

Lack Of Blood Test Labs In Kenya Blamed For Surge in Violations

Former one-hour-run world-record holder athlete [Jos Hermens](#) has blamed absence of blood testing laboratories in Kenya for several doping violations in the recent past.

In 2012, Mathew Kisorio, who has the world's third fastest timing of 58.46 minutes in half marathon was banned for two years. Two-time Chicago Marathon winner [Rita Jeptoo](#) recently tested positive for doping while Jemima Sumgong, who finished second to Rita in Chicago this year, received a doping ban of two years that was later reversed. These doping incidents have casted doubts about the reputation of Kenya as a powerhouse in long distance running.

Hermens, whose Global Sports Communication manages many elite African athletes, said the the news of Jeptoo returning positive for [Erythropoietin](#) (EPO) was shocking. EPO is naturally-producing hormone by the kidneys that can be artificially produced to improve endurance by injecting it into the blood. Hermens said it is a very common thing due to which athletes are getting caught nowadays. The former one-hour-run world-record holder added the doping control in Kenya is very difficult because there is no blood testing laboratory and EPO is a blood booster. For testing, the blood has to go to Europe and it is difficult to transport the blood and added blood testing is the most preferred way of catching athletes using EPO and growth hormones.

The 64-year-old, who has the distinction of covering 20,944 meters for the world record in 1976, said EPO was a very complicated substance to detect. He remarked fresh red blood cells live for 30 days only and so you not only need to consistently monitor the EPO level, but also track an athlete for more than two years to have an idea of the numbers that remain in the blood. Hermens, who competed for the Netherlands in the 10,000 meter race in the 1976 Olympics, also remarked remote location of Kenya's training areas also made it difficult to get blood samples to any accredited labs within the mandated 36 hours. The athlete blamed sports physicians and pharmacists for the doping problems in Kenya. Hermens said long distance running is a big business in Kenya and there is a lot of competition to get into the teams and so some doctors tell them they can run faster if they follow their advice. He added several athletes are not educated enough and they fall into the trap and the doctors are to be blamed because what they are doing is crime.

Hermens also remarked the low standard of living among Kenyans made them physically tough as they are used to living with less oxygen because they live in high altitude areas. Hermens went on to add that Kenyans have so much talent that there is no need for doping. Jos Hermens added we educate them for learning nuances of running and we manage their daily affairs. The athlete said it is very important regarding doping that every time they go to the hospital, they need to let us know because sometimes they get the wrong medicine and they can have a problem.