

COMMENTARY

Protecting Athletes and Ensuring Sports—Free of Doping

Marco Aurelio Klein

National Secretary for the Autoridade Brasileira de Controle de Dopagem—ABCD, Ministry of Sport, Brazil

Whenever we talk about Dopagem (the Portuguese term adopted by the Autoridade Brasileira de Controle de Dopagem—ABCD—for the act of doping) people usually think only about the consumption of performance-enhancing drugs. Sometimes this is true. However, the larger truth is that doping is not restricted to drugs of any type, it is about ethics; it is about values. When an athlete uses prohibited substances and methods in a sport which she or he practices, they are cheating the competition, defrauding other athletes, who have a talent, a technique, and the willpower to devote their lives to training and competition. Can you imagine anything more unfair?

The larger mission of the ABCD is to protect *all* athletes who compete cleanly, only with their talent, technique, strength, and will. Not coincidentally, the motto of the World Anti-Doping Agency—WADA—is Fairness (Play True, *Jogo limpo*).

When talking about WADA, people usually believe that international institutions to combat doping are a relatively recent development in the history of global sports. However, the present situation is the result of many years of antidoping efforts in the athlete's life as well as in the entire sports community that surrounds them.

Brazil was one of the first signatories of the International Convention against Doping in Sport—CICDE, held in Paris on October 19, 2005, during the 33th General Convention of UNESCO.

Inspired by the experience of the best institutions in the world for doping control, the ABCD was founded on November 30, 2011, fulfilling one of the commitments made by Brazil on the occasion of the candidacy of Rio de Janeiro to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2016 and, in addition, to meet the requirement established by WADA that all countries have specific and independent plans for the fight against doping in sport.

By accepting the invitation of the Brazilian Minister of Sports, Aldo Rebelo, to build and implement the ABCD, I began to research the issue and it became clear to me that it was fundamental for us to develop our strategic planning. In order to propose feasible solutions to meet the chal-

lenges presented by mega sporting events, and the day-to-day life of Brazilian sport, it was necessary to dive into the problem. And we did just that! Five key points which guide the strategic planning and all of the actions of the ABCD emerged from that effort; *Information, Education, Prevention, Intelligence, and Action*.

With the appropriate and necessary information it was possible to build the best *Education* programs to achieve *Prevention*; allowing *Intelligence* to assess what has been done and what needs to be done, therefore defining the path for *Action*.

To understand the then current situation of doping control in Brazil, it was necessary to take a national snapshot and compare it with the reality of how Brazil compared to the rest of the world. As a result, we obtained a complete overview of the sector, identifying strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Based on an analysis of the various projected scenarios, lessons learned, and observed data, we mapped a process for controlling, checking for errors and bottlenecks, and establishing priorities that would guide the work of ABCD and which would be addressed immediately.

Much of this work relied upon a broad survey conducted in early 2013, during the enrollment of beneficiaries of the Bolsa-A atleta Program (Athlete Grant Program). At that time, 100% of Brazil's athletes who had been awarded a scholarship, and who were enrolled through the portal of the Brazilian Ministry of Sport, replied to the ABCD questionnaire. This enabled the necessary accurate evaluation of doping control conducted by sports authorities in Brazil, since the sample universe included all of the athletes interviewed. It is noteworthy that all who responded to the ABCD survey are elite, high performance athletes in Brazil, representing all of the sports of the 2016 Rio Olympic and Paralympic programs in their various categories.

The survey results revealed the need for more effective participation by the sports entities regarding prevention measures and doping control, with a strong emphasis on guidance and education. Among the most

disturbing findings revealed by the survey was, that only two out of 10 athletes in Brazil already had undergone some sort of doping control test and, that the majority did not seek the advice of authorities when taking a restricted drug. Moreover, only a few Brazilian athletes looked to The World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA) website for help. Unfortunately, the web site has very little content in Portuguese, a situation which we at ABCD plan to remedy later this year by working together with WADA to increase the site's usefulness to Portuguese language speakers.

Based on this information, the establishment of the ABCD quickly became mandatory. We elected to adopt the "best practice" as our reference. Thus, to define the model for the structure and functioning of the ABCD, several national and international meetings were held with those responsible for policies to control and combat doping in various countries of the world. We worked together on several agreements of international cooperation which provide exchanges in strategic areas of intelligence, education programs, and the training of agents for doping control programs. Today, the ABCD attends major events of the international antidoping community, bringing to Brazil the best world practices in the fight against doping in sport.

The mission of the ABCD, the result of much internal discussion, reflects our philosophy of performance, that is, protecting doping-free athletes: "Consolidate doping awareness and advocate at the national level, the fundamental right of athletes to participate in sports competitions free from all forms of doping". In practice, it means that we have to promote and coordinate the fight against doping in sport in an independent and organized manner, in and out of competition, according to the guidelines established by WADA, and the protocols and commitments made by Brazil.

Another important task of the ABCD is support of the Laboratório Brasileiro de Controle de Dopagem—LBCD, at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), through assistance in obtaining the resources needed to expand and modernize its facilities, and as a mediator in agreements and partnerships with other areas of government.

When ABCD began its operation, one of the main difficulties faced by Brazil in the fight against doping was the lack of adequate procedures for the importation of controlled substances, in small quantities, for use as calibration standards and equipment in the Laboratório Brasileiro de Controle de Dopagem/Laboratório de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Tecnológico—LBCD/LADETEC. Moreover, the lack of defined processes for transit of controlled and biological samples used in the analyses performed by the Laboratory, as well as the importation of sample collection kits, represented at the time, a huge obstacle to antidoping activities in Brazil. To resolve this problem, we participated, together with the Laboratory, in the development of revised guidelines and regulations with the Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária—ANVISA (National Agency of Sanitary Vigilance), resulting in simplification of the importation of the materials used in the

antidoping testing process. The creation of specific processes and the establishment of operational procedures brought about improvement in Brazil's capacity to deal with the basic needs for effectively intervening against doping.

Joint action with ANVISA resulted in changes implemented in the Bolsa-Atleta Program, the largest program of individual sponsorship of athletes in the world and managed by the Brazilian Ministry of Sport. Established in 2005, the Bolsa-Atleta Program is targeted at high performance athletes who obtained the best results in national and international competitions in their sport. The Bolsa-Atleta Program ensures support for athletes training in their respective competitions. Currently, the Bolsa-Atleta Program has more than 7,000 beneficiaries. Reaffirming the Brazilian commitment to fair play, all athletes, starting in 2012, when they joined the Bolsa Atleta program, also agreed to submit to doping control whenever notified by the federation of their sport or by the Brazilian Ministry of Sports through the ABCD, at any time of the year, in or out-of-competition.

We also prepared a Terms of Membership where the beneficiary (athlete) affirms in writing his commitment to know and to avoid substance use and/or methods that constitute a breach of the rules as described in the World Anti-Doping Code, which integrates the International Convention Against Doping in Sport (under penalty of suspension of financial support provided by the Bolsa-Atleta Program at the time of communication of the first adverse analytical finding). When doping is proven, the athlete may have their benefits cancelled and need to return funds already transferred, as well as other applicable penalties depending on the individual case, after final judgment by the Justice of Sport (a courts that judge all National Sports cases).

Along with the Terms of Membership, every athlete receives a copy of WADA's annually revised List of Prohibited Substances and Methods, a set of guidelines for the athlete's safety, and information that the athlete should share with their family, team support, and medical staff, as well as club officials, consulting them before they take any medication.

In 2012, the ABCD held its first out of competition doping control testing with the support of LBCD/LADETEC for the analysis of samples. This pilot action served to gather important information that assisted in the development of our Action Plan for 2014. Doping control testing was performed on members of the Bolsa-Atleta Program in more than 20 different sports. This preventive and health action was conducted in Brasília, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo and performed under the supervision of the Autoridade Antidopagem de Portugal (ADoP) and included the participation of the most senior doping control officers of ADoP.

In 2014, our Test Distribution Plan provides for the implementation of doping controls encompassing all sports entities. The cost for conducting the tests will be fully subsidized by the ABCD. Twenty percent of the tests (urine and blood) will be conducted out of competition with athletes from the Bolsa-Atleta Program and the

Bolsa-Podio Program (Athlete Grant for a selected group of athletes govern is providing huge supporting), and 80% of tests (urine) will be conducted during competition. For out-of-competition testing, we will use a national where-about system to be implemented throughout the year. Further testing of additional urine (37.5% of total tests), involving EPO, growth hormone (hGH), and isotope, with the selection of the athletes, will be performed using *Intelligence* based analysis. Also, we will dedicate part of our resources to begin following the “Athlete Biological Passport” model, in which national and international authorities record the urine and blood profiles of athletes.

The ABCD will train and certify Doping Control Agents (DCOs) for the biennium 2014–2015. The best of these professionals will be selected to work as DCOs in official test events, for the Rio2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Further work will include training of officers from other countries in South America, who may also participate in the Rio2016 Games, as part of a government policy presented to the South American Sports Council—CONSUDE.

Education is a priority for the ABCD. We want to promote the dissemination of information to athletes, coaches, technical staff, and family. Therefore, the ABCD, in 2014–2015 biennium is planning seminars and lectures geared toward athletes, educators, technicians, administrators, physical education teachers, physicians, pharmacists, nutritionists, lawyers and jurists, and sports organizations, aiming to spread the message of antidoping and the rights of the athlete in Brazil.

Among other actions in the areas of education and prevention, we highlight ongoing projects on our website, www.abcd.gov.br. In May 2014, we will offer a reference tool for the athlete, where they, after indicating their gender and sport practiced can seek information about a particular medication by just looking up the trade name of the drug, as well as guidance to the potential for use in accordance with WADA’s List of Prohibited Substances and Methods. Within a few months after launch this tool also will be available for use on mobile phones and tablets.

The National Anti-Doping Program is the crowning achievement of the Strategic Plan prepared by the ABCD. It is inserted as a relevant public policy within the Federal Government, having been included in the proposed Federal Budget, with an expected budget of BRL \$12 million (USD \$5,269,764) for the fiscal year 2014.

The actions listed in the National Anti-Doping Program provide a structured view for combating doping in sport in Brazil, seeking fair play, and drug-free competitions. Further hearings to discuss and enrich the program with other sport management bodies are also provided for.

We are now at a point where, looking in the rearview mirror, we can say we have come a long way. The ABCD and fundamental legal frameworks for doping control were created in cooperation with ANVISA. The LBCE/LADETEC received the support they needed in relationship with all government entities and with work on modern facilities now being finalized; extensive surveys of athletes and sports administration entities were conducted, a strategic plan was developed and approved; doping control officers are now registered and active, the budget proposed for 2014 was approved, and the National Anti-Doping Program was established at the Fourth Meeting of the Coordination Committee of the International Olympic Committee for the Rio2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Our *goal* is to have zero doping cases among the Brazilian delegation at the Rio2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Our *dream* is that during 2016 we have zero cases of doping in sport throughout Brazil.

The new international order to prevent and fight against doping in sport, based on the World Anti-Doping Code, reflects the growing awareness for ethical decisions in compliance with the Core Principles of the Olympic Charter. Therefore, it is expected from us that we demonstrate antidoping-enhancing values such as self-effort, good example, respect for fundamental ethical principles, and especially, protection of the Clean Athlete.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflicts of interest. The authors alone are responsible for the content and writing of the paper/article.

THE AUTHOR



Marco Aurelio Klein is the National Secretary for the Autoridade Brasileira de Controle de Dopagem—ABCD. As a sociologist and specialist in administration and marketing, he has worked in the financial industry and as a planning and strategy consultant for several companies. He has also been a teacher of sports marketing and service marketing in the School of Business

Administration of São Paulo of Fundação Getúlio Vargas—FGV-EAESP (2001–2009), is a member of the National Counsellors of Sport, and an invited Professor of the graduate law school of the Brazilian Bar Association/São Paulo. He is the author of several books on football and other areas.