

Doctor Michel Léglise – the athlete is responsible for what he ingests and uses.

Interview of the president of the FIG medical commission.

Last year has (once again) been marked by doping problems in certain sports, particularly in cycling. These doping scandals generally affect the image of all sports on high level. As all international federations, the FIG has approved and signed the code of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and is therefore bound to respect the rules and obligations. The Continental Unions of the FIG are subject to the same rules and are under the responsibility of the FIG.

Doctor Michel Léglise, in 1998 you already said that gymnastics and doping do not get along so well. As president of the medical commission and official doctor of the FIG, can you tell us to what extent gymnastics is nowadays concerned by the phenomenon of doping?

Michel Léglise: If an evil genius came to persuade me to give him some recipes of how to dope in gymnastics (shame on me!) I would be very embarrassed to provide him some substances, despite of my good knowledge in the field of biology and pharmacology.

Exaggerating a little, I don't know any product capable of giving the gymnast the ability to make three loops in the air instead of two. Sure, there may be a temptation to take some anabolic to build up muscles; however, the development of the qualities of strength – often contra productive for the qualities required in modern gymnastics such as speed and swings – is no major element anymore in our current gymnastics.

How does the FIG manage the doping controls?

According the international WADA-UNESCO rules, the FIG must directly supervise the controls carried out at its different events (World Cham-

pionships, World Cups, tournaments etc.), at events organised by the continental unions as well as out-of-competition controls carried out by WADA on high-level gymnasts.

The FIG must also make sure that all doping controls carried out within the member federations presenting a positive result are treated on a disciplinary level according to the FIG/WADA rules, regardless the athlete's level.

In other words, all results of analyses carried out by WADA accredited laboratories throughout the world come to the FIG, whether it concerns controls during or out of competitions.

This means that the FIG has the perfect control over all results (several thousands) of the controls carried out every year within gymnastics.

Which are the substances that could be found in gymnastics?

We have a complete list of the prohibited products that were found in 2007.

This concerns 0.2% of the controls, which is a very low number corresponding to 8 positive controls throughout the world. Furthermore this number concerns rather minor products, notably no anabolic hormone.



Portrait:

Name and surname:

Léglise Michel

Date of birth: July 23, 1947

Residence: Paris, Frankreich

Profession: Doctor in Medicine

Functions in gymnastics and sport:

● **FFG:** Director for international relations, Doctor of the National Federation, Member of the medical commission of the French Agency against Doping (AFLD)

● **FIG:** 1st Vice-president, President of the medical commission, President of the competitions commission

● **IOC:** Coordinator of the work group Sport and Children of the medical commission

● **Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF):** Member of the medical and anti doping commission

Leisure: Painting

A wish: a big success for the 1st Youth Olympic Games YOG in Singapore

In 95% of the cases it concerns:

- furosemide, a diuretic found only among women (in this regard, see online article from Dr. Léglise on www.fig-gymnastics.com).
- cannabis.

Furosemide is a diuretic that can be used for hiding a substance, such as for example an anabolic. However it is well known that in gymnastics it is rather used for losing some weight by eliminating water (which is not a medically satisfactory method). It seems that there was no deliberate doping in the treated cases but of course the WADA rule foresees a sanction of a two year suspension.

Concerning the cannabis consumption it is a society problem affecting the youth and is condemnable, also for health reasons.

Of course, occasionally products used to treat asthma can be found but in all cases the concerned gymnasts could proof their need to use this product with certified medical tests (authorization for therapeutic use).

Where is gymnastics positioned on the scale of "contaminated" sports?

Every year the WADA publishes the list of the positive controls as well as the names of the found prohibited products by sport. Gymnastics is at the very bottom of the list.

This rather positive statement does not change the vigilance of the FIG to respect the rules of the WADA; this in solidarity with the other sports and most of all because the unlimited imagination of the cheaters can produce new substances.

Is there a risk that athletes become victims of a sort of « trap »?

An article of the WADA code states that every athlete is responsible for the introduction of products found in his organism. In case of a positive result in doping control, a fundamental question can be raised: is there a conscious determination to use the product for doping? The analysis only gives a simple and objective result and is not subject to any interpretation if the athlete had the intention to cheat or not.

The WADA code and the FIG/WADA rules certainly allow a certain flexibility and tolerate somewhat adapted sanctions for milder (or aggravating) circumstances, but within reduced limits and for exceptional cases where the proof, that there was no desire to cheat, is flagrant.

To proof this is not simple and the cheaters, as we know, have a fertile imagination and can deceive the disciplinary authorities.

Moreover, even if there was no intention of doping, reasons such as for example negligence or unawareness of the rules are only extenuating circumstances and can not prevent the pronouncement of a sanction.

Could the intake of prohibited products be compared to another form of cheating, such as for example manipulation of results?

We know that at competitions it is tempting to cheat. These temptations present themselves in different ways such as biased judging, doping etc; these are all forms of cheating that the FIG can not accept for moral, ethical and health reasons.

How are doping controls managed at UEG championships and competitions?

The UEG has formed its own medical commission in 2004, which is chaired by Dr. Kostas Markou (GRE) and closely collaborates with Dr. Léglise. Dr. Kostas Markou is responsible of the doping controls during manifestations, in accordance with the FIG/WAGA regulation. Recently, in agreement with the FIG, it was decided to carry out 12 doping controls during the UEG seniors/juniors championships and competitions. The draw of the athletes to be controlled is carried out by the UEG doctor.