BOA Lifetime Ban On Drugs Cheats Is Impeding UKAD Work

The chief executive of UK Anti-Doping (UKAD), Andy Parkinson, has warned that the lifetime ban on drug cheats by the British Olympic Association (BOA) is impeding the battle to stamp out the use of performance enhancing drugs in sport.

The new rule of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on banning an athlete from competing in the next Games after they have tested positive was also criticized by Parkinson who said it would be easier if everyone followed the standards set by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), which have established a suspension of two years as the fairest penalty for an athlete testing positive for banned drugs for the first time. Parkinson added that we seen in the United States and also in the United Kingdom how going beyond the anti-doping rules established by WADA creates confusion and impedes our role and also said the World Anti-Doping Code, agreed at an international level, encourages athletes to provide substantial assistance which can be grounds for a reduction in the sanction period.

Any athlete who tests positive for banned drugs is automatically prevented from representing Britain in the Olympics, under the rules of the BOA but the Britain's anti-doping chief believes that athletes would be more willing to cooperate with them if there was an incentive for them to be allowed to compete in the Olympics.

Parkinson said if, as is the case with the eligibility rules of the International Olympic Committee and here in the UK the British Olympic Association, we remove all incentives for athletes to share their stories and information with us, then we will continue to struggle to catch those who are supplying performance enhancing drugs and often operate on the edges of sport with relative impunity and it is clear that this is a hard message to get across and to agree on, largely because these eligibility rules are easy to defend, but if we cannot be seen to be working with all athletes, then what hope do we have in really getting to the heart of the doping problem and to those that traffic and supply. He also added that the fight against doping now more than ever requires a mature and coordinated effort to work together and UK Anti-Doping has firmly established itself in its first year and offers the chance to continue to play a lead role at home and overseas to better protect the rights of athletes to compete in doping-free sport.

The views of Parkinson echoed that of Dick Pound who claimed in 2008 that he did not believe that the BOA rule would survive, if it was challenged legally.

Since 1992, by-law 25 has been on the BOA's statute book when it was decided by the then chairman Sir Arthur Gold that Britain must take the moral high ground in the fight against doping. The British Olympic Association is now the only national Olympic committee to maintain this hard-line stance but have always maintained that it will "vigorously" defend any attempt to remove the anti-doping by-law.