

## **Armstrong Doctor Linked To More Top Cyclists**

At least 15 more cyclists have reportedly been linked to the banned Italian sport doctor of [Lance Armstrong](#) in an intricate scheme of money laundering, tax evasion, and widespread doping. The *Gazzetta dello Sport* reported former Giro d'Italia winners Michele Scarponi and Denis Menchov, and this year's Olympic champion Alexandre Vinokourov are under investigation for doping under the supervision of Dr. Michele Ferrari.

The *Gazzetta* cited documents from an inquiry led by Padua prosecutor Benedetto Roberti that detailed how Ferrari allegedly masterminded a \$40 million operation where teams and riders avoided paying taxes by recycling money via Gibraltar, Monte Carlo, Switzerland, and South America. All charges were however denied by the cyclists and Ferrari.

For several years, Roberti has been leading a sweeping investigation of Ferrari and parts of which were used in the USADA report that detailed how Lance Armstrong and others used performance enhancing drugs to stay at the top. After the report was published, the Texan rider was banned for life and stripped of all his results from August 1, 1998. The 41-year-old Armstrong has acknowledged that Ferrari was his trainer until 2004 and the name of Ferrari was mentioned throughout the USADA report and was banned for life.

Doping is a crime in Italy and the Italian doctor was already cleared on appeal in 2006 of criminal charges of distributing banned products for athletes and remains barred for life by the Italian Cycling Federation under a 2002 ruling. The Italian doctor is reportedly under investigation again in Italy for criminal association, trafficking and administering doping substances, tax evasion, and money laundering.

The *Gazzetta* said microphones were hidden by investigators in the camper van that the Italian doctor used to have meetings with cyclists in remote areas of Italy and in Switzerland and a phone-tap conversation was printed by the newspaper between Italian professional road bicycle racer Michele Scarponi and Ferrari inside the van in September 2010 during which Scarponi said he could win the following year's Giro and the doctor replied that if he used a blood transfusion he had a chance. The cyclist finished second in the 2011 Giro but then was promoted to champion when Alberto Contador was stripped of the title for doping at the 2010 Tour de France and Vincenzo Nibali finished behind Scarponi. Scarponi was banned in 2007 for a period of 18 months for involvement in the Spanish doping scandal Operation Puerto.

Police also taped a September 2010 phone call between Denis Menchov (who won the Spanish Vuelta in 2005 and 2007 and raced with the Rabobank team from 2005-2010 and won the Giro in 2009) and agent Raimondo Scimone during which Menchov tells the agent that he wants "all the cyclists working with him followed by Ferrari," according to the *Gazzetta*. In a statement to the paper, Scimone said he was never involved in doping or wrongdoing.

This year's Olympic champion Alexandre Vinokourov is also reportedly under investigation by Roberti and had served a two-year ban after testing positive for blood doping during the 2007 Tour de France.

Others reportedly under investigation are Yaroslav Popovych and Volodymyr Bileka; Russian riders Alexandr Kolobnev, Vladimir Karpets, Vladimir Gusev, Mikhail Ignatiev; Czech rider Roman Kreuziger; and Italians Filippo Pozzato, Lorenzo Bertagnolli, Giovanni Visconti and Franco Pellizzotti.