

French Senate Lays Bare Doping

A French Senate inquiry into sports doping has revealed the top two in the [1998 Tour de France](#) - Italian Marco Pantani and Germany's Jan Ullrich - were taking the banned blood booster erythropoietin (EPO).

The medical stubs enclosed in the 918-page report also revealed that American Lance Armstrong tested positive for EPO in 1999. The 21-member parliamentary group, just three days after the end of the 100th Tour, said a "truth and reconciliation" commission should be created to lift the veil of silence on illegal practices. It was recommended by the group that the French government finance studies about the extent of doping, its risks, and the range of drugs used.

Parliamentarian Jean-Jacques Lozach, the group's spokesman, said we cannot properly fight something that we don't understand and added that speaking of doping doesn't harm sport but instead contributes in the medium and long term to restore its greatness and not speaking about it often means not doing anything. Lozach said the anti-doping fight would be a lot more effective if the different actors in sports, law enforcement and justice cooperated.

The five-month investigation by the 21-member Senate group recommended that sporting calendars be approved by the sports minister to reduce the taxing schedules that it said created favorable conditions for doping. It also suggested that blood and urine samples should be used to test for more substances at the same time to cut down on the volume of samples and streamline the testing process.

The list of athletes who tested positive for EPO during the 1998 Tour included Ullrich and Pantani. In June this year, Ullrich admitted he underwent blood doping procedures and was banned in 2012 for two years for a doping offense. Last month, sports daily *L'Equipe* reported that a 1998 urine sample from Frenchman Laurent Jalabert showed traces of the banned blood-booster EPO when it was re-tested in 2004, a result confirmed in the Senate report. In May, Jalabert told the French commission that he is convinced today that one can do the Tour de France without doping and obtain results. He added that he will admit that cycling is a discipline that deserves blame, but I'd really like to see the day when we recognize that it was a sport that was a vanguard in anti-doping, and which assumed its responsibilities. Jalabert added that it is unfair to represent it today as the only sport that involves cheaters.

Meanwhile, Jacky Durand, a now-retired winner of three stages on the Tour who was also named in the report, said he accepted responsibility for his doping but added that the new generation shouldn't have to pay for the stupid things we did in the past.

In another development, Australian Tour de France stage winner [Stuart O'Grady](#) who recently admitted using the banned blood-booster EPO before the notorious 1998 Tour de France may lose his three national citations, which include an Order of Australia Medal awarded in 2005. The cyclist could also be stripped of his Olympic medals after admitting to using performance enhancing drugs.