

# The anti-doping code: A positive step in a dubious world

On the road to the new international anti-doping code, Play the game was the only global gathering where the code was debated in public

By Jonna Toft and Jens Sejer Andersen

**W**ill it be possible for the world to agree on a common set of anti-doping rules?

And will such rules ever be effective?

These questions ignited a heated debate at Play the game.

The heart of the matter was the second draught for an international anti-doping code made by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

The code was to be ratified in a third version four months later, a few kilometres from the venue of Play the game, at the WADA congress in Copenhagen in March 2003.

But before almost one thousand government officials, organisation leaders and scientists invaded Copenhagen to agree on the code, Play the game happened to be the only global gathering where the code was exposed to public debate.

»Play the game was an interesting experience. Some of it was quite biased. There were people with strong viewpoints who expressed them strongly,« says Craig Reddie, member of the IOC and chairman of WADA's finance committee.

»But we should never be afraid of facing up to our critics, and I hope that at the end of the day the WADA code has answered some of the questions that was raised.«

Indeed, many of the experts who were sceptical about the new code during Play the game, do feel that the outcome of the WADA congress in March 2003 was a step in the right direction.

Which doesn't mean that all scepticism has now vanished.

## Uncertainties remain

According to professor Barrie Houlihan from the University of Loughborough who has monitored the process closely, a lot of uncertainties remain.



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Poor countries will have difficulties in carrying out the intentions, and poor athletes will get difficulties when asked to pay for their own lawyers or the necessary translations of the legal proceedings.

Also, the true willingness of sports federations like FIFA to live up to the code is to be seen.

But the code is "as good as it gets" in a world where compromise is necessary:

»The final version of the code became much stronger. It is more flexible, but still has rather clear fundamental rules, and it includes definitions of how to interpret the rules,« Houlihan estimates.

## Doesn't justify optimism

Another expert, professor Hans B. Skaset from Norway, regards the success of WADA as gratifying and desirable, but reminds that the world is not built on conference declarations alone:

»Until WADA proves that it has effective power to investigate and sanction doping violations, there is little hope for progress.«

Hans B. Skaset has gained international reputation for his anti-doping efforts in a long career as President of the Norwegian Confederation of Sports and head of sport in Norway's Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

His experiences leave little justification for optimism regarding the anti-doping struggle.

The demands on athletes are too great, the doping practice is too widespread and too many parties have interests in the athletes' success.

WADA is no exception from that logic. It is controlled equally by sports representatives and governments - and you need to search a long time to find a government or a sports association with no desire to see its athletes break records and win medals.

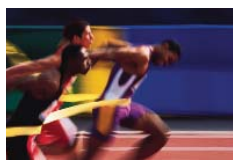
»International sports associations are unwilling to prioritise resources and give attention to a struggle which can make sport seem less attractive,« says Hans B. Skaset,

»There isn't the political will to back up the fight against doping. This is evident from WADA's finances, which show



*The WADA conference in March 2003 (big photo) was preceded by debate between experts like professor Hans B. Skaset (above) and Craig Reddie from WADA (below)*





“ *It's simple: it was just fantastic!* ”

*Radu Naum, Sports Reporter and Commentator,  
RTV Romanian Television*

that many countries have not paid their fees towards the agency's operational costs. In a media-driven sports world where everything is about breaking records, diminishing results are just not interesting.«

### **An Italian self-attack**

If politician and sports leaders will not solve the problems, who will?

»The pressure for a doping-free sport must come from the grass roots,« the Italian doping-expert Sandro Donati said at Play the game (see also page 22-23). »In ten years' time, drug controls could be replaced by a demand for medically-supervised doping.«

Though one of the worlds' most renowned anti-doping experts - and the official head of the research department in the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) - Donati wasn't invited to join the Italian delegation at the WADA congress in March.

There, the delegation was headed by the sports minister Mario Pescante who in 1998 had to withdraw from his post as president of CONI - thanks to his implication in a drug scandal unveiled by Donati.

Since then, Pescante has made a spectacular political comeback.

As Italian sports minister, Pescante had to tolerate an attack during the WADA congress along with other governments who never payed their contributions to WADA.

The outraged attack was launched by the president of the European Olympic Committee whose name is... Mario Pescante!

Apparently, Pescante's attack on himself did not impress him much. When the edition of this magazine was closed in April 2003, Italy still hadn't payed their 2002 contribution to WADA.

### **Found listeners**

For Sandro Donati, it is in no way a new sensation to be neglected or obstructed by the sports establishment.

In 2000, he was banned from speaking at that year's Play the game - until CONI during the conference was persuaded by protests from world media.

But Play the game 2002 may have been another turning point for Donati. His fellow Italians may still not want to listen to him - but WADA does:

»Play the game gave me an opportunity to make ties with WADA representatives, and I hope our contact will be of mutual benefit.«



## Doping Doctors

Doctors continue to play a major role in the practice of doping, says Leicester University's Ivan Waddington

*By Jonna Toft*

The development of substances which allow athletes to arrive at their destination just a little faster, or jump just that little bit higher over the bar, is a practice not confined to a few eccentric physicians. In fact, today doctors play a major role in improving athletes' performances – both legally and illegally.

»The fact that more and more doctors are involved in elite sport has meant that doping research is an increasingly important part of their work,« says Ivan Waddington of the Centre for Research into Sport and Society at the University of Leicester in England.

Moreover, he claims, sports doctors must bear a large part of the blame for the doping explosion.

»The development of sports medicine began long ago, but over the last three decades it has increased in pace – and at the same time medical reasoning has altered,« he says.

»It is no longer about using sport as just one of many ways of understanding the body. Sports medicine has now become an eternal search to win and set new records.«

Waddington adds that at the same time, it now appears that today's doctors are not particularly affected by ethical considerations. He cites the example of a doctor meeting doping officials with a declaration that his entire team were taking heart medicine on health grounds.

Instead of doctors attempting to protect their athletes, he says, athletes are often simply seen patients who are required to perform better and better.

Ivan Waddington highlights the connection between sports medicine and doping with the following quote from a report into blood doping in the USA's cycling team at the 1984 Olympics. »In the national euphoria after the games, no one thought nothing of probing into secret places. The U.S. team had won nine medals and dominated the cycling events. Fantastic riders.... fantastic trainers.... fantastic cycles, wrote the press. No one thought to add 'fantastic doctors'.«

## Success for anti-doping transparency

While it still remains to be seen if WADA will succeed in the anti-doping struggle, the global agency has already set new standards in another field in international sports. The communication policy of WADA has been carried out in a way all sports organisations can learn from – if they will.

From the first to the final day in the negotiation process of the international anti-doping code, everyone could follow the debates on WADA's website

The comments and suggestions made by researchers, sports organisations and other stake holders were simply published there without any censoring and open to the public.

The openness was rewarded. When the last draught of the new code was presented on the site, it was downloaded by 22,500 people in less than two weeks!

Moreover, most of WADA's congress in Copenhagen was webcasted live.

For journalists, [www.wada-ama.org](http://www.wada-ama.org) is a useful bank of facts, documents and opinions. Unlike many international sports leaders, those of WADA has accepted the invitation to face the critics at Play the game with no delay.

Seemingly, WADA regards the public as a strategic ally on the road to achieve its goals – why don't all international sports organisations?