



The Failure of WADA Communications And the Power of Condemnation

By Steven V. Selthoffer, CEO, AVA
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(Montréal, CAN) – The epic announcement of the **WADA Statement on Meldonium Notice issued to Stakeholders**, April 13, 2016, stating that “limited data exists” of how long the substance (meldonium) takes to get out of an athletes system reveals a major operational failure by WADA leadership of adding meldonium prematurely to the Prohibited List without adequate scientific information placing WADA and athletes in legal jeopardy and calls into question whether it should be on the Prohibited List at all.

With anti-doping leadership like this, no athlete is safe. These scenarios and problems were predicable long ago.

The Statement was followed by the announcement of a record breaking number of 201 adverse analytical findings of athletes who have tested positive for meldonium throwing the world of anti-doping into a tailspin of who is responsible for what in this disaster. Athletes who would never even think of doping are caught in the net.

The Notice of “guidance regarding the Results Management and Adjudication process” throws the 201 athletes including tennis superstar Maria Sharapova and others a possible life-preserver for their sport careers. However, that remains to be seen.

Now the entire process of the addition of meldonium to the Prohibited List from the first “alert” reportedly given to USADA to Ms. Sharapova’s announcement of testing positive for her medical treatment is becoming an ever darkening tale of condemnation, substandard communications, possible Cold War animosities and demonstrates what many believe is that WADA is incapable of governing itself, that it needs oversight, checks and balances and independent review.

The about-face, saying that cases could be “stayed” and provisional suspensions “lifted” under certain concentrations before March 1 and after March 1, 2016 reveals another case of a lack of scientific data and information.

Questions arise of how these new limits and time frames were created if they did not have enough science or data to do so in the first place? How many studies were done? Over how many years? Did they do male and female comparisons? Did it include world-class performance athletes? The real question becomes: How can they get enough “science” or do enough “new studies” to make a determination before the Rio 2016 Olympics or the hearing panels in May-June?

Now that WADA has “blown it,” growing public sentiment increasingly believes this is the first step back in a scramble and search for a political solution and not just a “clarification.”

In recent days, nine (9) athletes have had their bans for testing positive for meldonium lifted as they qualified for the “no fault or negligence” provision under the WADA Code.

Then the Ethics Commission of the Austrian National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) weighed in, criticizing WADA's operations and procedures stating, "This inconsistency is a setback... With this approach, WADA itself has done sport a disservice and the anti-doping work has been dealt a severe setback."

Most likely, this is not the last back peddling that will happen. The Notice of the adjustments for the athletes facing results management and adjudication is only one part of this dark story now emerging.

The real story begins here.

Pound's condemnation of Sharapova

Many were astounded and taken back earlier by the statements and condemnation made by Mr. Dick Pound leveled at Ms. Maria Sharapova and her use of meldonium in her medical treatment for cardiac issues including irregular EKG results after her recent press conference announcing her medical use of meldonium. Her heart problems and medical issues including possible signs of diabetes have been known for a long time. Sharapova has always played at a medical disadvantage to healthier athletes.

Pound is the former WADA president from 1999 to 2007 and now a member of the WADA Independent Commission (IC) who was recently tasked with investigating the spreading Russian doping scandal. His statements infuriated many who viewed the commission as not being genuinely "independent" and as if Pound was more concerned with protecting his own work under his watch at WADA.

In The Guardian interview, Tuesday, March 8, 2016, Pound condemned Sharapova's conduct as "reckless beyond description," not content with that, he stated among other things that Sharapova taking meldonium was "willful negligence." Pound went on to say, "She was warned in advance of the WADA publications out there, (but) she didn't pay any attention to it... of course she should have known."

These statements were viewed as patently hypocritical to many coming in the middle of the expanding Russian doping scandal with the release of two shocking Independent Commission Reports also now with the death of two RUSADA executives Kamayev and Sinev (to date), athletes living in exile for fear of their lives, sport executives allegedly extorting hundreds of thousands of Euros from athletes, with the FSB allegedly inside the Russian anti-doping lab, doping test cover ups, destruction of evidence and the tentacles going all the way to the Lausanne lab home of the Athletes Blood Passport system and WADA itself in Montréal.

Pound's statement that Sharapova "should have known" revolted many in light of what has taken place with WADA which many view as a mess. The statement is also key and pivotal as to who is genuinely at fault for the high volume cases (201 to date) currently pending to go to adjudication and maybe CAS (Court of Arbitration and Sport) and the process of adding meldonium to the Prohibited List.

Accusing Sharapova of not "paying attention to it" is revelatory clue in the dark and convoluted world of WADA and international sport federation communications.

Pound's quotes of "reckless beyond description," "willful negligence" and others placed in context are heavy comments damaging to Ms. Sharapova personally and her entire career before even going to adjudication and potentially arbitration in CAS. Sharapova like other athletes have always supported the efforts in anti-doping and the efforts of WADA, Mr. Pound and others.

And all this was done knowing that WADA had only "limited data" on the secretion times of meldonium.

Usually it's those athletes who have left their country to train in the USA (or another country) that are totally innocent and the most committed to clean sports. They usually know what is going on in their own country and chose to "vote with their feet."

Sharapova demonstrates integrity

Sharapova took the initiative announcing her positive analytical finding first. Standing up at her press conference she took full responsibility for her mistake.

World Number 1, Serena Williams, USA praised Sharapova saying, “I think most people were happy she was upfront and very honest and showed a lot of courage...”

Nick Bollettieri, her former coach said in a BBC interview that he believed she “made a very honest mistake” and did not take meldonium to gain any unfair advantage over her opponents.

Sharapova said her family doctor began prescribing the drug Mildronate, also known as meldonium in 2006 after several health issues arose... including frequent cases of the flu. (Source: New York Times article, *Maria Sharapova Admits Taking Meldonium, Drug Newly Banned by Tennis*, Christopher Clarey, March 7, 2016).

“I was getting sick often,” she said. “I had a deficiency in magnesium, I had irregular EKG results, I had a family history of diabetes and there were signs of diabetes.”

Sharapova’s lawyer, John Haggerty, said in an interview after the news conference that the medication “brought these conditions that she had under control.” (NYT).

The Absolute Power of Condemnation

It appears Pound has now personally cemented his role as WADA’s CCO, the Chief Condemning Officer. In the middle of the current Russian doping scandal the Sharapova press conference gave Pound a public relations opportunity to hide behind, quickly sliding from defense back to offense as Condemner-in-Chief.

Condemnation is a powerful weapon. Hard hitting, made-for-TV statements and quips can invoke a populist wave of condemnation on an athlete through the global anti-doping chain-of-command. Statements like those can result in eliciting the maximum emotional, social and economic punishment on an athlete as possible. It is especially harmful to athletes like Sharapova who are personally committed to clean sports and who have supported Pound’s and WADA’s work over their careers.

With Pound citing athletes like Sharapova and using her as a punching bag, strategically it takes the heat off himself and WADA, pulling the media spotlight on to meldonium that deviates from the current crisis and criticism with the steady stream of scandals uncovering illegal conduct in anti-doping under himself, Howman, Reddie and other’s watch at WADA.

With Sharapova’s condemnation rippling globally, major questions on athlete’s rights, innocence until proven guilty, proportionality and basic human rights come into play.

How could anyone ever expect to get a fair and impartial hearing, or trial in CAS or ANYWHERE with people like Pound condemning athletes like Sharapova with statements like that? Anti-Doping seems to be the only judicial system in the world where you are punished *first* by WADA officials with their condemnation while sponsors cancel contracts worth tens of millions of dollars, in concert while you are globally publically shamed, all before your adjudication proceedings or a court date at CAS.

Under Pound’s and Howman’s leadership at WADA, what now has to be considered emerging with the two shocking Independent Commission reports is possibly one of the worst examples of executive sport leadership and governance in the history of sports. Shouldn’t *they* have known?

In the war against corruption in sport, maybe it’s time to create a level playing field?

Ignorantia juris non excusat? Sharapova’s Facebook statement

Ignorance of the law is no excuse? Ummm... Yes it is. Especially if information from WADA and/or international sport federations is carelessly designed that way with a callous disregard for the welfare of the athletes to keep athletes informed. Current efforts are not sufficient.

Sharapova’s Facebook page March 11, 2016 states “A report said that I had been warned five times about the upcoming ban on the medicine I was taking. That is not true and it never happened.” She goes on to state the “communications,” how “warnings from WADA and the ITF were buried in newsletters, websites and hand-outs.”

That's a distortion of the actual "communications" which were provided or simply posted onto a webpage.

I make no excuses for not knowing about the ban. I already told you about the December 22, 2015 email I received. Its subject line was "Main Changes to the Tennis Anti-Doping Program for 2016." I should have paid more attention to it.

But the other "communications?" They were buried in newsletters, websites, or handouts."

That demonstrates WADA's and the ITF's communications are blurred at best and possibly (unintentionally) misleading.

However, Sharapova went on to say, "On December 18, I received an email with the subject line "Player News" on it. It contained a newsletter on a website that contained tons of information about travel, upcoming tournaments, rankings, statistics, bulletin board notices, happy birthday wishes, and yes, anti-doping information. On that email, if a player wanted to find the specific facts about medicine added to the anti-doping list, it was necessary to open the "Player News" email, read through about a dozen unrelated links, find the "Player Zone" link, enter a password, enter a username, read a home screen with more than three dozen different links covering multiple topics, find the "2016 Changes to Tennis Anti-Doping Program and Information" link, click on it and then read a page with approximately three dozen more links covering multiple anti-doping matters. Then you had to click the correct link, open it up, scroll down to page two and that's where you would find a different name for the medication I was taking.

In other words, in order to be aware of this "warning," you had to open an email with a subject line having nothing to do with anti-doping, click on a webpage, enter a password, enter a username, hunt, click, hunt, click, hunt, click, scroll and read. I guess some in the media can call that a warning. I think most people would call it too hard to find."

By burying additions to the Prohibited List at the bottom in a mish-mash of topics not directly applicable or interesting to an athlete, combined with a difficult hunt-and-see, high "click through rate" would get WADA communication team members fired if they were in e-commerce. The tactic enforces disinterest in an athlete in a game of "Gotcha." That's the bait- uninteresting, non-threatening topics. The hook was buried inside, causing an athlete to most likely delete the message or mentally move along.

Preventing unnecessary legal carnage of innocent, young athletes holds little currency within WADA. Prevention, communication process management, instituting world-class communication plans and communication forensics that identify corruption or sub-standard performance in communications aren't sexy. Proactive improvements are often ignored and the results are catastrophic for the life of an athlete.

Minimal communications

The seething anger and frustration athletes and coaches globally face getting answers from WADA and/or NADOs with the changes on the Prohibited List or with other issues are well known. The sub-standard communications and non-communication are "built-in" to the WADA system.

How about asking WADA and the NADO's to implement customer-service criteria in their communications with athletes, coaches and press such as rating response times to questions and "Are you happy with this answer?" "Has it been effective?" WADA and the NADO's don't want to know the truth concerning that. They already do. They don't want to face the backlash.

Is there a harmonized, best-methods, best-practices, top-level communications plan across all national borders and all platforms and communication objects? There doesn't appear to be any.

The WADA and international sport federation communications, information architecture, platforms and information system distribution along with tech adoption remain at *minimum* levels and any changes have been mostly self-protecting.

WADA's faulty communications and evasion

The **WADA 2015 Code Review- Second Code Consultation Phase**, shows 35 comments that had been narrowed down from others submitted during the WADA Code Review process. (Three of which were contributed by the author. One of them follows).

The purpose of these comments was for WADA to take note, to address these issues completely to the satisfaction of those concerned, by changing the Code, amending the Code, or drafting new mechanisms and safeguards to solve the problems stated. There is no excuse for WADA "not knowing" about these issues. The comments were published by WADA themselves on their own Internet site by their own team.

Beginning on the bottom of page 12 of 13 of the **WADA 2015 Code Review**:

"WADA does NOT use best practices or best methods in communications. It is the most secretive and closed group many have dealt with.

There is no public accountability in their condemnation of athletes before or during/or after the CAS cases.

There are NO best methods, best practices in communications with... open public accountability in the process with the press, or other experts."

These statements cover wanting an independent investigation into the Pechstein case along with a number of other issues including their use and analysis of statistics, their decision making process for adding substances to the Prohibited List, their lack of independent verification, their communications with athletes and so on.

Hein Verbruggen, NED wrote an open letter published by SportKnowHowXL, April 4, 2016 about his role at the UCI and in fighting doping: "WADA is not keen on independent investigation commissions if there is any chance that its own actions and failings might be exposed and that it might therefore come under investigation. Hence the permanent appointment of WADA Board member Dick Pound as the president of the so called "independent" WADA committees, neatly ensuring that there can never be any serious investigation into WADA's failings."

For WADA to ever say, "They don't know" about their dysfunctional and deficient communications regarding changes to the Prohibited List or internal and external communications with athletes and other issues it is 100% false.

On page 9, **WADA 2015 Code Review Second Code Consultation Phase**, President, Luis Horta, ADoP, Portugal, already had problems with WADA's communications regarding their Prohibited List. He stated **"ADoP recommends WADA to make the process of the changes and adoption of the List more concise and more transparent.** E.g.(i) to upgrade the List Expert Group to a Committee of its own, rather than a sub-committee), (ii) **to clarify the decision making process** from the draft to the adoption of the List, (iii) to eliminate or at least minimize last-minute changes to the draft List, (iv) **to share scientific data** regarding substances included on the (draft) Prohibited List and the Monitoring Program, and (v) **to clarify the process of including substances and methods on the List.**

Be more transparent? Clarify the decision making process? Share scientific data? Clarify the process of including substances on the List? What does Grindeks the manufacturer and distributor of meldonium think of that?

The New York Times article *"Wave of Positive Tests for Meldonium Adds to Doping Crisis,"* Christopher Clarey, March 13, 2016. "It also has some wondering whether elite athletes in all parts of the world are being educated sufficiently about imminent changes to the banned list..." Anna Antselovich, Head of RUSADA, told TASS on Thursday, that the sanctions against the agency in November **had damaged the information chain on meldonium.** (Important). We had no possibility for a certain period of time to hold educative seminars with athletes, coaches and the personnel of national teams," she told TASS."

The communications responsibility for anti-doping was set up by WADA. WADA's "non-compliant" Russian NADO should share the blame along with WADA for any of its substandard non-compliant work.

In the article Tom Bassindale, a senior lecturer in forensic and analytical science at Sheffield Hallam University in Britain continued, "Word could not have filtered down. That could honestly be the issue.'

Though WADA posts changes to its Code on its website, it does not inform athletes directly of changes, relying instead on its partners: national anti-doping agencies and international federations. The question is whether those bodies have all done a thorough job of spreading WADA's word?"

Essentially, WADA's communication system is similar to the children's game of "telephone" where with each person they say something too, it loses some of the original meaning. Each organization (Stakeholders) handles things differently (let alone what is lost in translation). Data integrity and issue urgency come into play here. But, WADA reserves the right to blame the athlete(s) directly.

The NYT article then went on to say: "There is also the matter of whether the banning of a drug that has long been legal for use in some parts of the world might require an exceptional level of communications from WADA and its stakeholders."

It does- completely.

Communication failure on a global scale

By acknowledging the need for improvement and taking responsibility to improve communications, WADA would then have to admit they are not at 100% effectiveness or efficiency and thus give the appearance they may be culpable for any miscommunications in their information system design in notifying athletes.

But, remember in an organization made by attorneys for attorneys...

Always. Always. Always. Blame. The. Athlete.

And Grindeks?

Grindeks the makers of meldonium say they were never informed during the WADA process for adding meldonium to the Prohibited List. They say they have received no scientific justification from WADA as to why meldonium is on the Prohibited List.

Ivars Kalviņš outstanding researcher and biochemist, meldonium inventor

What hasn't been widely mentioned and was completely absent in the USADA meldonium statement is that Ivars Kalviņš, whose groundbreaking research in the field of medicinal biochemistry and who spearheaded the development of a new generation of drug compounds had been nominated as a finalist for the European Inventor of the Year award by the European Patent Office just last year during WADA's monitoring of meldonium.

<https://www.epo.org/learning-events/european-inventor/finalists/2015/kalvins.html>

Kalviņš was named as a candidate for the Lifetime Achievement award in the European Patent Office's Medicine/Biochemistry sector. Kalviņš led the laboratory work of the Department of Medicinal Chemistry at the Latvian Institute of Organic Synthesis in developing the anti-cancer drug Belinostat, neuro-protectant Neramexane, anti-inflammatory compound OX-MPI and heart medication Mildronate," according to Latvia Broadcasting.

<http://www.lsm.lv/en/article/economics/economy/biochemist-up-for-european-inventors-award.a130362/>

The Latvian broadcaster went on to say concerning meldonium: "The targeted use of natural compounds – as opposed to artificially created chemicals – is the foundation of Kalvins' approach. He successfully brought to market drugs based on natural compounds to treat and prevent strokes, tinnitus, heart attacks, Alzheimer disease, as well as chronic pain and inflammation.

Kalvins' inventions have proven especially beneficial for the prevention and treatment of ischemic heart disease and stroke, currently the world's top most causes of death with 7.4 million and 6.7 million victims in 2012, respectively, according to the World Health Organization (WHO)."

What's appears to be emerging now after reading the USADA statement and other reports is perhaps more a case of resurgent Cold War animosities between the West and East influencing the process than anything associated with a performance enhancing drug. Essentially saying, "Your medicine is not approved here (USA)" and "our medicine is better than your medicine."

The 13 member WADA Prohibited List Expert Group is composed of four (4) Americans, three (3) Germans, two (2) or three (3) from the UK, and one (1) each from France, Ireland, Denmark and Ghana. There are none (0) from Eastern Europe. That's enough to guarantee the decision of placing it on the Prohibited List and protecting the "special relationship" of WADA and USADA like the USA and Great Britain share.

USADA and WADA don't have the monopoly on intelligence. The outstanding work at the Latvian institute appears to be rivaling efforts in the USA and elsewhere.

Not everyone outside of WADA's or USADA's inner circle is evil.

The truth is there is no scientific evidence to show that you can take meldonium and get a faster time. You won't automatically win a tennis match either. You can't pop three or four tablets in order to win a race. That's totally absurd.

What many need to understand is that taking care of your health is a basic human right.

What should be considered along with everything else is that meldonium/Mildronate might be the best medication to take to *prevent* early heart attacks in athletes.

But, don't cheaters hide what they do? Aren't cheaters always "one step ahead?" Meldonium is detected in urine. So far in the 201 positive samples/cases there are no reports of *any* athletes using masking agents to hide their medical use of meldonium.

Latvian Broadcasting went on to say that, "Kalvins' biggest success story to date is meldonium, medicinal name Mildronate, an efficient drug against heart disease. Manufactured and marketed by Latvian pharmaceuticals company Grindeks, Mildronate ranks among Latvia's most successful medical exports: it generated an export turnover of around €60–€70 million Euros in 2013, with a share of 0.6% to 0.7% of all Latvian exports." Its first market is Eastern European countries.

WADA and USADA have reported that meldonium is "not approved in the USA." What they and others have failed to say was that Grindeks is expanding the market gradually around the globe as finances permit. It takes tens of millions, sometimes hundreds of millions of USD to bring a product to market with clinical trials in the U.S. Sales are only €70 million Euros to date. Grindeks is expanding as they are able.

Grindeks' defense

On March 09, 2016 the Grindeks Internet site published the following statement: "Despite Grindeks' submitted arguments, evidence and justifications, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) included meldonium in the Prohibited List.

In accordance with the results of the extended research, Grindeks has a firm conviction **that meldonium should not be included in the Prohibited list.**

It means that meldonium cannot improve athletic performance, but it can stop tissue damage in the case of ischemia. **That is why this therapeutic drug is not a doping agent.**

It is unclear to Grindeks why the WADA included meldonium in the Prohibited List, because it never

gave any explanation of this decision. The company will continue to use all the options and will stand up for to the exclusion of meldonium from the WADA's Prohibited list."

Speaking with Ilmārs Stonāns, Head of Research and Development, Grindeks, "We do not produce doping (substances). We manufacture medicine. WADA placed one of our products on its Prohibited List without asking or notifying us."

How transparent and fair are WADA's operations and communications? Stonāns answered, "WADA has never directly asked our opinion on the mode of function of the drug, or its operation, or the mechanisms of how the substance functions. How can WADA make an informed decision without us?"

When questioning Stonāns I asked: How do you feel you have been treated by WADA and their List Expert Group? Is the process fair? Do they explain things to your satisfaction?

Stonāns: "The answers to your questions are: 'No' and 'No.'"

Last year WADA made a public relations splash to show their cooperation and work with the pharmaceutical industry and companies. However, reality is far different.

Stonāns reiterated again ending with, "We would like to have the scientific justification as to why they have included meldonium on the Prohibited List."

Forbes magazine posted an article by Rita Rubin, March 9, 2016 explaining that Prof. Michael Joyner, anesthesiology, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN who studies physical and mental stress stated, "Evidence is lacking for many compounds believed to enhance athletic performance. I would be shocked if this stuff (meldonium) had an effect greater than caffeine..."

And in CNN's article, "Sharapova suspension: Doping agency's unfair game of 'Gotcha?'" March 14, 2016, Ford Vox, a U.S. doctor stated, "There's not much scientific support for its use as an athletic enhancer."

WADA, CAS, the arbitrators, and attorneys in the anti-doping eco-system

The story behind the selection of the meldonium addition to the Prohibited List has raised suspicions over the "alert" and data analysis. It has nothing to do with innocent athletes like Sharapova.

Over the years, funding WADA and anti-doping has been a major concern. There are hundreds, thousands of people who need funding in the entire anti-doping eco-system, from WADA, down to the NADOs, the labs, the Court of Arbitration and Sport (CAS), the arbitrators (judges), the specialized anti-doping attorneys, the labs and so on.

WADA, CAS, the arbitrators, sport federations (hearing panels) and specialist attorneys have been facing financial short falls and/or tight budgets for years.

With the Prohibited List, quietly the financial calculus in the whole anti-doping equation, slowly, almost unperceptively has changed over the past five years.

With the release of the new annual Prohibited List update it has become a financial "bump" to the entire anti-doping system. Almost like what Christmas shopping is to retail stores.

The whole point of anti-doping was to protect clean athletes and to root out the black sheep (cheaters) in sport. However, now the system casts as broad as net as possible, hauling in innocent athletes, youngsters, care-free teenagers, athletes just training and going along in life, as well as the "black sheep" in sport.

It's not that there were "thousands of athletes cheating." No. No one was "cheating" on December 31, 2015 at 11:59:59.99pm or before that with meldonium. Then one hundredth of a second later, it's only a matter of time before they reel in the net of 201 athletes... and counting...

It's the WADA communications and lack of it that creates the case load volume.

Current substandard communications results in the ability to cast as wide a net as possible and makes "cheaters" out of innocent and honorable athletes who would never even *think* of doping.

If WADA has laboratory standards for compliance with its NADOs shouldn't it have communication standards?

In hearings and adjudication processes, the CAS arbitrators, the three panel judges, personal attorneys all must be paid by the individual athlete. Are there grants? Yes, and fees in CAS are reasonable. But, we're talking about potentially an extraordinary number of legal cases going through Results Management and the adjudication process now.

Think of this. WADA, respective hearing panels, CAS arbitrators, specialist attorneys, NADO scientists and others have no incentive to improve communications to stop the new 201 meldonium cases and other related cases from coming to adjudication and at CAS.

Why? The more anti-doping cases, the more money everyone makes. With hundreds of cases over the past four or five years, there are millions to be paid out by high profile athletes.

There is a powerful, built-in financial and public relations incentive for WADA to hold communications at the *minimum* level where they are for the *maximum* number of athletes to be caught in the net with little to no incentive to improve communications.

There is a perverse logic to the whole equation of "justice" that distorts the actual crisis in keeping sport clean, the more athletes they "get" the more the public thinks they are doing their jobs.

Netting dozens and dozens of innocent athletes along with the black sheep in sport in the long trawler lines are just part of the by-catch in anti-doping.

Inadvertent and not intentional

The truth is a high concentration of athletes who "didn't know" means that it is a **FAILURE of WADA and the WADA designed communications plan** across all countries and sport federations to properly serve and inform the athletes.

Without multi-layers of redundant safeguards in place across all ISFs, NADOs, digital platforms, communication objects, end terminals, events and personnel the netting of more innocent athletes than black sheep in sport will continue.

The beginning of a new era? FIFA and WADA?

With WADA releasing the two IC reports many believe that it is following the same organizational pattern as FIFA with the top of the food chain more concerned about protecting its own interests first.

Mr. Craig Reddie, President, WADA issued a press release April 6, 2016 regarding the open letter published by Mr. Hein Verbruggen, NED stating that "he is astonished by the complaint made by Hein Verbruggen to the IOC Ethics Commission... The allegations in the complaint have no merit, are outrageous... and obviously defamatory... etc."

Maybe. Maybe not.

Mr. Reddie should demonstrate his integrity. He either represents all stakeholder's interests or only a few. Which is it? Place a poll on WADA's customer-facing Internet site and let the athletes, coaches, anti-doping community and public at large vote to see if Mr. Verbruggen's complaint has no merit... is outrageous... or defamatory. Give the athletes and those who WADA is mandated to serve a voice.

Isn't that a good idea?

Communications is the nervous system

A tyrannical model of communications functions by edicts. Its power is condemnation and threats. The decision making process is not transparent. Information is tightly controlled and centric, not distributed. It institutionalizes a “come to me” attitude demanding everyone to “pay” attention. Instead of “working for the athlete” the athlete or anyone else *must work for the organization* to find the most important information pertaining to them.

WADA is not a law firm, or a medical or technical agency. In its current form, **WADA is an information based organization**. And until that view supersedes all other organizational functions, hundreds of more innocent athletes will be falsely accused, more athletes will be suicidal, sport lives will be lost, substances that shouldn't be banned will be banned, unnecessary legal carnage will ensue, athletes will be living in exile for fear of their lives, countries will continue state-sponsored doping and sports will continue to be corrupt or at risk at best.

WADA's Code Review has failed to adequately address these issues.

Does WADA have a system of compliance and harmonization for communications for all NADO's? International Sport Federations? National Sport Federations? Apparently not. A look across the digital landscape at all NADOs, ISFs, NSFs, and anyone will see it's a dog's breakfast, a mish-mash of communication architecture, digital platforms, various communication objects and priorities.

There is no world-class, best-methods model used. But, there should be.

No one will face criminal charges

And the latest news is: “Russian doping scandal, no one to face criminal charges, says minister,” AP, April 08, 2016, With two former RUSADA officials now dead within days of each other and the former head of the Russian track federation allegedly accused of a role in extorting €450,000 Euros from a marathon runner now banned for life...” with other athletes under death threats now in hiding for fear of their lives outside the country, the article said “No one will face criminal charges” over the worst doping scandal in Russia's history.

Russian sport minister Vitaly Mutko stated, “The General Prosecutor's Office carefully examined the report in question and did not find a single legally supported fact (from the WADA Independent Commission reports chaired by Mr. Dick Pound) to open any kind of case.”

However, Sharapova and others must now lay prostrate on the ground before their hearings for their very sport lives. Along with having already faced condemnation from Pound and others, Sharapova has lost over \$37 million USD in cancelled sponsorship deals and endorsements so far.

Who has ever been punished this severely and has lost more financially than Maria Sharapova in the history of sports?

Proportionality? Innocent until proven guilty? Basic human rights? Condemnation? Substandard communications?

Remember, remember, remember...

Always. Always. Always. Blame. The. Athlete. ■

***** Note:**

Steven V. Selthoffer, USA is a communications executive living in Germany. He swam for U.S. Olympic coach Dr. James E. Counsilman, Indiana University. He has worked for Deutsche Telekom and T-Mobile on a number of large projects. Selthoffer also has a background in relief aid, security and international relations. He has testified before the OSCE, a joint session of the U.S. House and Senate of Congress on international relations and security. He has also worked in cooperation with the U.S. State Department and other agencies on relief aid and various issues.

AVA is the official organization for the Athletes Movement. The epicenter for change. A powerful force for good. Championing the cause of athletes worldwide.