Letter to National Federations and Athletes from Leslie Buchanan, ITU Anti-doping Director

As another calendar year of triathlon competitions comes to an end, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all triathletes and their respective national federations of the importance of maintaining a zero-tolerance attitude towards doping in triathlon and to reiterate that you are all an intrinsic part of the continued success of ITU’s anti-doping program.

I would like to look back on 2019 and provide you with an overview of our ITU Anti-Doping Program in the form of a year-end Report.

2019 ITU Testing Program Year End Report

(*** note that additional testing may occur between now and December 31, 2019)

ITU Testing Pools had approximately 108 athletes in its Testing Pools

- 48 athletes in the International Registered Testing Pool (RTP);
- 60 athletes in the International Testing Pool (TP).

Athlete Biological Passport:

- 165 blood samples were collected for the purpose of the Athlete Biological Passport (ABP).

In-Competition Testing:

- 1143 in-competition urine samples were collected and analyzed;
- 52 in-competition blood samples were collected and analyzed.

Out-of-Competition Testing:

- 275 blood, urine, or blood passport samples were collected from a total of 179 tests;
- 19% of these attempts took place during the athlete’s 60-minute slot;
- Athletes from 29 different countries were tested;
- 64% of tests were conducted on athletes while they were living or training outside their home country;
- There were 6 unsuccessful testing attempts during 2019.

Anti-Doping Rule Violations

Five decisions were issued against international level athletes further to the confirmed commission of anti-doping rule violations. Each athlete was sanctioned in accordance with the ITU Anti-Doping Rules:

Those cases involved the presence of the following prohibited substances:

- Betamethasone. Glucocorticoids
- Higenamine. Beta 2 Agonists
- Prednisone. Glucocorticoids
- Methylephedrine. Stimulants
- EPO. Peptide Hormones, Growth Factors and related substances and mimetics

Not all national-level anti-doping rule violations have been reported but as of December 17, 2019, 5 national-level anti-doping rule violation were reported to ITU by NADOs.
With the help of focused and intelligent testing, education, deterrence and vigilance, ITU is confident these numbers should continue to diminish in the coming years.

ITU can proudly and confidently assert that all the testing and education initiatives it has undertaken in the past years have played an instrumental role in keeping the number of anti-doping rule violations and doping cases low.

**Code Compliance**

In 2019, ITU underwent an Audit by WADA. This was a useful exercise as it required us to think about not only how we do things but why as well. It strengthened our programs in many respects especially with regards to our collaboration with our NADO partners in this pursuit of clean sport.

ITU is dedicated to consistently fulfill all its Code requirements and shall continue to strive for excellence in this regard in 2020. Notably, we are happy to note that the ITU Executive has approved an increase in our testing budget.

Meeting all our Code compliance obligations is an ongoing responsibility. ITU is proud of the team of professionals who are involved in the day to day operation of the ITU’s anti-doping program and who work tirelessly throughout the year to ensure that all compliance requirements are met and that ITU’s anti-doping program effectively meets a gold standard. You can be sure that we will continue to do so in 2020!

**Looking ahead to 2020**

Another Olympic year is already upon us!

ITU is committed to maintaining and implementing its anti-doping program and promoting drug-free sport. We shall continue to tackle all anti-doping issues with the same determination and conviction in 2020:

**Doping controls**

The ITU Test Distribution Plan, which has been carefully and mindfully established with the help of our partners in anti-doping shall, as per usual, be carefully monitored throughout the year. It shall also be evaluated, modified and updated periodically, as required by the ITU Anti-Doping Director and the Canadian Center for Ethics in Sport (CCES), who manages ITU’s testing program.

The monitoring shall focus on efficiency, efficacy and targeted testing all the while considering the ongoing importance of deterrence and detection. The monitoring shall apply to both in-competition and out-of-competition testing.

The monitoring shall also be based on ITU’s intelligence gathering and shall include the acknowledgment of various red-flags such as significant performance improvements, suspicious behaviour, follow-up testing on atypical findings, filing failures and missed tests, etc.

ITU is also committed to coordinating all its testing efforts with all NADOs to ensure that global anti-doping efforts encourage maximum efficacy.
The ITU believes that although the typical doping control approach based on the detection of prohibited substances or their metabolites in an athlete’s sample remains an effective approach to combat doping in triathlon, it has limitations when an athlete may be using substances on an intermittent and low-dose basis.

Furthermore, it is hard to argue that notwithstanding all the advances that have been made in this field, new substances or modifications of prohibited substances (designer drugs) or methods continue to be difficult to detect by conventional analytical means. In fact, doping regimes have become much more complex and strategic by taking full advantage of the weaknesses of traditional protocols.

ITU therefore continues to implement both the steroidal (urine) and hematological (blood) modules of the Athlete Biological Passport (ABP) and remains steadfast in its belief that the implementation of the ABP has kept our anti-doping rule violations low by not only deterring potential cheaters but by making all our athletes more accountable.

The fact that the implementation of the ABP continues to be well received by our athletes speaks volumes as to the value that you have all bestowed upon ITU’s anti-doping initiatives and your desire to keep our sport clean and the playing field level.

We are proud to begin a new partnership with the Montreal INRS WADA accredited laboratory who, as of January 1, 2020, will be the ITU Athlete Passport Management Unit (APMU). The Montreal Laboratory’s reputation speaks for itself. Anchored with the IRNS’ qualified staff and robust analyses, ITU is confident that we will have a strong lasting and productive partnership which will fulfill all compliance requirements.

The International Testing Authority

The ITA is an international organisation constituted and officially established by the IOC in January 2018 as a not-for-profit foundation, based in Lausanne, Switzerland. Its mission is to offer comprehensive anti-doping services, independent from sporting or political powers to International Federations (IFs), Major Event Organisers (MEOs), and all other anti-doping organisations requesting support. Planning tests in and out of competition, evaluating risks, athlete whereabouts, managing Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUEs) and results management are all part of the way the ITA can reinforce the fight against doping by bringing together expertise and helping IFs and MEOs fulfil their duties under the World Anti-Doping Code.

The ITU intends to sign an agreement with the ITA to carry out some parts of its anti-doping program in 2020.

We are confident that our partnership with the ITA will allow us to uphold at all times the values of integrity, excellence and quality by enhancing ITU’s delivery of a high-quality anti-doping program through a collaborative, professional and innovative approach.

The 2020 Prohibited List

The 2020 Prohibited List can be downloaded from the WADA website at https://www.wada-ama.org/sites/default/files/wada_2020_english_prohibited_list_0.pdf
Education

ITU firmly believes that education is critical to successfully deter all our athletes at all levels of competition from using performance enhancing substances, to inform them of the risks of using supplements and their many responsibilities under the ITU Anti-Doping Rules and to underline the importance of verifying everything they ingest.

ITU shall continue to offer valuable information on anti-doping on its website and to distribute various educational materials to triathletes of all levels. We will also continue to work closely with our national federations and NADOs to facilitate the dissemination of these materials. We encourage you to contact ITU directly should you require assistance in this regard.

Future

Finally, looking ahead to this New Year that is upon us, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued commitment to drug-free sport.

If ITU is proud of the work it continues to accomplish in carrying out its anti-doping program, it is equally proud to acknowledge all of your contributions to our doping program and your pledges to respect your obligations with regards to anti-doping.

- To our national federations who have respected their testing, reporting and results management obligations;
- To the CCES who is ITU’s active partner and ally in the operation of its anti-doping program;
- To the SAIDS who has done a great job as our past APMU;
- To the ITA who will soon become our partner in drug-free sport;
- To all medical staff for being mindful of the Prohibited List, offering Code-compliant consultations and properly filing out timely TUE applications;
- To our hard working ITU Medical and Anti-doping Committee, led by Dr Sergio Migliorini, who guides us and serves as our TUE Committee;
- To all athlete support personnel who continue to deter athletes to resort to the use of performance enhancing substances by emphasizing the importance of proper training and nutrition and the adoption of ethical sporting values;
- To our RTP and TP athletes who continue to submit timely and accurate whereabouts information notwithstanding the burden this may impose; and,
- To each athlete who has made a personal decision to not use prohibited substances or methods to enhance his or her performance and discouraged others to do so as well:

Thank you!

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