forced to flee Russia, after the country's president labeled his statements as defamatory and false. Since then, Rodchenkov has lived in hiding, often appearing in public with his face covered.¹¹¹

This case demonstrates the high-risk nature of whistleblowing, particularly when it involves powerful state actors. Rodchenkov's situation underscores the imperative for Anti-Doping Organizations to prioritize the protection, anonymity and long-term safety whistleblowers.

Before encouraging disclosures, institutions must ensure that robust safeguards are in place.

B. CAS 2016/O/4481 IAAF & Mariya Savinova–Farnosova

(i) Facts

Mariya Savinova–Farnosova is a Russian middle–distance runner who specialized in the 800 meters. Throughout her career she achieved numerous successes. In this case, the IAAF charged Savinova–Farnosova for violating the IAAF Competition rules.¹¹²

These allegations were reinforced by three pieces of evidence. First, some audios and videos recording submitted by Yuliya Stepanova. Yuliya Stepanova an athlete from the same federation recorded conversations between her and Savinova–Farnosova. Additionally, she brought as evidences some recordings between her and Vladimir Kazarin, the coach of Stepanova and Savinova, in which performance enhancing substance was discussed.¹¹³

In addition to the audiovisual materials, Stepanova submitted a detailed written statement with precious information about the doping practices within Russian athletics.

These testimonies were corroborated by the abnormal level of hematological values that could be a blood manipulation by Savinova–Farnosova. Even so, Savinova denied all allegations of IAAF and Stepanova alleging, that the information is not accurate and cannot be admissible.¹¹⁴

(ii) Critical thinking

This case of Mariya Savinova–Farnosova represents a landmark moment in the development of anti–doping. It reflects the admissibility of diverse forms of evidence, such as recordings and other audiovisuals.

It confirms the individual impact of whistleblowing and the need to educate athletes of their right and secure their integrity. Whistleblowing is as important as prevention.¹¹⁵

In an evolving global environment, there is a continuous tension between individual interest such as privacy, safety and personally loyalty and the collective interest of protecting fair competition. The actions of Stepanova raised questions regarding privacy and prior misconduct. Therefore, the value of a clean sport and institutional transparency override personal controversy.

C. Lessons – Intermediary Conclusion

Cases like those of Rodchenkov and Stepanova illustrate the indispensable role of whistleblowing in revealing both institutional doping and federation–level corruption. Despite the sophistication of anti–doping tools, no system can predict every violation. The Russians doping scandals, demonstrated that fraud and corruption can be institutionalized, not only by athletes, but also by officials.¹¹⁶

Rodchenkov’s disclosures exposed laboratory manipulation and state interference, while Stepanova’s act revealed the athlete and coaching dynamic within a corrupted sporting culture. Together, their testimonies dismantled a multilevel system of cheating and highlighted the need for institutional vigilance, athlete protection and ethical governance.

VII. CONCLUSION

Since its creation, WADA has progressively evolved from a reactive institution to a proactive global regulator. Initially established in response to fragmented anti-doping efforts, WADA is yet projecting to a more cohesive approach involving international cooperation with Interpol and the pharmaceutical industry.

Education must be at the center of all discussions and a contract must be concluded with governments to transfer this knowledge from an early age, especially in countries that are most at risk and have fewer resources.

A full global harmonization of anti-doping measures has yet to be achieved we conclude that WADA has made significant progress since its debut in the 1990s. Some disparities still remain, particularly the access to educational programs and whistleblowing platforms such as WADA “Speak Up” and the IOC’s Integrity and Compliance Hotline. Some countries don’t have the same knowledge as other, therefore we need more collaboration and help among federations. Such inequalities shall not remain. The trust in the system must be earned, not assumed.

Whistleblowing can come with high sacrifice on the athlete integrity, therefore anyone stepping forward is highly vulnerable and must never be left unsupported.

I am happy to see that last week, Spain under “*La Agencia Estatal Comisión Española para la Lucha Antidopaje en el Deporte*” had three trainings on anti-doping in three different location and among the public, there were athletes and technical. Prevention is at core of the success and no athlete or staff shall remain without education.

To reinforce the anti-doping framework, these are my recommended actions in a short- or long-term period:

Recommended Measure	Short-Term Action	Long-Term Action
Education at all levels for athletes and support personnel	Regular awareness sessions and online training for professional athletes	Institutional course in primary, secondary school and college
Coordination between federation and regions	Set up a meeting between ADOS representatives	More developed regional bodies
Psychological support for whistleblowers	Webinars to raise awareness	Employ specialized teams among federation (a person of trust) governed by confidentiality

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