

# THE DOPE

## ON DOPE

Following a similar pattern to a year ago, the staff at *Bicycling* has been run ragged trying to work out who will or won't be riding the Tour de France, courtesy of yet another round of doping allegations and admissions. Operacion Puerto still rages, and now we have had '96 Tour winner and CSC team owner Bjarne Riis, an avowed anti-doping team manager, admit he won that Tour as high as a kite. So what is all the fuss about? Neil Gardiner investigated: ►

The atmosphere was thick with anticipation, sausages and beer. Out of a speaker crackled a singsong voice, echoing back from the grandstand. The pace motorbike buzzed around the velodrome and pounded the wood, the reverberations rumbling through the underground corridors and change-rooms. In a six-day track event, a big gathering means a better payout for the riders. But on this particular winter day in 1985, above the chattering crowds and searing bratwurst, one of the riders heard a whisper. "Drug testing tonight!" In those boomy change rooms sat nine very concerned riders, debating what to do next. It didn't take them long to come up with a solution. All in agreement, they put a few banknotes into an envelope and left to go warm up.

At around 9:30pm, just after the last race, all the lights went off and the whole stadium descended into darkness. A minute later, when a spectator found the switchbox, the caretaker was already there, turning the main switch back on. He was smiling, and only he and those nine riders knew why. The drug testers, however, were not smiling. In the critical moment of taking the urine samples, the lights went out.

This story accurately contextualises riders' attitude towards doping at that time. As professionals they all felt they

needed some assistance in recovery from racing February to December, they needed help motivating themselves in stage after stage, come sleet or sunburn, and they needed relief from the pain of lactic acid onslaught and oxygen bankruptcy. "Why should we not be allowed to look after ourselves?" Doping controls were resented, generally because "they interfered with a man who is just trying to do his job". Controls were just another obstacle to overcome in a very hard existence. Those nine still laugh among themselves about that day, and on the face of it, it's a funny anecdote. But today this topic is taken very seriously.

The media have penned grotesque pictures of athletes, chemically modified like futuristic, purpose-farmed animals. Dedicated athletes are branded 'cheats' and 'liars' and, by representing the matter in black and white, the public is merely led, without insight and perspective that show up all the shades of grey.

The sport's sponsors pay close attention to public opinion when calculating their return on investment. A big ProTour team costs €10 million a year, lesser teams cost a fraction of that, but get a fraction of the exposure. TV channels constantly watch their ratings and for every percentage drop in eyeballs looking at screens, they lose leverage in negotiating advertising deals. So when fewer people watch, the

UCI loses leverage in negotiating programme deals. When big paycheques are threatened, people get upset.

Positive drug results have caused many sponsors to withdraw. Phonak threw in the towel after Tyler Hamilton, Santi Perez, Oscar Camenzind and Floyd Landis tested positive. Insurance giant Liberty Seguros withdrew when team manager Manolo Saiz was caught leaving a haematologist's blood bank with vast amounts of cash in his pockets. German TV stations have threatened not to show cycling events until there is clear evidence that the governing bodies are cleaning up the sport.

The question still remains though. Who do the governing bodies go after? Who's at fault here? Is it the riders? Is it the team managers? Is it the system? All of the above is the fairest answer. Riders want to win. Team managers are partial to winning too. But they have inherited a system with a culture of doping, dating back to the very first Tour de France.

A timeline shows riders over the years using various combinations of booze, strychnine, cocaine, heroin, stimulants, anabolics, corticoids, EPO and blood doping. Jacques Anquetil was famously quoted as saying that one cannot ride the Tour on mineral water (and he wasn't recommending a hearty chateaubriande before an important time trial). Tommy Simpson died on Mont Ventoux with vials

of amphetamine in his jersey pocket, Olympians admitted blood doping in the LA games and in the late 1980s EPO was trialled among Dutch amateurs, some of whom would die in their sleep. The stakes are high – Jimenez dead, aged 32. Pantani dead, 34. Several other elite cyclists have suffered heart attacks and died. Four have been under the age of 24.

Still, the underlying reason behind doping is money. In anything involving money, there is cheating. Take the business world – the courts are filled with people who thought they could take a short cut and earn an extra buck. Now the law has extended to cycling. There are criminal consequences to a positive dope test in Italy. Some say damn right, it's fraud. It's no wonder that those accused deny all. Losing money is one thing, but jail is no

schemes, ensuring that the rider stays successful, and alive. The ones that really suffer are the younger riders and the amateurs trying to get a break.

In any medium-sized town in say, Italy, there'll be at least one bike race a week. After soccer, the European pastime of choice is to stand on a street corner on a Friday night with a beer and a roll and watch men hurtle around a 1km circuit. It's a blue-collar sport. For many, it's a chance to escape the humdrum of factory labour, farm duties or municipal work. With few exceptions, the riders have very little education and few prospects. A look at last year's ProTour winner – if it were not for cycling, Alejandro Valverde would be driving lorries back and forth across Extremadura. He's lucky though. He had the right parents who passed on vast



Barry Hoban leads Tom Simpson's British team-mates the day after his death at the 1967 Tour.

## THE BUTLER DID IT

REAL EXCUSES RIDERS GAVE FOR THE PRESENCE OF NAUGHTY STUFF IN THEIR BLOOD/URINE. MAKE THAT SURREAL...

### Gilberto Simoni

He declared that the cocaine was from a recent visit to the dentist. When the dentist denied using archaic anaesthetising methods, Simoni claims cocaine is from a South American sweet his grandmother gave him.

### Frank Vandenbrouke

He claimed that the EPO found in his house was for his dog.

### Stefano Garzelli

He maintained that the Probenecid found in his system was from the chicken he ate in the hotel.

### Raimondas Rumsas

He asserted that the vast amounts of EPO, testosterone and corticoids were for his mother in law.

### Christian Henn

He explained that his high testosterone levels are due to drinking an Italian herbal remedy he

was using to help increase his fertility.

### Dario Frigo

He promised that he "never intended using the Hemassist". This wouldn't have helped anyway, as the substance he'd been sold turned out to be saline solution.

### Jan Ullrich

States that someone gave him a pills in a nightclub and he just took it.

### Laurent Brochard

Asserts he did take drugs because everyone around him took them so he had to not to lose his job – but denied taking them before the world championships, attributing his win to just having good legs that day.

### Richard Virenque

Vehemently denies ever taking any drugs. He goes so far as to write a book then wrote a book called *Ma Verite* (My Truth) proclaiming innocence and unfair treatment. In court a year later he breaks down and owns up.

### Charlie Wegelius

His De Nardi Colpack team issued a statement

at the time explaining that Wegelius's haematocrit value fluctuates naturally, the result of the removal of his spleen following a 1998 motorcycle accident.

### Tyler Hamilton

His defence is the notion of a 'vanishing twin' who shared the womb when Hamilton was a fetus. He claimed that cells can transfer from one to unborn twin to another in the womb. No twin has been found.

### Ivan Basso

He admitted that he was 'Birillo,' the canine codename on Dr Fuentes' list, but that it is only classed as 'attempted doping'.

### Adri van der Poel

Bust for strychnine in 1983. Claimed his father in law, who raced pigeons, fed him a pie made from one of his doped-up birds.

**And finally – not cycling, but a classic:** In 1996, Daniel Plaza tested positive for nandrolone, and claimed that prolonged oral sex with his pregnant wife caused the race walker to absorb the steroid, which pregnant women may produce naturally.

place for a skinny guy with shaved legs.

During the Festina Affair (the sponsor of the implicated team will forever bear the burden of that term) Alex Zulle sat in prison for only a few minutes before it all came gushing out (the truth that is). It took his team-mate Richard Virenque a year longer. In the year before his court appearance he'd written a book entitled *My Truth* claiming innocence. But a few minutes in front of a judge and *My Truth* became my lies.

The question often asked is: why don't they just let them do whatever drugs they like and let them get on with it? There's a simple answer to that. They'd die. Not immediately, and very few pros would. The doped pay doctors untold fortunes, fixed percentages of salaries and incentive

cardiovascular capabilities, extra fast-twitch fibres and massive self-belief.

The ones that look up to him have a long way to go – years of riding through the ranks to maybe, perhaps, possibly get noticed. Given a straight choice: load hay bales at 5am every morning; or take some unmarked pills the team mechanic says gives 'more power' and maybe one day earn €2 million a year. Few would pick the former.

Are they all on it? Well, no-one can say for sure. The signs are there. The stories don't always match up and we are often told the wildest of excuses about how a certain athlete's station wagon got to contain enough drugs to start a pharmacy chain.

Truth is, it's easy, by UCI legal standards, to test positive. We've all had runny ▶

## TIME LINE

### 1900s

Early Tour riders were said to consume alcohol, ether and strychnine to dull the pain.

### 1910s

Reports of cocaine use by riders to anaesthetise their saddle sores.

### 1924

The Tour's first drug scandal; the Pélissier brothers admit using chloroform, cocaine, aspirin and horse ointment.

### 1940s

Riders begin using substances to increase performance rather than dull the pain. The Tour organisation and UCI step in.

### 1957

Jacques Anquetil claims no-one can expect pros to race "on mineral water alone" implying use of l'amphèt (amphetamine).

### 1958

Jacques Anquetil and Ercole Baldini agree not to use amphetamine for the Grand Prix de Forlì. "Never again!" they say.

### 1967

13 July: British cyclist Tom Simpson dies climbing Mont Ventoux following the use of amphetamines.

### 1969

May: Eddy Merckx accused of doping at the Giro d'Italia, with no counter-analysis sample. He has always claimed it as a set-up.

### 1970

Anabolic steroids Clenbuterol, nandrolone and epitestosterone show up in tests.

### 1983

Dutch professional cyclist convicted of having used strychnine after positive test at Henninger Turm.

### 1988

July: Tour de France leader Pedro Delgado positive for Probenecid – but substance not yet on UCI banned list.

### 1990

Dutch rider Gert-Jan Theunisse positive during 1990 Tour – second time in two years. A procedural mix-up exonerates him.

### 1995

Marco Pantani crashes during Milan-Turin. Tests reveal a 60.1% hematocrit.

### 1998

July: Willy Voet, Festina team soigneur, arrested for possession of EPO, HGH, testosterone and amphetamines. Police raid finds TVM team with doping products.

Aug: Alex Zulle and Laurent Dufaux admit drug use. Festina team-mate Richard Virenque denies doping, contrary to Willy Voet's account.

### 1999

Dr Michele Ferrari admits Moser's 1984-hour record achieved using blood doping, and then unbanned.

June: Marco Pantani ejected from Giro with high red blood cell count.

July: Armstrong's urine test finds traces of glucocorticosteroid, but well below the 'positive' threshold. Armstrong exempted for using skin cream treating saddle sores.

Oct: Virenque finally admits to EPO use in court.

### 2000

Gert-Jan Theunisse, KOM 1989 Tour, confesses to "having used a great deal of Celestone", a corticoid. Criminal trial reveals Festina team management organised doping in 1998.

noses and an ignorant chemist could prescribe the wrong nasal spray. If doping control pitched up in the morning and asked for a sample, you'd feature on every cycling blog in the English-speaking world. Oh, and you'd be banned.

Jan Ullrich took some pills at a nightclub, while he was injured and depressed. His cobwebbed bike had been standing in his garage with two flat tyres for weeks. He was not competing. The doping officials didn't care. They woke him in the morning with an empty test tube. In a few days it was headline news.

## THE DOPE

Ask yourself this question: why do you ride? To stay fit and healthy and enjoy life a little more? To see the great outdoors?

If it is then you won't need to read this. If you want to make it a career, remember that cycling at a professional level is dangerous and if you make the decision to dope, then your whole approach will change. Staying in shape is not a priority of a pro, funnily enough. The goal is to win, often at any cost. The two are often mutually exclusive. Pros that dope are the most unhealthy people you'll meet. And that's in the prime of their life. Wait till they are 55.

### ERYTHROPOIETIN (EPO)

EPO is a hormone produced by the kidneys that stimulates red blood cell production by bone marrow.

#### WHY THEY USE IT

This increases oxygen absorption, reduces fatigue and improves endurance – the extra red cells carrying more oxygen and nutrients.

#### WHY YOU SHOULDN'T

EPO increases blood viscosity, risking coronary and cerebral artery blockages and embolisms leading to strokes or heart attacks. The heart rate drops at night and may stop. 0.3% of EPO users develop pure red cell aplasia – a debilitating, lifelong condition that necessitates blood transfusion on a regular basis.

### BLOOD DOPING

#### WHAT IT IS

Blood doping is process of removing blood while out of competition and reinfusing it just before a big day.

#### WHY THEY DO IT

The extra blood cells have a similar effect to EPO, increasing oxygen absorption, reducing fatigue and improving endurance. It is very difficult to detect in testing.

#### WHY YOU SHOULDN'T

There are very few risks if performed properly by a physician. The reality is that it seldom is. Firstly, athletes risk infection. Then, the blood must be specially prepared, frozen and stored

Clearly no cheating had happened, unless you count German techno as a healing agent.

There was Jonathan Vaughters' wasp incident. During the 2002 Tour de France he was stung on the face and it swelled like a blown-up surgical glove. With a small dose of cortisone he could've raced the following day. But with the doping laws, he had three choices: 1. Ride in the peleton at full speed with a massive headache and one eye. 2. Take the injection and risk the drugs test. 3. Take the injection and abandon. Wisely he chose option 3.

at -60 degrees, failing which they may develop a transfusion reaction which can result in death.

### ANABOLICS

#### WHAT THEY ARE

These are drugs that increase the rate of growth of certain tissues. Examples: Stanazolol, Nandrolone, Human Growth Hormone, Epitesterone, Testosterone.

#### WHY THEY USE THEM

Benefits include:

- increased strength and speed
- faster recovery
- ability to train harder and for longer
- greater motivation and competition aggression
- loss of fat and increase in muscle mass
- bone density gains

#### WHY YOU SHOULDN'T

Anabolics help build the body, but not only the muscles, hands, feet, hair, the head and tumours too! It's a serious risk in a high stakes game. Possible side effects are:

- cancer of the liver, prostate, kidney
- heart and liver damage
- high blood pressure
- aggressive behaviour
- post-use depression
- acne, swelling of feet or ankles
- nosebleeds
- heart arrhythmias
- stunted growth in younger athletes
- shrinking of testicles
- baldness
- breast growth in males
- body hair growth in female
- acromegaly with HGH (abnormal growth of bones of hands, feet and face)

### AMPHETAMINES

#### WHAT THEY ARE

Amphetamines increase alertness and arousal, limit appetite and inhibit pain receptors.

#### WHY THEY USE THEM

Riders who use an amphetamine like ephedrine or methylphenidate can race harder, for longer enabling them to ignore the warning

The injection would have given him no performance advantage and could not possibly be construed as cheating.

Last year, the words Operation Puerto struck terror into the hearts of several athletes on a mythical list, not only cyclists. The doctor at the centre of the scandal, Dr Eufemiano Fuentes, is accused of storing and preparing blood for blood doping. Codenames hid the identity of the athletes he'd been assisting and this list was the reason that we were all deprived of a Jan Ullrich / Ivan Basso showdown at the 2006 Tour de France.

signs of fatigue. They can train harder and lose weight more easily.

#### WHY YOU SHOULDN'T

Amphetamine use can lead to complications, some immediate, some far-reaching:

- can cause anxiety or panic
- can lead to physical and psychological addiction
- heat stroke
- kidney damage
- psychosis

### DIURETICS

#### WHAT THEY ARE

Diuretics are drugs that increase urination.

#### WHY THEY USE THEM

Diuretics have been used by cyclists to reduce the concentration of drugs in the urine, reducing chances of detection of banned drugs in a urine test.

#### WHY YOU SHOULDN'T

Side effects are:

- dehydration
- muscle cramps
- low blood sugar
- headaches
- vomiting
- drowsiness

### CORTICOSTEROIDS

#### WHAT THEY ARE

Corticosteroids are a class of steroid hormones.

#### WHY THEY USE IT

Used legitimately for many sports injuries, corticosteroids are believed to have great healing properties, allowing long rides, day after day. Improved recovery from hard Tour stages is also cited.

#### WHY YOU SHOULDN'T

Ask Bernard Thevenet, who admitted using corticosteroids for three years. He says it ruined his liver and now he can hardly ride a bike. Other complications include infections, hypertension, osteoporosis, diabetes and permanent eye damage.

The involvement of Saiz meant that his team was left off the roster, excluding the third favourite, Alexandre Vinokourov. Others sat, hoping their codename was obscure enough to get away with it.

Rather than provide answers, the deeper the saga goes the more questions pop up. The first being 'Why is everyone so quiet about it?' It could be explained but the 'cartel of silence', a conspiracy theory that everyone's in on it. As a pro rider retires there are very few options open after 15 years of just eating, riding and sleeping. If anyone wants a job in cycling again then they have to keep quiet.

Nobody likes to be the tattletale. Ask Simeone what Armstrong said to him on the road to Lons le Saunier in the 2004 Tour de France. Ask ex-pro Paul Kimmage, author of the revealing *Rough Ride* if fellow Irishmen of the peleton came to the book launch. But as more people come clean, it'll be harder for the big guys to pick on them. It's odd that by keeping this code of silence, those involved are killing the industry that feeds them.

We've heard the blithe statement 'Don't hate the players, hate the game.' It indicates an evil inertia of conservatism. Those who get rich from the system have no desire to change it. That is, until the money troughs run dry. The sport has to evolve to survive and team managers under pressure realise that changes must come from within the structure. The doping agencies cannot chase every rider in the pro peleton every day. Let alone riders lower down.

In a bold initiative, Team CSC's owner Bjarne Riis has appointed internal doping control. Already in charge of the International Skiing Federation's anti-doping programme, Rasmus Damsgaard accepted the post provided Team CSC pays funds into the research foundation that employs him. That way he keeps his independence. He'll watch riders' blood profiles and urine samples for irregularities, testing them regularly, in and out of competition. Interestingly, CSC's results are still great. Again they won the coveted Paris-Roubaix title. Locally, the MTN Microsoft team management is implementing structures to spearhead a fair-play initiative in South Africa.

In yet another recent scandal, former Team Telekom soigneur Jeff D'Hondt has alleged in his soon-to-be-published book that he witnessed team doctors administering EPO injections in the 1990s. It was a long time ago in cycling terms. It happened before the Festina

affair and before the Armstrong era. But what we can't ignore is that the time frame of that era falls squarely on the two Tour victories earned by Bjarne Riis and Jan Ullrich. Initially, it seemed this was just another of many isolated single-source stories that are dismissed by the accused as bitter words from a fired employee.

But after initial denials, the floodgates have since opened. The doctors and former riders Christian Henn, Udo Bolts, Bert Dietz, Rolf Aldag, Erik Zabel and 1996 Tour winner Bjarne Riis have spoken out, confirming those reports. Dietz is only indirectly connected in the sport with little to lose by clearing his conscience. The rest are deeply involved as directeur sportifs with Gerolsteiner, T-Mobile and Riis owns and runs Team CSC. Riis said, "The time has come to put the cards on the table. I have done things which I now regret and which I wouldn't do again. I have doped. I have taken EPO. For a while it was part of my life."

Gerolsteiner team manager Hans-Michael Holczer has stated that Henn would not be fired instantly. At first this may seem foolish, and that Holczer is in on it too. But in fact it's a giant leap forward in getting to the root of the problem – the code of secrecy. "There are two possibilities: I can either keep Christian Henn on, or I can suspend or fire him, the latter would support the 'cartel of silence,'" he says. "We stand for a new era in cycling."

By his actions and words, Holczer shows an acute understanding of how the system works. The old way of 'keep quiet or you'll never work in this town again' has scared too many into remaining tight-lipped. We hope the others follow his example. Henn's amnesty has now set a precedent, which can only encourage similar confessions. It's the future. And we're hoping for more. ■



Floyd Landis gives evidence at his May doping hearing.

## TIME LINE continued

### 2001

April: Bo Hamburger is first rider positive for EPO.  
6 June: Frigo found with three phials, one containing testosterone and two with saline solution, purchased under the impression it was Hemassist.

### 2002

23 May: Gilberto Simoni positive for cocaine at Giro.  
3 June: Stefano Garzelli positive for probenecid at Giro.  
July: Raimondas Rumšas' wife arrested after EPO and anabolics found in her car. Filippo Simeoni testifies to taking banned products prescribed by Dr Michele Ferrari.

### 2003

11 Jan: Denis Zanette dies aged 32.  
5 May: Marco Ceriani dies aged 16.  
3 June: Fabrice Salanson dies aged 23.  
14 Nov: Marco Rusconi dies aged 24.  
6 Dec: Jose Maria Jimenez dies aged 32.  
29 Dec: Michel Zanoli dies aged 35.

### 2004

13 Feb: Johan Sermon dies aged 21 – heart failure.  
14 Feb: Marco Pantani dies from cocaine overdose.  
4 July: Mountain biker Filip Meirhaeghe positive for EPO, faces two year ban.  
June: Armstrong accused of taking performance-enhancing drugs in a book by David Walsh and Pierre Ballester. Authors concede evidence is circumstantial.  
July: David Millar confesses EPO use, stripped of world TT title. Team-mate Philippe Gaumont tells press – doping is endemic to team. Jesus Manzano, of Kelme, claims he was forced to dope by team.  
9 Aug: Ex world champ Oscar Camenzind positive for EPO.  
24 Sept: Tyler Hamilton accused of blood manipulation at Olympic Games and Vuelta time trials. Vuelta charge upheld, banned for 2 years.  
5 Oct: Team-mate Santiago Perez, second in 2004 Vuelta, positive for homologous blood transfusion.

### 2005

27 Jan: 16-year-old South African, the youngest rider ever, fails EPO test. CSA accepts defence that he did not take EPO intentionally.  
Aug: Retrospective testing on Armstrong's 1999 Tour samples positive for EPO leaked to *L'Equipe*, procedurally inadmissible.  
Sept: Roberto Heras positive for EPO at Vuelta.

### 2006

May: Armstrong cleared of 1999 doping allegations.  
23 May: Police officers raid Madrid laboratory, seizing frozen blood and equipment, five arrested; 50 cyclists implicated in 'Operation Puerto'.  
30 June: Tour de France team officials withdraw Ullrich and Basso, Liberty Seguros and implicated cyclists.

27 July: Floyd Landis positive for testosterone after remarkable Stage 17 comeback.  
5 August: Landis' 'B' sample confirmed. Fired by Phonak, now appealing.

22 Dec: Former Vuelta winner Aitor Gonzalez is banned for two years for steroid use.

### 2007

24 Jan: Former Paris-Roubaix winner Johan Museeuw admits to dishonesty and resigns as QuickStep PRO.  
4 April: Ullrich's DNA matches Operation Puerto blood.  
8 May: Basso admits to Operation Puerto involvement, claiming 'attempted doping'.  
24 May: Former and current riders Henn, Dietz, Aldag and Zabel confess EPO usage in 1990s Telekom era.  
25 May: Bjarne Riis comes clean, admitting doping during his 1996 Tour win.