

Dear Sir / Madam

Following recent press regarding the WADA 'Whereabouts' drug-testing system, we would like to add the athlete's perspective to the debate. Firstly, we would like to make it clear that we of course support strict drugs-testing. It is in our interests more than anyone else that the drug users are caught and punished; and we know that the only real way of catching cheats is no notice, out of competition testing. We also recognise the importance of deterring young British athletes from considering performance-enhancing drugs. We recognise our responsibilities as British athletes to be 'clean', and also to be seen to be 'clean'. We want to lead the world in intelligent, effective drugs testing that catches the current cheats and deters the would-be cheats.

However, we have grave reservations about the principles underpinning the 'Whereabouts' regime, and its implementation, and we feel that unless the system is changed, there will be a number of clean athletes facing life bans and a higher number of clean athletes who will opt to retire rather than face the constant hassle and panic of staying on top of these requirements, and the severe penalties for tripping up. Will this system catch more cheats, or merely compromise the lives and training of clean athletes?

As we're sure you are aware, the system is based on having to submit your daily location, with one nominated hour per day (between 6am and 11pm) when you have to give a definite location; if a tester turns up at any point in that hour and you aren't there, that is one missed test 'strike'. You can also receive a 'strike' for failing to accurately file your information. Three strikes and, under the current rules, it's a one to two year ban from our sport plus a life Olympic ban.

What we want is firstly an end to 'self-policing'; each country testing its own athletes. There are enough countries with doubt over whether or not there is state-sanctioned doping to question the integrity of in-house procedures. Impartial, international testing is the only way of achieving a level playing field at 2012; all athletes should be tested to the same standards.

Secondly, we advocate either scrapping the one nominated hour rule, or reforming the system to make it practical and workable. We already have to submit up to date information regarding our location all day: the testers know where we will be and we are happy to be tested anywhere, and at any time. We support alternatives which accommodate the vast majority of athletes who are clean, such as voluntary phone tagging, targeting testing of those athletes who are consistently not where they say they will be, and looking further up the chain to find where the drugs are coming from. There seems to be little justification for the one hour rule, and it is so easy to miss a test (traffic, disorganisation, or a training session over-running and still being out on the lake when the testers are in the boat house) that with the fact it is three strikes and out, the prospect of a life ban becomes very real.

Alternatively, if the one nominated hour rule stays, reform the system so it does not have to be at the absolute forefront of our minds simply to stay on top of it. Prior to 2009, we had to submit one hour any time of day, five days a week, with no testing on travel or competition days, and the onus being on the tester to be present at the start of the hour. We could set 'our hour' as first thing in the morning, so if the

doorbell did not ring at 5am, you knew you were not going to be tested. When we recently flew to Australia for a training camp, the only way of staying abreast of the rules whilst travelling was to submit our seat number and have a nominated hour on the aeroplane.

We spend our days panicking; having to always think about when our nominated hour is on that day, any upcoming changes of plans, if there's any chance recently that we've missed a test. We absolutely support both no-notice testing and strict sanctions; what we object to is this impractical and unworkable regime. There are far better ways of catching doping cheats than this.

Yours faithfully

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