

Reflections on the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games (1)

How to Speed-up Doping Control

What are mankind's oldest and most enduring mysteries? How was the universe created? What is the meaning of the monumental Nazca drawings on the plains of southern Peru? Did the Chinese reach the Americas before Columbus? Why does anyone eat vegemite? Who styles Nicki Vance's hair? Where does David Howman find his outrageous suits?

What about: why does doping control still take so long?

The Vancouver Paralympic Winter Games anti-doping program was a tremendous success (I may have a slight personal bias here). Impeccably-organized, with the most experienced group of Canadian and international doping control officers ever assembled superbly-trained chaperones and blood collection officers, spacious and well-sited doping control stations, state-of-the-art lab facilities. Yet on average it took more than 20 minutes to complete a urine sample (from the time of entering the processing room), and over 30 minutes for urine + blood.

How can we speed the athlete's departure from the doping control station? At the same time, how can we improve the accuracy and efficiency of doping control procedures? I see three main possibilities.

Use Current Technology

Supermarkets, restaurants, banks, courier companies, parking control officers, taxi drivers and a myriad of others abandoned written documents and receipts long ago. They make full use of scanning, bar code and chip & PIN technology. By comparison, doping control languishes in the era of quill pens and ink pots. We need to move into the 21st century (or at least the last decade of the 20th century).

We all know that much of the time spent at athlete notification and in the doping control station is devoted to careful preparation of paperwork. When mistakes get made, often forms have to be re-written (as they were at the Vancouver Games). Dozens of entries to make on each doping control form by hand. This is verging on madness in this day and age. Much of this unnecessary labour could be done automatically by scanning the information that is already or could easily be embedded in the athlete's and representative's credentials, and the identification cards of chaperones, DCOs and BCOs. Receipts could be printed with passwords and doping control forms made accessible on-line. Procedures would be simplified, time would be saved, mistakes would be avoided, and athlete confidence in doping control would be increased.

Doping control officials conducting testing for North American commercial sport leagues are already using hand-held devices that scan bar codes. Those DCOs tell me of the many advantages. For example, since the hand-held has a built in GPS, the DCO can record exactly when and where they attempted to

notify an athlete at home for no-notice out-of-competition testing. No more spurious arguments from athletes that the DCO could not possibly have rung their door bell at a particular time. So the technology obviously pays for itself. The “pro” leagues have at least got this part of doping control right.

One little-discussed benefit would be the opportunity to provide automatic translation from an anti-doping program’s home language into English or French for the purposes of reporting to WADA and liaison with IFs and major games organizers. For example, in the Czech Republic, doping control could be conducted entirely in Czech with versions of the documentation for WADA being produced automatically and electronically in English. The possibilities of direct down-loading into ADAMS are too obvious to discuss.

Who should lead the development of such a system? There are several candidates who alone *or in combination* can get the job done:

- **WADA** – I will not insult your intelligence by setting out all of the obvious reasons. But the need to interface with ADAMS cannot be overstated.
- **IOC/IPC** – they have the technology sponsors at their games (Acer in Vancouver) to provide the knowhow, including the project management.
- **London 2012** – imagine this as one of the great and practical legacies of the next Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games. The system could be licensed to ADOs and other major games organizers after 2012 and provide a lasting revenue stream as part of the games legacy.
- **Toronto 2015 Pan-American and Parapan-American Games** – one of the largest upcoming regional summer games, taking place in a country (and in a region of that country) with ample high-tech know-how and therefore numerous potential sponsors/partners. If LOCOG Again, a tremendous opportunity for a financial and other legacy from the games.
- **Berlinger** – already the leading supplier to anti-doping programs world-wide, with a record for innovation and customer service, Berlinger has the know-how (and the incentive) to develop and provide the system.

Eliminate Collecting Medication and supplement Information

Why do we collect this information? Do the accredited labs need or even use the information? For the most part, no. Is this information relevant to results management? Only in a few cases. For example, it may help an athlete prove no intent to enhance performance for the purposes of reduction of ineligibility for specified substance ADRV (see WADC 2009 Article 10.4 (Comment)). In my experience, during games-time, athletes frequently arrive at a doping control station without a complete list. They must call their team doctors for the information. Sometimes they have not even provided the complete list to their team doctors. (One wonders how and why this can ever be the case.) I observed several

examples of this at the Paralympics, and involving sophisticated sporting countries. In one case, the athlete had to use the computer at the doping control station to e-mail his doctor in Korea for the information – and he did receive a response within 15 minutes. But this contributes little to efficient and effective doping control.

I suggest that ADAMS would be a better place for athletes to list their medications and supplements – if they so choose. The utility for the anti-doping system of collecting this information during doping control is not worth the time it takes in the doping control station.

Permit DCOs to Divide and Seal the Urine Samples

Use the FIFA approach that permits athletes to authorize the DCO to manipulate the sample in the processing room. It is efficient, and quick, and the athletes like it. It is WADC 2009 compliant, and spelled out in these provisions of the *FIFA Anti-Doping Regulations*:

Appendix E: Testing Procedure

...

Article 6: Conducting the sample collection session: collection of urine samples

...

7. *The player shall decide whether he or the FIFA doping control officer shall pour the urine into bottles.* The decision taken shall be documented in writing on Form 0-3. If the player decides to do it himself, the FIFA doping control officer shall explain the procedure to him. Bottle “B” shall be filled to a minimum of 30ml, and the remainder of the urine poured into bottle “A” to a minimum of 60ml. Should there still be urine remaining, the FIFA doping control officer shall ensure that the player fills first bottle “A” and then bottle “B” to capacity as per the recommendation of the equipment manufacturer. The FIFA doping control officer shall instruct the player to ensure that a small amount of urine is left in the collection vessel to test that the residual urine is in accordance with art. 6 par. 9 herein. [emphasis added]

8. After the urine sample has been poured into bottles “A” and “B”, *either the player himself or the FIFA doping control officer according to art. 6 par. 7 herein shall seal them.* The player and the FIFA doping control officer shall ensure that the bottles have been properly sealed and compare the code numbers on both bottles, the bottle caps and the particulars on Form 0-3 once again. [emphasis added]

I think every games-time program should have this option.

Other Suggestions?

There are a number of major upcoming anti-doping meetings in Europe. My ideas are quite obvious; no doubt there is much more innovative thinking. Please talk about these ideas, and suggest other ways to improve the efficiency and speed of doping control. Ask athletes what they would suggest. Make the system better.