

Riccardo Ricco's 12-Year Ban Upheld

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) has dismissed the appeal of the Italian cyclist [Riccardo Ricco](#) against the decision of the Anti-Doping Tribunal of the Italian Olympic Committee that had imposed a suspension of twelve years on him, beginning on 19 April 2012, because of an anti-doping rule violation. The ban runs until April 2024.

The controversial Italian cyclist remains under contract to UCI Continental team Meridiana-Kamen but has been suspended from all competition until 2024. The former professional road bicycle racer from Italy joined UCI ProTeam Saunier Duval-Prodir in 2006 and won the Settimana Bergamasca.

An investigation into the banned Italian cyclist had revealed that he did perform a blood transfusion on himself on February 6 and was subsequently hospitalized with kidney problems. The cyclist had a bruise consistent with an injection site on one arm and asked the staff to inject him using the other arm, a nurse said. Meanwhile, the bacteriological analysis of the Italian cyclist's blood disclosed an infection caused by a failed blood transfusion. The doctor who saved his life said Riccardo Ricco had confessed to having performed a blood transfusion on himself with blood that he kept in his refrigerator. The cyclist was suspended by his country's national Olympic committee's (CONI) anti-doping body and the ban imposed on the cyclist applies to events in Italy as well as abroad. Ricco, stating his innocence, said he injected himself with an iron solution but the claim was dismissed by experts who said it would not have produced the symptoms he was suffering from.

Nicknamed "Cobra", Ricco won two stages at the 2008 Tour de France but was thrown off the race after a positive test for Cera EPO (erythropoietin) and was given a ban for 20 months. The cyclist appealed to the CAS on 18 June 2012 to request the annulment of the CONI Anti-Doping Tribunal's decision and argued that the proceedings before such body were flawed and that the Tribunal which handled the case was not impartial; Ricco also raised many procedural errors. His case was handled by a Sole Arbitrator, Professor Ulrich Haas (Germany), who considered that the arguments of Ricco were unfounded and that, in particular, he had failed to demonstrate a lack of impartiality by the CONI Anti-Doping Tribunal. Thereafter, the twelve year suspension was confirmed.

[Riccardo Ricco](#) was previously banned for doping at the 2008 Tour de France. In the past, Ricco and Leonardo Piepoli were sacked by the Spanish team Saunier Duval for "doping practices". Piepoli was dismissed because of a "violation of the team's ethics code" while Ricco tested

positive for the blood-boosting drug EPO. The cyclist tested positive for the banned blood booster Continuous Erythropoiesis Receptor Activator (or CERA, a variant of Erythropoietin) on 17 July 2008 from a sample taken following the fourth stage, making him the third rider to test positive for this substance in the 2008 Tour de France after Moisés Dueñas of Barloworld and Manuel Beltrán of Liquigas. He later admitted to the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) that he had been taking EPO independent of the team in preparation for the 2008 Tour de France, and he accepted responsibility for his actions and apologized to his teammates and fans.