

Drug testing must be independent of cycling's governing body



**THE UCI NEEDS TO UNLEASH ITS DRUG-TESTING PROGRAM**

of the UCI. Newly elected Spanish Cycling Federation president José Luis Lopez Cerron firmly backs independent testing as well.

“I think an independent organization should carry out anti-doping tests and judge them all too,” Lopez Cerron told Spanish sports daily *MARCA* in December. “If a federation judges their own athletes, it can produce conflicts of interest. An independent body would judge them in a much more neutral way, which would be better both for the federations and in terms of credibility.”

Jonathan Vaughters, the Garmin-Sharp team manager and a staunch anti-doping advocate, believes that independent testing, paid for by the teams and exacted by national anti-doping groups (like USADA) and overseen by the World Anti-Doping Agency, offers a clear way forward. He said his Slipstream Sports management group would happily pay more into a fund that guaranteed independent testing. What Vaughters wouldn't do is direct any of that money to the UCI.

“Right now, you've got an opportunity. How many team managers are going to say 'no' to having a big portion of their budgets put into anti-doping? Not that many. How many are going to say 'no' to the UCI? That's a little different, right?” Vaughters said. “When everyone says, 'Oh, the UCI isn't doing a good job' ... wait a minute? Are we talking about the leadership? The executives? Or are we talking about the boots on the ground? Because the people with boots on the ground are doing an

excellent job, and they're doing it with resources that aren't quite enough.”

That's why Vaughters suggests leaving those doing the testing now, such as its anti-doping manager Francesca Rossi and head doctor Mario Zorzoli, in place, but moving their oversight to another organization, a WADA-type entity, that doesn't have an economic interest in the sport. Positives are bad for business, but clean sport should not be beholden to financial interests.

“If you remove all of the UCI, you take [Rossi and Zorzoli] out of the equation, you just lost years and years of experience of how to read a blood profile, and knowing exactly what's suspicious and what's not,” Vaughters said. “So remove the conflict of interest — the leadership, those are the people making strategic decisions based on marketing, expansion of the sport

In the months after the fall of Lance Armstrong, the UCI has been forced to examine itself and its policies. For any long-term progress to be seen, this self-reflection process must include a deep analysis of its drug-testing oversight program. The Armstrong affair and other issues — such as the absence of any EPO testing at past Amgen Tours of California — have called into question the governing body's ability to police its peloton and promote itself simultaneously.

Now, as professional cycling is trying to molt from its tainted skin, there is an opportunity for change, especially within the arena that has damaged the sport more than any other: its drug testing policies and procedures. The question many are asking at this crucial moment is whether teams and races can, or should, stay on the UCI-piloted course, or whether testing should be wholly independent of the governing body.

Opposition to the current system is gaining momentum. The Association of Race Organizers (AIOCC), which represents the grand tours and major classics, recently signed on with the Movement for Credible Cycling's efforts to beef up doping sanctions and controls; Greg LeMond, now the only American to have ever won the Tour de France, recently called for drug testing to be conducted independent