

Final Report

“Under 23 cyclists’ openness to doping: understanding the causes of doping behavior among American junior road cyclists with professional aspirations”

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Introduction

As described in the initial funding application, I began data collection among under-23 (U23) collegiate cyclists in the Spring of 2008. Overall data collection proceeded much more slowly than initially anticipated. I also experienced resistance to filling out surveys from potential subjects once they heard that WADA had funded the study. Many of the U23 athletes had negative opinions and reactions to WADA. Anecdotally, they seemed to feel that WADA, as an organization, was working against their interests and as one survey participant said, “aren’t they on a witch hunt?” I experienced very similar reactions when I surveyed and interviewed American U23 cyclists racing in Europe. Despite these negative reactions I was able to collect 170 valid surveys. I was also able to collect 10 one-hour interviews from U23 cyclists racing professionally as Espoirs.

According to the data analysis U23 cyclists racing on collegiate teams are unlikely to dope and are unlikely to excuse doping for any reason. In response to hypothetical and unlikely situations, a small number of U23 cyclists surveyed did see doping as a possible path to success in cycling. This number, however, was statistically insignificant. The interviews with Espoir cyclists racing in Europe provided the greatest insight into issues faced by U23 cyclists with

professional ambitions. The small amount of data collected from Espoir racing in Europe showed pressure from team staff and team directors appears to be the greatest factor in the riders' openness to doping, which is discussed more below.

Data Collection Activities

In the Spring of 2008 I began the phase of data collection focusing on surveying collegiate cyclists. In this phase, survey data was collected from under-23 collegiate road cyclists primarily in the Northeast US and also at US Collegiate Nationals. Surveying was suspended after Collegiate Road Nationals in 2008 and began again in the Spring of 2009 and ended at the 2009 Collegiate Road Nationals. I set up a table in the area where teams prepare for the race. IRB approved fliers were posted. Participants who agreed to participate were given a human subjects information sheet and a \$10 gift card. Surveys were stored in a locked box within a locked car until they were taken back to research offices where they were stored in a locked filing cabinet. Surveys results were entered into a spreadsheet and data was stored in a password protected folder on a password protected computer. After data was entered into the spreadsheet the written surveys were destroyed by paper shredder. In all, 170 U23 cyclists were surveyed, four of which stopped the survey or did not completely fill out the survey. Survey data was coded into an Excel spreadsheet in Fall 2009 and Spring 2010. The survey data is being analyzed with SPSS and some of the results are presented in this report.

In May/June of 2008 I traveled to Europe to begin the phase of research focusing on American U23 riders who were engaged in organized development programs and racing professionally. This research began with traveling to the Pyrenees region in France where American female development riders were racing in major stage races. While in France I

interviewed American female athletes, soigniers, mechanics and other support staff working with the female riders. I conducted participant observation by attending races with the team, taking meals with the team, and generally “hanging out” between races and training rides. Data was collected in the form of field and interview notes.

Following data collection in France, I traveled to Belgium – where there are multiple American-sponsored development programs – and interviewed U23 male cyclists who were racing professionally. My research focused on one American-sponsored training camp in the Flanders region. I cannot name the specific program for human subjects purposes. This development program sponsors and trains U23 road cyclist to race in Europe with the goal of nurturing talented riders to be competitive on the world stage as professionals. During my stay in Belgium I collected 10 one-hour (5 recorded) interviews with U23 riders racing as professionals in Europe. I also collected participant observation data by attending races with riders, “hanging out” around the house they shared, and accompanying them on training rides.

Statistical Data

		Cycling a Varsity Sport at your school?			Total
		No	Yes	No Response	
You are currently a collegiate rider?	Yes	148	14	1	163
	No	4	0	1	5
	No Response	1	1	1	3
Total		153	15	3	171

Table 1 – Collegiate riders attending schools with varsity cycling programs.

		Cycling a Club Sport at your school?			Total
		No	Yes	No Response	
You are currently a collegiate rider?	Yes	10	153	0	163
	No	2	2	1	5
	No Response	0	2	1	3
Total		12	157	2	171

Table 2 – Collegiate riders attending schools with ‘club sport’ cycling programs.

		You have an anti-doping program at your school?			Total
		No	Yes	No Response	
You are currently a collegiate rider?	Yes	147	15	1	163
	No	1	2	2	5
	No Response	1	0	2	3
Total		149	17	5	171

Table 3 – Collegiate riders who attend schools with/without anti-doping programs for cyclists.

Cycling is a varsity sport at your school?	You have an anti-doping program at your school?			Total
	No	Yes	No Response	
No	138	14	1	153
Yes	11	2	2	15
No Response	0	1	2	3
Total	149	17	5	171

Table 4 – Collegiate riders in varsity cycling programs with/without anti-doping programs.

		Are you required to participate in an anti-doping program at your institution?			Total
		No	Yes	No Response	
You are currently a collegiate rider?	Yes	151	12	0	163
	No	3	1	1	5
	No Response	1	0	2	3
Total		155	13	3	171

Table 5 – Collegiate riders who are required to participate in an anti-doping program at their institution.

Cycling is a varsity sport at your school?		Are you required to participate in an anti-doping program at your institution?			Total
		No	Yes	No Response	
No		143	10	0	153
Yes		11	3	1	15
No Response		1	0	2	3
Total		155	13	3	171

Table 6 – Collegiate riders in varsity cycling programs required to participate in anti-doping programs at their institution.

		Have you ever attended any educational event at your Institution where you learned about the rules governing performance enhancing drugs?			Total
		No	Yes	No Response	
You are currently a collegiate rider?	Yes	135	27	1	163
	No	3	1	1	5
	No Response	1	0	2	3
Total		139	28	4	171

Table 7 – Collegiate riders who have/have not attended educational events about doping at their institution.

		In the last year, you have had contact with doping.					Total
		Not at All	Seldom	Some	Often	No Response	
You are currently a collegiate rider?	Yes	149	9	3	1	1	163
	No	5	0	0	0	0	5
	No Response	1	0	0	0	2	3
Total		155	9	3	1	3	171

Table 8 – Collegiate riders who had contact with doping in the last year.

		In the last year, you have used doping products.					Total
		Not at All	Seldom	Some	Often	No Response	
You are currently a collegiate rider?	Yes	159	1	1	1	1	163
	No	5	0	0	0	0	5
	No Response	1	0	0	0	2	3
Total		165	1	1	1	3	171

Table 9 – Collegiate riders who have used doping products in the last year.

		In the last year, you saw teammates dope.				Total
		Not at All	Seldom	Some	No Response	
You are currently a collegiate rider?	Yes	155	6	1	1	163
	No	5	0	0	0	5
	No Response	1	0	0	2	3
Total		161	6	1	3	171

Table 10 – Collegiate riders who saw teammates dope in the last year.

		In the last year, you heard of a teammate doping.					Total
		Not at All	Seldom	Some	Often	No Response	
You are currently a collegiate rider?	Yes	153	7	1	1	1	163
	No	5	0	0	0	0	5
	No Response	1	0	0	0	2	3
Total		159	7	1	1	3	171

Table 11 – Collegiate riders who heard of teammates doping in the last year.

		In the last year, you heard of competitors doping.					Total
		Not at All	Seldom	Some	Often	No Response	
You are currently a collegiate rider?	Yes	101	36	18	7	1	163
	No	4	0	1	0	0	5
	No Response	1	0	0	0	2	3
Total		106	36	19	7	3	171

Table 12 – Collegiate riders who heard of competitors doping in the last year.

		In the last year, you were offered doping products by coaches.				Total
		Not at All	Seldom	Often	No Response	
You are currently a collegiate rider?	Yes	159	2	1	1	163
	No	5	0	0	0	5
	No Response	1	0	0	2	3
Total		165	2	1	3	171

Table 13 – Collegiate riders who were offered doping products by coaches in the last year.

You aspire to be a professional bike racer?	I would consider using a banned performance enhancer if: it would help me 'go pro.'											Total
	Never 1	2	3	4	Maybe 5	6	7	8	9	Definitely Would 10	No Response	
No	80	8	4	4	4	1	0	0	0	1	1	103
Yes	47	5	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	1	60
No Response	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	7
Total	129	13	7	4	5	2	0	0	0	3	7	170

Table 14 – Collegiate racers who aspire to be professional bike racers who would consider using a banned performance enhancer to “go pro.”

You aspire to be a professional bike racer?	I would consider using a banned performance enhancer if: it would help me make it onto a European Pro Tour team.											Total
	Never 1	2	3	4	Maybe 5	6	7	8	9	Definitely Would 10	No Response	
No	84	6	3	5	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	103
Yes	46	3	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	4	1	60
No Response	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	7
Total	133	9	5	6	2	1	2	1	0	5	6	170

Table 15 – Collegiate racers who aspire to be professional bike racers who would consider using a banned performance enhancer if it would help them to make it on a UCI Pro Tour team.

You aspire to be a professional bike racer?	I would consider using a banned performance enhancer if: it would help me win the Tour de France											Total
	Never 1	2	3	4	Maybe 5	6	7	8	9	Definitely Would 10	No Response	
No	77	6	4	3	2	1	4	1	1	3	1	103
Yes	45	2	2	1	3	1	1	0	0	4	1	60
No Response	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	7
Total	125	8	6	4	5	2	5	1	1	7	6	170

Table 16 – Collegiate racers who aspire to be professional bike racers who would consider using a banned performance enhancer if it would help them to win the Tour de France.

You aspire to be a professional bike racer?	All professional cyclists must dope.			Total
	No	Yes	No Response	
No	86	12	5	103
Yes	48	10	2	60
No Response	1	1	5	7
Total	135	23	12	170

Table 17 - Collegiate racers who aspire to be professional bike racers who feel that all professional cyclists must dope.

You aspire to be a professional bike racer?	Are you required to participate in an anti-doping program at your institution?			Total
	No	Yes	No Response	
No	92	9	2	103
Yes	52	7	1	60
No Response	4	1	2	7
Total	148	17	5	170

Table 18 - Collegiate racers who aspire to be professional bike racers who are/are not required to participate in an anti-doping program at their institution.

Interpretations

The data specific to U23 collegiate riders with professional ambitions, while not statistically significant, shows that they have a greater openness to doping than their counterparts without professional ambitions. Furthermore, as Tables 14 – 16 show, as the level of prestige increases so do the numbers of individuals in the Maybe – Definitely Would category of ‘would dope.’ This could indicate that as a rider with professional ambitions becomes closer to their athletic goals they might be more willing to engage in doping practices. As Table 5 -7 shows few of the collegiate riders are involved with teams that have anti-doping programming. Additionally collegiate riders with professional ambitions only 7 out of 52 are required by their institutions to undergo some form of anti-doping education. A lack of openness to doping prevails among U23 collegiate cyclists. The interviews among Espoir riders in Europe reveal the same trend. U23 riders with professional ambitions and who are involved in European-based development programs are vehemently against doping. Given what riders said during interviews it appears that many of the cyclists racing at the top level of Espoir sport are more aware of the realities of doping, but also seem to take the ramifications for fair play and health more seriously.

For example, when asked if they were given a choice between doping and not being able to race professionally most of the athletes said that they would quit the team for whom they raced. At the same time the interviews show a disdain for doping they also reveal a concern about the possibility of the “need for doping,” which is something all 10 interviewees cited.

The “need to dope” is unequivocally connected to success as a professional cyclist by Espoirs. The cyclists who were interviewed each described a scenario in which they would “need to dope.” In all cases it involved a coach, exercise physiologist or directeur sportif (DS) prodding the cyclist to produce better and more impressive results. Cyclists using power meters, for example, must upload data from their training rides and races to computers. That data, in addition to their weight and calories burned, is analyzed by team personnel. Training regimens, diet and rest schedules are modified according to data analysis. Espoir cyclists using power meters as training tools described scenarios where the DS or team exercise physiologist would tell them they “need to do something” to improve their wattage output. Wattage is seen as equivalent to the potential for results in races. During the interview, an Espoir stated: “They say you need to do something. If I’m already training my ass off, eating what I’m supposed to and doing what they say, what am I supposed to “do” to improve my wattage? I think it’s clear what they mean.” Needing to dope was universally recognized as a decisive moment in an aspiring professional’s career. Espoirs expected at some point they would be given the choice to use banned substances to enhance their performances. Anticipation of this moment is embedded in many of the ways Espoirs think about their careers, training and possibilities for success. While most abhorred doping and were very critical of professional cyclists who had been caught doping, they “understood why” professional cyclists choose to use banned substances.

The link between training practices, the influence of team personnel and peers holds the greatest potential for future research into attitudes about the use of performance enhancing drugs. Also important is the ways doping is seen differently among professionals, amateurs and the general public. Anecdotally it seems U23 collegiate cyclists see doping as a moral issue and akin to “using hard drugs.” While morally opposed to doping, most Espoirs see performance enhancing drugs as an option among many to improve performance and achieve results. The question of whether or not to dope for an Espoir is one of scale and complexity not seen among amateur U23 cyclists.

Budget (See attached Grants Budget Spreadsheet from the University of Vermont Accounting Office for specific transactions)

Supplies: US\$1244.56

Services/Other: US\$597.55

Domestic/Foreign Travel: US\$6135.91

Participant Expenses: US\$2531.98

Total: US\$10510.00