

DOPING HARMS

the children of athletes

Many former doped East German athletes still suffer severe side effects, which have also been passed on to their children

by Kirsten Sparre

An athlete's doping past may well come back to haunt on his or her children. New research on 52 doping victims from the former East Germany shows that the majority of their children have damages to their social, physical or mental health. And the damages are worse if it is the mother that was drugged as an athlete.

The research on the long-term effects of doping has been undertaken by Dr. Giselher Spitzer from Humboldt University in Berlin. Over a period of two years, he interviewed 24 women and 28 men who were all Olympic or elite-level athletes in East Germany during the 1970s and 1980s and were given different types of drugs to enhance their performances without their own positive knowledge or consent.

Presenting his findings at Play the Game 2007, Spitzer concluded that doping is dangerous not only for the generation that was doped but also for the second generation, and can lead to severe mental health problems such as depressions, auto-aggression and suicidal tendencies.

Damaged athletes

The long-term effects can be divided into two groups: Direct effects on the athletes themselves and effects on their children.

FACTS

The project in brief

- Research undertaken from 2004-2006
- Documentation of 60 life courses of doping victims
- All interviews were tape recorded and files and medical sources were copied. All protocols were authorised.
- Reported in a book by Giselher Spitzer:
"Wunden und Verwundungen": Opfer des DDR-Dopingsystems
ISBN 978-3-939390-11-4

Over 90 per cent of the athletes experienced strong damages to their skeletons which makes it almost impossible to hold down a normal job. 27 out of the 52 former athletes could not stand up for very long, 26 could not lift anything and 25 could not walk normally. Holding things was impossible for 21 of the former athletes and eight could not sit for long.

A quarter of the athletes interviewed suffered from cancer, and more than a third reported problems of auto-aggression and thoughts and attempts at suicide. More than 60 per cent suffered from or had had therapy for psychiatric issues.

Damaged children

Having children also turned out to be problematic for the former athletes. Between them the interviewed athletes lost 15 children during pregnancy and three children were stillborn. The risk of miscarriage and stillbirth in the athletes was a staggering 32 times higher than in the normal German population.

Of the 69 children that survived, many struggle with allergies, skin illnesses and asthma. One in ten children had crippled arms, legs or feet and almost as many had metabolic diseases. One in seven children had psychiatric disturbances.

"There is a clear tendency: Children of mothers who were drugged typically suffer more from multiple handicaps than children of drugged fathers. 54 per cent of the children suffer from two illnesses," Spitzer said.

The value of studying effects

Spitzer undertook the study in order to find out what help doping victims need and how to

Research by Dr. Giselher Spitzer from Germany documents long-term damages to the social, physical or mental health of doped athletes and their children.



Photo: Stockxpert.com

prevent similar systems from emerging in other countries. But the catalogue of documented long-term effects leads him to believe that the value of health could be a strong motor for anti-doping work.

"The 'body capital' is a very concrete guide for athletes who have to decide from competition to competition if they want to abuse drugs or not," Spitzer said.

In the former East Germany, such a choice did not exist. Athletes were told that the drugs were vitamins and minerals and help for training and recreation. Still, a quarter of those Spitzer spoke to had actually stopped taking the drugs at some point because they felt uncomfortable. A difficult decision, Spitzer acknowledged, as none of them knew what would happen to them if they defied the system.





The President of UCI, Pat McQuaid, presented the era of “New Cycling”: focus on individual riders and implementation of a massive test programme

Massive test programme to exorcise cycling’s doping ghost

UCI President wants commitment from riders to “New cycling”

by Maria Suurballe

With the introduction of a massive test programme and new test methods, the International Cycling Union (UCI) intends to close the gap on cheats in cycling. The focus is on catching individuals, as UCI President Pat McQuaid believes that doping is no longer organised at team level.

McQuaid is a strong advocate of more tests and new initiatives in the fight against doping in cycling, but the road to a totally clean world of professional cycling is still as rough and bumpy as the cobblestone passages between Paris-Roubaix. It is a step-by-step process, and “we are only as good as the tests,” McQuaid said in his presentation to Play the Game 2007.

Commitment from riders

Biological passports, increased out-of-competition testing, high volume in-competition-testing, education and massive co-operation between UCI and its partners are all means to scare away the doping ghost from international professional cycling.

After having chased doped cyclists in the period from 1997 to 2006 and picking up the pace

between 2006 and 2007, the aim of UCI from 2008 and onwards is to “close the gap” and make riders commit to a “new cycling” by encouraging them to sign a document declaring that they are not involved in any type of doping.

McQuaid hopes that such a declaration can help sweep away the memory of all the stories from doped cyclists that are popping up to surface at almost every team.

Doping disorganised

UCI is focusing on individual athletes, not teams. Answering a question about the CSC teams anti-doping programme compared to other teams, McQuaid stated, “in today’s cycling there is no longer widespread doping. Doping practices now are done by individuals. It is no longer organised at team level.”

This statement caused former pro-tour rider Jörg Jaksche to roll his eyes as his personal history points in another direction. “Maybe I was just unfortunate. I worked on six different teams and I experienced organised doping in all of them,” Jaksche replied.

During the panel debate Pat McQuaid also stated that many professional cyclists have used EPO without being caught. Laboratories often find traces of EPO, but in very many cases it is not enough to make a positive test.

The future of cycling

Michael Ashenden, an Australian doping scientist, on the other hand, finds that there is a need for new solutions in solving the doping problems in sport, and that further testing is not the way. He lists a number of products with a similar effect as EPO, all of them untraceable in today’s doping tests.

This is why Ashenden suggests, that all doping test are scrapped and replaced by the new biological passport combined with the introduction of a GPS-system that will be able to locate the professional rider at any time (see page 6).

“I don’t think this suggestion will stop the problems with doping,” Pat McQuaid responded and added that the riders also deserve a life in privacy, and that there should be a certain amount of dignity in the fight against doping.

Breaking the law of OMERTA

Professional cyclist Jörg Jaksche admitted to doping and has suffered the consequences

by Maria Suurballe

"In cycling you take drugs – either you accept it or you leave the sport." These were the conditions that professional cyclist Jörg Jaksche had to follow in order to keep up with the professional game as a rider on six different teams. He doped for ten years. Although he never tested positive, Jaksche decided to tell the truth: "To fight the doping problem we have to be honest about our past."

Jaksche was only 19 years old when he was introduced to doping, and according to him the use of EPO in professional cycling was widespread when he started his professional career in 1997. Before he decided to admit in public to his systematic use of doping in June 2007, he was told: "If you talk, you will never come back." A confession would be a violation of the omerta code and would ruin his professional career for good.

Omerta is the law of silence, the code of honour that the Mafia follows, and according to Jaksche all riders in professional cycling are dominated by a similar code. "Whatever happens in your life as a cyclist, you should never tell it to the public." You have to be quiet and accept the rules.

After having crossed the line and lost his job, he finds it extremely difficult to get back into professional cycling: "Once you have admitted your abuse, everybody turn their backs on you," Jaksche told delegates at the Play the Game 2007 conference.

Punish team owners

In Jaksche's opinion, the riders face even more dilemmas. Their own teams exploit those who confess to have doped.

The team managers expose the riders in order to get good publicity and to show that they are concerned about doping. However, they are the very same people who brought the riders to doping doctors like the Spaniard Eufemiano Fuentes, Jaksche said. Also, riders who speak out will be sanctioned according to anti-doping regulations and criminal laws.

Even though admitting that every cyclist must be responsible himself for doping, Jaksche argued that also the team owners should be punished. "It is not enough to pick one yellow leaf from the sick tree; we have to go to the root to find the real trouble."

"If a rider is tested positive, don't let the team ride for a month. This will create group pressure," he said at the conference.

Jaksche argued that the chance of being punished would lead the team owners to keep more strict control on their riders. The team owners are first and foremost interested in making money, Jaksche said.

"We have a big problem in cycling which is a vicious circle: The teams are 100 per cent dependent on their sponsors, so the managers are under pressure; they need publicity, they need the riders." Jaksche advocated for a new structure to ensure the income of the team in order to avoid ending the sponsorship, which will also end the team.

Ghost finishing line

Recalling how he as a young boy and cyclist used the "ghost finishing line" to improve his results in cycling, Jaksche has now made it clear to himself what the ghost finish line for his own future should be. If he goes back in to cycling, he will only ride in a clean environment on a team without doping.

According to Jaksche, there are some initiatives that could help changing the widespread use of doping in professional cycling:

- Freeze samples from riders in order to be able to detect unknown doping products after a period of years
- Leave out-of-competition testing in the hands of WADA, as they are neutral
- Reduce the ban for doped riders that are willing to speak
- Make the managers pay when one of his riders is tested positive

These initiatives might not solve the entire problem but will be a step in the right direction, Jaksche said.



After admitting that he doped for ten years, professional rider Jörg Jaksche advocated stronger punishment of team owners. L'Equipe/Polfoto

FACTS about Jörg Jaksche

- Born 23 July 1976
- Professional cyclist since 1997
 - Politi (1997-1998)
 - Team Telekom (1998-2000)
 - ONCE (2001-2003)
 - CSC (2004)
 - Liberty Seguros-Würth/Astana (2005-2006)
 - Tinkoff Credit Systems (2007)
- 2004: Winner of Tour Méditerranéen and the Paris-Nice race
- 2005: No. 16 in Tour de France – best placement ever
- 2006: No. 3 in Tour de Suisse
- 2006: Jaksche is one of nine riders held out of Tour de France after being identified by investigators in the Spanish Operación Puerto doping case
- 2007: Jaksche admits he is guilty of blood doping
- In April 2008 Jaksche announced that he will retire from cycling

Read more at www.joergjaksche.com

According to Australian anti-doping researcher Michael Ashenden, an implanted GPS tracker would make it possible to get to athletes at times of the testers' choosing. Eirik Vassvåg/ScanStockPhoto



AN EYE IN THE SKY ON ALL ATHLETES

GPS implants in athletes could improve anti-doping testing

by Michael Herborn

During the 2007 Tour de France, the whereabouts system for cyclists was laid out before the world's eyes. Everywhere people discussed whether Danish rider Michael Rasmussen, the tour leader at the time, had been in Mexico or Italy in the run-up to the tour. A leading anti-doping researcher now suggests implanting a GPS chip into athletes to resolve the question of whereabouts once and for all.

The whereabouts system requires athletes to inform anti-doping authorities where they are at any given time so they can be tested in the training periods between competitions.

However, for a whereabouts system to be an effective weapon in the anti-doping arsenal, the Australian anti-doping researcher Michael Ashenden believes that testers need to know exactly where athletes are at every second of the day. He proposes the introduction of a NOLO system (notification and location) based on a GPS chip implanted into athletes. The chip would enable testing agencies to track athletes wherever they are and test them at times of the agency's choosing.

According to Ashenden, the problem is that current testing methods are not always able to

detect doping agents in the days, even hours, after their introduction to the body. Athletes can sometimes pass under the radar even though they have been tested and their whereabouts known.

Therefore, testers need to be able to get to athletes at times of the testers' choosing, not specific testing windows, as athletes may be able to use masking agents to hide the effects of doping in the hours prior to the window.

The athlete's sacrifice

The system has obvious implications for the privacy of athletes, a point that Ashenden himself acknowledges. However, he argues that the burden would be justified given the lifestyle benefits of being an athlete and the need to protect the integrity of sport.

"These measures unquestionably involve a significant sacrifice by the athlete," Ashenden said at the Play the Game conference.

"But sacrifice used to be one of things we regarded as a virtue in our athletes and our role models. Perhaps today's athlete in return for the opportunity to reap personal fame and fortune beyond the reach of the normal person must in return be willing to sacrifice some of the rights and the privileges that the ordinary citizen enjoys."

But are athletes prepared to subject themselves to constant monitoring by GPS?

In Norway, journalist and sports researcher Dag Vidar Hanstad has carried out research into Norway's whereabouts system that requires athletes to supply testing authorities with personal details, such as contact telephone numbers, training times and venues, and travel plans.

As part of his research, Hanstad has made surveys amongst athletes about their feelings towards the system.

A majority of the athletes felt that the system did not significantly deflect from the joy of being a professional athlete. However, in terms of personal freedom, a slight majority felt that in some way, the whereabouts system was akin to a big brother society, with nearly a quarter fully agreeing with that assessment.

However, Hanstad argues that given that in general, the sporting community has accepted the need for an anti-doping movement in sports, the whereabouts system in Norway can be justified as it is a logical extension of anti-doping testing. But, to maintain its justification, costs must not be placed upon athletes and the system must be properly managed and effective.

The willing suspension of disbelief

How sports writer David Walsh lost his naivety and now pursues the truth about doping in cycling

by Maria Suurballe

Doping in cycling has not only affected riders, teams and audiences all over the world. For some journalists like David Walsh of the Sunday Times, it has also led to a loss of illusions and a commitment to exposing the truth about riders who cheat.

Speaking at Play the Game 2007, Walsh reminisced about the good old days of cycling. The days when television was black and white, when a man was a man and a hero was a hero. When we, still not robbed of our illusions of the purity of sport, watched our heroes achieving great results! When doubt was something you did not speak aloud.

Those days are over now, and the game of cycling has changed faster than a Tour de France rider can climb the Alps. As Walsh put it: "We can't watch anything now, virtually without wondering what they're on."

Walsh spoke with emotion about the dilemma between passion and reality. The passion that was so strong and filled with love for the sport of cycling, has been replaced by the bare truth of

cycling and a professional battle to uncover doping crimes: "Sport has to be fair, otherwise there is no idea in competing."

As a sports reporter on the Sunday Times, Walsh has followed cycling for many years and he even moved to France with his family in order to come closer to the cycling scene. In 1984, one particular incident became the starting signal for a growing distrust in Walsh's fascination of cycling.

Together with a close friend from Ireland (an amateur cyclist riding on a French team), David Walsh had come to the start of the Paris-Brussels race. They wanted to see the stars before they went on the 300-kilometre journey to the Belgian capital.

The rattling pills

Both Walsh and his friend admired one especially successful rider in the peloton. "This particular morning we had the luck to speak with our great hero, chatting about the weather and his chances to win. As he was off to leave, we heard the unmistakable and easily recognisable sound of pills rattling in a plastic container in the back pocket of



Journalist from The Sunday Times, David Walsh, lost his illusions about cycling, and embarked upon a quest for truth.

our hero's cycling jersey," Walsh told delegates at the conference.

They glanced at each other but did not say anything. Later they tried to reassure each other, that what they had witnessed was a simple question of the cyclist using vitamins or some legitimate medication. "Deep down we both suspected the pill to be illicit. And quoting the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, we had both been guilty of the willing suspension of disbelief."

According to David Walsh, doping really has the potential to destroy sport, and incidents in the late 1980s and further on made Walsh decide that he would no longer close his eyes to the fact that professional cycling and other sports were infected by doping and foul play.

He has therefore become a keen representative of a journalism that cuts through the glittering surface and digs into the reality behind the show. "If an athlete has won, and if he did it by cheating, it's our duty as journalists to tell about it."

The cost of exposing Armstrong

by Marcus Hoy

In 2004, David Walsh published the book "LA Confidential" – a celebrated exposé of seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong. At the time, Armstrong was the ultimate sports hero – an all-American athlete who had beaten cancer and gone on to snatch cycling's greatest prize from the Europeans not once but twice. He was, in Walsh's words, "not quite Nelson Mandela – but almost".

Accusing one of the world's favourite sportsmen of cheating was not going to win Walsh many friends. But as a journalist he felt obliged to follow the story. He agreed to collaborate with a French colleague Pierre Ballester to write a longer and more sceptical account of Armstrong's rise. Walsh described the methodology used by himself and Ballester to further their investigations. In a case such as this, he stressed, sources had to be prepared to go on the record and stand fully behind their statements. He expected attempts to discredit his research – and he was not wrong.

In the end, Walsh and Ballester found they were not the only ones with suspicions. Plenty of people were willing to talk on the record, including many who had been close to Armstrong. The final draft, Walsh pointed out, used only three unattributed quotes. All the rest came from named sources.

Before publication, they checked the book thoroughly, anticipating legal action. They were not wrong. What they did not fully anticipate was the reaction from Armstrong's cycling team, US Postal, which threatened to withdraw reporting privileges to any journalist seen speaking to the authors. Armstrong's representatives also sued the authors, the publisher, Armstrong's former colleague Emma O Reilly, and even L'Express, a magazine that had published extracts. In retrospect, Walsh said, Armstrong was at the time in negotiations to join the Discovery team, who may have needed additional assurance that the stories were untrue.



Niels Nyholm in memoriam

On an early April day, shortly before this magazine went to print, Play the Game lost a close friend and collaborator, while sport for all lost one of its most important eyewitnesses. After a long struggle with cancer, Danish press photographer Niels Nyholm died at the age of 62.

From the first Play the Game event in 1997 and until our latest conference in Iceland probably no person has been present at as many sessions as Niels Nyholm. Over five conferences, he ensured that the impression of lectures, debates and corridor talks is preserved for much longer than it stands in our fragile memories.

In Reykjavik last autumn, it was hard to suspect that Niels was undergoing a long-lasting cancer treatment. Once again, he displayed his infectious commitment and care for the people surrounding him, working enthusiastically from early morning until late in the evening – only interrupted by a daily five km running route around Reykjavik.

A conference may not be the most appetising setting you can imagine as a photographer. But Niels transformed a presumably predictable task into a catching testimony that reflected the atmosphere, intensity and human interaction. Just as you will see in this magazine where all photos are his unless otherwise credited.

His legacy, however, goes much beyond Play the Game. It is marked by his outstanding efforts to draw a varied, compassionate, humorous and engaging picture of everyday sport as it unfolds far away from Olympic intrigue and media hype.

Niels had a unique talent for capturing the kindergarten child, the boy footballer, the elite gymnast, the pub footballer, the pensioner – all these apparently ordinary people – in the moment where they forget themselves out of commitment, thereby becoming extraordinarily relevant and meaningful for the rest of us.

Through thousands of pictures, Niels documented the endless opportunities embedded in the kind of sport that does not satisfy itself with blind ambition and narrow focus on achievement, but aims at developing complete people and fruitful communities.

We and many Play the Game participants will miss an excellent photographer, an inspiring colleague and a much-loved human being.

Jens Sejer Andersen



Photo: Robert Wengler



A starting point for a coalition against corruption in sport could be at Play the Game, Director Jens Sejer Andersen said referring to Richard W. Pounds statements earlier at the conference.

Pound backs coalition against corruption in sport

by Kirsten Sparre

“I think sport in general ought to consider a coalition against corruption in sport more consciously and overtly than it has to date.”

The answer to a question from a Play the Game delegate was carefully phrased but Richard Pound clearly supports the idea of a global coalition for good governance in sport that Play the Game has been a key proponent of for some time. The idea is to build an agency along the same lines as WADA that can define minimum standards for transparency, accountability and democratic procedures that should be followed by all national and international sports federations, government and sponsors. The agency should also have a legal mandate and professional expertise to investigate cases of mismanagement and corruption and be able to impose appropriate sanctions.

Pound is no stranger to corruption. As IOC vice president, he was in charge of investigating charges of corruption against members of the IOC in the Salt Lake City bribery scandal in 1999, so it was fitting to ask him what he thought of the need for a coalition against corruption.

“There are financial and other aspects of corruption including judging. We have all seen examples of that. But I think a lot of the corruption has just been kept quiet – almost by consent or a similar kind of omerta that we have seen in doping,” Pound said at the conference.

Later in the conference, Play the Game’s director, Jens Sejer Andersen, picked up on Richard Pound’s remarks:

“A coalition against corruption in sport may not be possible in the world of sport of today, but it could be possible in the world of sport of tomorrow. And Richard Pound almost gave us a mandate when he said that a starting point for such a coalition could be here at Play the Game,” Andersen said in his closing speech to the conference.

“I am following your discussions on the internet and they are fascinating. Same arguments, different excuses; but at least through Play the Game and others not prepared to accept sport the way it is – awareness is raised and people can be held to public account”.

Michele Verroken, Director, Sporting Integrity, UK.

This is not a Mr Nice Guy job

Outgoing WADA President Richard Pound called for mean and confrontational successor

by Kirsten Sparre

Richard Pound is not one to mince words. In one of his final public appearances as President of the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA), he told participants in Play the Game flat out that he had one key wish for his successor: "He has to be as mean and confrontational as I am. This is not a Mr Nice Guy job."

Pound had been invited to the conference to reflect on his eight years at the helm of an organisation set up by governments and the Olympic movement to combat the problems of doping in sport. As one of very few members of the IOC, Pound not only accepted the invitation from Play the Game but also spoke freely about the challenges ahead for WADA:

"We have to maintain government interest in this and it is difficult as they have the average attention span of a fruitfly. The international sports federations must also be prodded. There are a huge number of international federations that do not comply with the WADA code and should be excluded from Beijing for that reason," Pound stated.

He refrained from naming the errant federations believing that WADA can better convince them to shape up if the sword of publicity still hangs over their heads. But ultimately, federations that do not have out of competition tests should be told that they cannot be part of the Olympic Games.

"The IOC should use the leverage," Pound said, reflecting the lack of compromise on doping that has characterised his presidency and gotten him into many public fights with federations and athletes who have taken offence at his outspokenness.

First step to catch up

Pound agreed to help the IOC set up an independent international anti-doping agency back in 1999 when the world of sport was reeling from the Festina scandal after the French police – in the words of Pound – found "industrial quantities of doping substances" with officials from the Festina cycling team.

Pound said he would be president for two years but hung on for eight, and during that period he has overseen the establishment of a unique organisation composed of governments and individuals from the sports movement. WADA has adopted a World Anti-Doping Code, instituted a system of sanctions for athletes using doping, and undertaken a wealth of research on doping methods in order to be able to catch offending athletes.

"Our initial work was to catch up with the runaway train but we have to change attitudes. We have an extensive education programme and I think we can do it in sport. It will take a while – at least a generation – and we have to work pretty hard. But we will get there," Pound said.

Pound places the principal responsibility for doping squarely with individual athletes.

"99.9999 per cent of the time, doping is an organised process. Taking EPO is not an accident, paying for designer drugs is not an accident. It is

deliberate cheating for the purpose of winning and it has to be confronted. It is not going to go away by itself."

The personal responsibility of athletes aside, Pound agrees that in many cases athletes are not the most guilty in cases of doping.

"Most sanctions are against athletes but that is because we do not have enough evidence against others, such as doctors, or ways to sanction them. That is one of the reasons we need governments because they can tell doctors that it is a professional offence if they prescribe drugs for non-therapeutic use. We must find ways to deal with the enablers, but the athletes bear the responsibilities," Pound stated.

As a parting shot, Pound said that he had no problems with lifelong bans on athletes:

"I don't see a moral problem with a lifelong ban for doping. If you do it again, I am sorry there is no excuse: Go somewhere else, don't play with us!"



The president of WADA, Richard W. Pound, looked back on his eight years fighting for a cleaner and more fair world of sport.

"It really was the sort of conference that all conferences should aspire to." The conference itself was fantastic... it provided much food for thought and lots of potential and possibilities".

Guy Osborn, Reader in Law at the University of Westminster, London, UK.