



IAAF World Championships London 2017: Athletics Integrity Unit Programme Q&A

A comprehensive and far-reaching integrity programme will be conducted at the IAAF World Championships London 2017. The programme will comprise doping control, education and prevention, and a betting monitoring programme.

Read the following Q&A to discover more about the AIU's strategy to protect clean athletes and uphold the integrity of the sport.

What has been the Athletics Integrity Unit's anti-doping strategy in the countdown to the IAAF World Championships London 2017?

The key point here is that the AIU enacted an intelligence-led out-of-competition testing strategy in the 10 months prior to the Championships, with testing targeted at athletes likely to compete in London. This 10-month out-of-competition testing period - which included over 2,000 blood tests and approximately 3,000 urine tests - is a cornerstone of the AIU anti-doping programme, with no advance notice of testing given to athletes. The AIU also collaborated with federations and National Anti-Doping Organisations (NADOs) to ensure that its own out-of-competition testing would be maximised, and to concentrate on filling the gaps where no effective national testing programs exist.

The most important time to be testing many of the athletes is during the off season when the heavy training loads are taking place. That approach is no secret - but it is often easier for sports to simply pile on the tests during the event itself and claim a successful anti-doping programme. The reality is far from it. The testing in London is important - but nowhere near as important as a truly no-notice doping control program conducted during the out-of-competition season. Other times that are just as important to test include, for example, the lead up to the qualification events or when we know that athletes are chasing qualification marks/times. At the heart of the AIU's testing programme will be the collection of over 600 blood samples prior to the Championships for the purpose of continuing to build Athlete Biological Passport (ABP) profiles and to detect prohibited substances, such as human Growth Hormone (hGH).

The AIU is also heavily utilising specialist analysis such as the IRMS (isotope-ratio mass spectrometry), test for EPO, HGH etc. While it is more expensive and at times harder to co-ordinate, it is crucial that as often as possible the tests are analysed for all possible banned substances (based on the risk factors for the relevant discipline).

In what areas does the anti-doping strategy differ from the IAAF World Championships Beijing 2015?

It doesn't differ greatly.

The AIU has resumed the work previously conducted by the IAAF (prior to 5 April 2017) in continuing to build its Athlete Biological Passport (ABP) database. Prior to the World Championships, the AIU has collected over 600 blood samples for this purpose. This means we have more profiles to guide target testing which helps determine where and when the testing occurs. During this lead-up period, we also concentrate on adding existing suspicious profiles to the ABP database.

Continuing on from Beijing, the AIU will also focus on the steroidal (urine) component of the ABP. This acts in the same way as the previous ABP blood (or haematological) passport but uses parameters within the urine sample to look for changes in steroidal values. Again, with these new profiles the AIU is better able to target its testing including the use of the IRMS test to detect exogenous steroid use. Certainly, the steroidal module of the ABP continues to provide some excellent information to assist the AIU with target testing.

Will you be blood testing in the countdown and during London?

Absolutely. Blood testing forms an important part of the AIU anti-doping programme. In the lead-up to the World Championships, over 600 blood samples were collected for ABP profiling purposes. Blood will continue to be collected in London, too.

What is the purpose of blood testing?

There are essentially two different forms of blood testing used as part of the AIU programme. Blood samples taken for profiling purposes in the context of the ABP (e.g. they form part of a longitudinal study, but can't be used as a one-off test for proof of doping), and blood samples taken for the purpose of detecting prohibited substances (e.g. human growth hormone).

There are some small differences in the way the samples are collected. The biggest being that for ABP blood samples, athletes are required to have rested for at least two hours before sample collection.

Can you explain the difference between blood and urine testing?

The main difference is that the samples are used to look for different substances. Steroids and EPO for example are found through urine samples, while the test for Growth Hormone is analysed using blood samples.

There are also differences in the requirements on the AIU for the shipping of samples. There are stricter rules regarding how quickly the blood samples need to arrive at the

laboratory for analysis, whereas in general the urine samples - as long as they are not subject to temperature variations - are a lot more stable.

What is the AIU's in-competition anti-doping programme?

In order to maintain the integrity of the joint AIU-UKA anti-doping programme, we don't disclose the detailed specifics of our testing programme for the event, however we can confirm that there will be approximately 600 urine tests conducted during the Championships in order to detect a wide range of substances including EPO and steroids. As encouraged through the 2015 World Anti-Doping Code, there is an emphasis on a quality-driven programme rather than a quantity-driven one.

Can you explain the anti-doping strategy for the 2017 London World Championships in greater detail?

The AIU's anti-doping strategy revolves around protecting the value of the World Championships medals. The out-of-competition program is most important in preventing cheats from having the opportunity to line up at the start line in London, and gain an illegitimate advantage in their events.

During the Championships, testing will target medal winners - but certainly they are not the only athletes who will be tested. Again, the AIU will use all the intelligence it has at its disposal to conduct target testing, where it thinks it is most warranted. Additionally, it is important to point out that, in accordance with its retesting policy, the AIU will be storing samples from this event in a secure and dedicated facility for future re-analysis. The revised World Anti-Doping Code has increased the statute of limitations from eight to 10 years, which means that in any period for up to 10 years following the collection of a sample, the AIU can re-analyse the samples using new technology to try to catch the cheats. This deterrence-based technique has already caught out athletes from previous World Championships (and Olympic Games), and should serve as a big warning to those contemplating doping.

Is anti-doping, education and the monitoring of betting all that the AIU does under its remit?

No, the AIU has a very broad remit that extends well beyond anti-doping, education and the monitoring of betting. This remit ranges from detecting misconduct including bribery, corruption and breaches of betting rules, the pursuit of individuals engaged in age or results manipulation, investigating fraudulent behaviour with regards to transfers of allegiance, and, yes, anti-doping, too.

Put simply, it is the AIU's responsibility to stamp out any and all forms of corruption and ethical misconduct within the sport.

