

Anti-Doping Awareness in Sports

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ADRV Indian Case Scenarios

Good morning friends, and welcome to this edition of the anti-doping course brought to you by NPTEL in association with IIT Madras. This is a continuation of our Week 3 lectures. This is our fourth lecture on anti-doping rule violations. I am Professor Dobson Dominic, a sports medicine doctor, and today we are going to look into the different anti-doping rule violation case scenarios. We are going to look into the different cases. We have already looked into what anti-doping rule violations are and the different articles. Today, we will look into the Indian case scenarios. So, these are the Week 3 learnings we have been following. Just a quick recap: we looked into what anti-doping rule violations are for athletes and athlete personnel.

The 11 articles which fall under anti-doping rule violations were also discussed. We also looked into the rights and responsibilities of athletes during the doping testing process. Today, we will look into the common anti-doping rule violation scenarios that have been prevalent in India, especially. As an introduction, anti-doping rule violation refers to a breach of anti-doping rules, often resulting in suspension or a ban for the athlete or support staff.

India has seen several high-profile cases in sports like wrestling, athletics, and weightlifting where there have been instances of rampant doping, leading to anti-doping rule violations and sanctions being delivered. Looking at comparisons across nations, anti-doping efforts vary by region, and some countries face more challenges than others. In the history of Olympic doping and the global doping landscape, we have seen systemic doping in several countries, such as East Germany in the 1970s and the Russian Federation more recently in 2015–16. India also has a poor record in compliance with the World Anti-Doping Code. Other countries such as the United States, Kazakhstan, Romania, France, China, and Brazil have also had instances of anti-doping rule violations.

The Indian scenario, in particular, is alarming in several sports like athletics, bodybuilding, wrestling, and weightlifting, where there have been many anti-doping rule violations. This graph or Excel sheet shows recent 2020 statistics, where specific sports like athletics, bodybuilding, wrestling, and weightlifting have been significantly affected by anti-doping rule violations. What is the impact of these anti-doping rule violations on athletes? Different bans are imposed, resulting in athletes being removed from the sport. These can range from one to two years, up to four years, and in cases of repeated offenses, even lifetime bans can be imposed. Disqualification can also occur, if an athlete is found to have committed an anti-doping rule violation during a competition, they can be immediately disqualified.

There is also loss of endorsement. Professional athletes often have sponsorships and endorsements from various companies. A doping violation can lead to the loss of all these professional benefits. The most common type of violation seen is under Article 2.2, which is the use of performance-enhancing substances.

Now, let us look into some interesting cases we have come across in India in the recent past.

In the sport of weightlifting, an international athlete was sanctioned with an 8-year ban. The background of the case: the athlete was a Commonwealth Games silver medalist and tested positive for the banned substance Stanozolol, which falls under Substance A; that is, anabolic steroids. The outcome of the case: the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) imposed a stringent 8-year ban on the weightlifter. So, a promising career was cut short due to a violation of anti-doping rules. This significant ADRV fell under Article 2.2 and the use of anabolic steroids.

Scenario 2 comes from wrestling. The athlete was a national-level wrestler and received a 4-year ban. Background of the case: the athlete tested positive for a banned substance. NADA imposed a 4-year ban on the wrestler, and as a result, the athlete's career suffered a major setback due to the doping violation.

Case scenario 3 involved another prominent wrestler who tested positive for a banned substance, methadone, just weeks before the 2016 Rio Olympics. He claimed that his food or drink was spiked, but the allegations could not be substantiated. The outcome of the case: the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) overturned NADA's earlier decision to clear the athlete and instead imposed a four-year ban. This was a very interesting and controversial case that marred India's Olympic hopes, as the athlete was a strong medal prospect. The doping scandal raised serious questions about the integrity of Indian sport and the effectiveness of our national anti-doping process.

Another interesting case, Case Scenario 4, involved a discus thrower in 2006. The athlete was an international competitor. While not officially banned, the athlete was withdrawn from the Asian Games following in-competition testing. A prominent Indian discus thrower was reported to have tested positive for a banned substance during a training camp in Muscat ahead of the 2006 Asian Games. Outcome of the case: while there was no official confirmation or subsequent sanction, the athlete was withdrawn from the Asian Games. In summary, the incident tarnished the athlete's reputation and raised concern about the prevalence of doping in Indian sport.

Case Scenario 5 occurred in 2008 in the sport of weightlifting. The athlete was an international-level competitor. Again, while not officially banned, the athlete was withdrawn from the Olympics. A promising Indian weightlifter was stopped from boarding a flight to the 2008 Beijing Olympics after testing positive for a banned substance. Outcome of the case: while there was no official confirmation or subsequent sanction, the athlete was withdrawn from the Olympic team. The incident caused significant controversy and raised questions about how doping cases are handled in India.

Very recently, in 2023, even in the sport of cricket, an international cricketer was withdrawn from India's final squad for the World Test Championship Final. The athlete was not officially banned but was found to have missed three whereabouts filings. He fell under the whereabouts clause, having failed to disclose his location three times over a 12-month period, resulting in a potential anti-doping rule violation. Outcome of the case: while the Board of Control for Cricket in India did not impose a formal ban, the player was excluded from the final squad. This again summarizes how even established international athletes and sports not in the Olympics must adhere to anti-doping rules.

This is a collection of interesting case scenarios related to Indian anti-doping rule violations. The important take-home message is that there must be strict adherence to the whereabouts filing requirement. Athletes should be sensitized to whereabouts rules and must stay in communication with their association regarding their training and travel. Failure to file whereabouts information can lead to serious consequences. Proper whereabouts filing is essential for ensuring fair competition and maintaining the integrity of sport.

As the anti-doping landscape continues to evolve, it is crucial for athletes to be educated about the rules and to take their responsibilities seriously. Promoting awareness and understanding of anti-doping measures can help foster a clean sporting environment, allowing athletes to compete without the shadow of doping allegations.

These are our references, predominantly taken from the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) India website, the WADA Code 2021, and the official WADA website.

Thank you, and Jai Hind.