

Dear BBC Members and Friends,

As many of you may know, a rider from our own Western New York bike racing community has received a sanction from the US Anti-Doping Agency (USADA). Per the article posted on USADA as well as shared on our BBC Facebook page, he “refused to provide a sample as requested by a doping control officer during an out-of-competition test.” This has been the subject of great debate on our Facebook page, and I generally have been encouraged that most of the comments have been from those who were asking relevant questions and engaging in policy debate, rather than throwing out character attacks on the individual.

The BBC, and the USA Cycling organization at large, does not tolerate doping of any kind. Doping harms our sport by giving unfair advantages to certain competitors at the expense of others, compromises the integrity of our sport, and in some cases, is dangerous for your health. At the same time, however, we need to understand that there are nuances of certain types of USADA sanctions. In this case, the individual refused to take a doping test, but did not directly test positive for any banned substance. That is against the anti-doping rules and deserves a sanction, but it should not be treated in the public eye as black and white by making it the equivalent of testing positive for a performance enhancing drug.

This finding does bring up a lot of uncomfortable questions for us to deal with as a Western New York racing community. This article was posted for the entire world to see, leading potentially anyone to associate Buffalo with an anti-doping sanction. Some of you, when you travel to races outside of Buffalo this year, may be asked some uncomfortable questions from those outside the Buffalo racing community or even outside the sport at large. We encourage all of you to be good ambassadors for the BBC by explaining that this was a violation of anti-doping rules and procedures, and for that we support the verdict, but are using this as a teaching moment about the USADA rules and procedures, the dangers of violating protocol, as well as the dangers of taking banned substances themselves. Some of you may feel differently about that, and may see this violation as the equivalent of taking banned substances, and we do want to continue to encourage a healthy discussion of the matter.

While we, the BBC Officers, do believe, based on the information at hand in the USADA article, that this sanction was justified, we do not want to leave this individual out to dry or permanently shun him from the cycling community. We want to be able to use this as a teaching moment so that all racers know the anti-doping rules and procedures, and know that if you are taking any variety of prescription medicines or supplements for your health, you do need to go to <http://www.globaldro.com> to check to see if your substances are on a banned list. While someone who willfully cheats by using EPO will receive a sanction, someone who takes a physician-prescribed drugs may also receive the exact same sanction if they didn't apply for a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) or if that drug isn't covered by a TUE.

It is important to know if you are a USA Cycling or UCI license holder, you have already signed off stating that you will submit to any drug testing, both in-competition and out-of-competition upon request. USA Cycling and the UCI have been cracking down in recent years on doping in amateur sports just as much as they have been testing the professional riders. Many of the domestic and international amateur racing licenses now carry a surcharge when you renew or purchase your license to go to the Ride Clean fund, which provides money to fund anti-doping testing at amateur races all across the country. Some of you may have even seen doping-control testers at regional races, especially in the last year.

It is your responsibility when you go to a race to ask the organizers if there will be drug testing at the event, which category races will be subject to the drug testing, which finishing places will be tested automatically, whether there will be random testing on top of that, and when that testing will happen. It is your responsibility after the race to find the doping-control testers and ask them if you will be getting tested after the race based on the race you were in and your finishing place. It is not their responsibility to track you down after your race. If you decide to leave after the race is over without checking and you are on the list to get tested, you will receive a sanction for a missed test, and that may carry penalties with it.

Also, although rarer in nature, by being a licensed bicycle racer, you can be subjected to an out-of-competition testing as well. USADA officials may call you or show up to your home asking you to provide a sample for testing. It is important that you do treat this very seriously. It is well within your right to ask to see their credentials so you know why they are there, but it is not within your right to tell them to leave and expect to escape any consequences. If testers show up asking for a testing sample and you refuse, that counts as an anti-doping sanction that this individual has now received.

Many of us here are amateur racers looking to have a good time, better ourselves, and enjoy the competition and community that bike racing provides, but we do still have the same responsibility as the professional riders to submit to doping tests when called upon. Many of us likely welcome the increased testing that has started to happen in the amateur ranks because we do want a clean, fair, and credible sport, but with that comes the responsibility of possibly submitting to doping tests yourself. I encourage all licensed racers to take a few minutes to read your full rights and the anti-doping policies at <https://www.usada.org>.

All the BBC Officers and I are here to help with any questions you may have as we learn as a community to process this news and how to move forward so we can have a clean and credible cycling club. We would like all the local riders and racers to continue to display their Buffalo pride, compassion, and resilience when representing the region. After all, that's what makes us, the city of good neighbors.

Sincerely,

Steven Mongiello  
President, Buffalo Bicycling Club