

October 30, 2017

Secretariat, International Weightlifting Federation  
H-1146 Budapest,  
Istvánmezei út 1-3.  
Hungary

Dear Sir/Madam:

Having reflected on the technical, economic and political quagmire in dealing with the punishment for and deterrence against prohibited PED use, I offer the following suggestion below for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
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### **How to deal with prohibited PED violations in the sport of Weightlifting**

In a nutshell: simply disqualify athletes' competition result; do NOT ban athletes as punishment or deterrence from repeating the offense; and test only at competitions. Don't try to be policeman, judge, and jury. Stick to being referee.

Rationale:

1. The historical record makes it clear that the use of prohibited PEDs is widespread in the sport of Weightlifting (as in many other Olympic sports). The reality of the culture of competitive professional sports is to win, and that avoiding detection of competition infractions or other prohibited actions is considered part of the game and acceptable...as long as you don't get caught. The ethical imperative against this view among athletes and coaches is nowhere on the horizon. Clearly, athlete sanctions have done little to reduce the use of prohibited PEDs. New forms of detection will inevitably be followed by new designer drugs. There probably has never been a "clean" world Weightlifting championship since the 1950s. So let's stop pretending the sport can be made clean in the future, just as the IOC stopped pretending long ago that the Olympics Games were amateur competitions and now welcomes professional athletes.
2. Weightlifting is largely a youth sport. Training starts in the early teens or earlier, and an athlete peaks in performance by age 25. These are young athletes, not mature adults. They should not be held responsible for violations they were led into by the culture of their sport, by their coaches, physicians, mentors, or other adults who often pursue their own interests over the health, safety, and long-run career interests of the athlete. Bans of 2, 4, or more years typically ruin an athlete's career. Such bans are too harsh on young people. As with sentencing a minor to a long prison sentence for theft, it is more destructive than constructive.

3. There appears to be no effective way to eliminate the use of prohibited PEDs in the sport. Rather than trying to eliminate their use with threats of long-term bans from competition—using policies and procedures that are to some degree arbitrary and often mired in legal, political and ethical complexity—it would be much easier and a more appropriate role for a sports federation to simply disqualify the athlete’s result for the competition in question. Don’t try to be policeman, judge, and jury. Stick to being referee.
4. One concession to competition bans may be a policy of short-term bans of, e.g., 6 months, with the rationale that it provides time for the ergogenic effects of prohibited PEDs to wear off or substantially so.
5. With this approach, testing is done only at competitions. Only medal winners and runners-up plus potential alternate winners in cases of disqualifications need to be tested (e.g., test the top 10 finishers). An added benefit is greatly reduced drug testing and enforcement expenses.

This policy approach greatly reduces the burdens of sports governing bodies in managing and shepherding their sport into a popular and successful attraction. It keeps sports associations out of PED politics and away from potential public criticism of their policies and actions. It focuses sports federations on their proper role of officiating and arbitrating sports competitions. Sports federations gain no advantage in trying to play policeman, judge, and jury to punish athletes with career-destroying long bans for using prohibited PEDs. Instead, stick to being referees and simply disqualify athletes’ results for their competition infractions.

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