

Doping On Cycling Team Was Tolerated By Rabobank

A Dutch newspaper has revealed that Team Rabobank tolerated the use of doping up until at least 2007. It was revealed by *de Volkskrant* that the riders were allowed to use their own products and medical staff of the team ensured that they didn't hurt their health.

Three former riders, including Michael Boogerd, one of the Netherlands' most popular riders, were said to have been involved in the HumanPlasma blood doping ring. A key witness in the Humanplasma scandal, Stefan Matschiner, revealed that three riders of the team were customers of the Swiss blood doping expert.

Boogerd had admitted to using banned blood booster EPO, cortisone and, late in his career, blood transfusions and said he used the banned substances from 1997 to 2007, the end of his career. He even admitted using the Austrian blood lab, Humanplasma, for transfusions. The cyclist won the Amstel Gold classic in 1999, edging Lance Armstrong in second place, and had two stage wins in the Tour de France.

Six former riders – Danny Nelissen, Marc Lotz, Thomas Dekker, Levi Leipheimer, Michael Rasmussen, and Grischa Niermann — and former manager Theo de Rooij have admitted doping. Nelissen confessed to using EPO while riding for the team and confirmed that a doping system was implemented after the Rabobank had endured a low-key start to the 1996 season. Nelissen remarked the pressure of supporting a family had influenced his decision to dope. He claimed he had EPO administered by the team doctor Geert Leinders at the Tour de France in 1996 and 1997.

Rolf Sorensen of Denmark admitted to doping in the 1990s and said he used EPO and cortisone. Theo de Rooy who was team manager from 2003 to 2007 did not deny that there was doping on the team and remarked if there was doping, that was a deliberate decision by the medical staff but claimed not to know of the HumanPlasma involvement.

Theo de Rooy added it was the responsibility of each rider to determine how far he would go into the medical field and said the team management did not encourage or pay for doping, and was not officially allowed. He went on to remark that he had disciplined riders who wanted to organize their own medical care outside the team structure. De Rooy left the team shortly after Rasmussen was removed from the 2007 Tour de France after the 16th stage and was handed over a ban of two years July 2007 to July 2009, for lying about his whereabouts. The cyclist later admitted to

using EPO, growth hormones, insulin, testosterone, DHEA, [IGF-1](#), cortisone, and blood doping, for most of his professional career.

Team Rabobank announced its withdrawal from sponsoring the team in October 2012 after 17 seasons in the peloton. The team however announced its intention to continue as a 'white label' under a new foundation yet to be established and made an announcement that it would participate in 2013 under the name [Blanco Pro Cycling Team](#) (successor of the former Rabobank), with the intention to find a sponsor for 2014 or to stop the team otherwise.