

Tom Meeusen Cleared By Belgian Cycling Federation

Tom Meeusen, the Cyclo-cross rider from Belgium, has successfully appealed against decision of the Belgian Cycling Federation not to register him at the World Championships after doping suspicion.

The 26-year-old rider, who found himself in an investigation by the Belgian Cycling Federation, was acquitted because of lack of evidence that he made use of performance enhancing substances, [Cortisone](#) and Vaminolact. If he was found guilty, Meeusen would have faced a doping ban of two years and a fine of €28,550 and his 2012 results would have been annulled. Meeusen successfully appealed his exclusion at the 2015 cross world championships in the Czech Republic in January because of the ongoing investigation, along with other riders Laurens Sweeck and Bart Wellens.

Sweeck has admitted that he did purchase Vaminolact, injectable amino acids developed as a nutritional source for premature and sick babies, but added that he did not receive illegal ozone treatments from Belgian doctor Chris Mertens. Sweeck was named among 19 athletes linked to a three-year-long investigation into the activities of Merten who was charged with providing ozone treatment, a procedure where blood is extracted and infused with ozone before being injected back into the body.

Article 9.2.002 of the UCI regulations states that a rider against whom an investigation was opened in relation to a breach of anti-doping rules will not be eligible for the World Championships until their definitive acquittal. Stijn Debaene, Partner of Fieldfisher, the firm that defended Meeusen, said the Arbitration Court has only issued a decision without a motive for it, so we do not yet know on which basis they have decided that this rule is not applicable. Debaene added maybe they have decided that this rule is not applicable because there is no investigation that has been initiated against the rider, which is the first thing that we pleaded. Maybe they have said, as they did in the Valverde case, that the rule in and of itself is not a rule which should be applied anyway. But we do not know at this time.

[Greg van Avermaet](#) of BMC Racing is now the next high-profile rider to wait on a decision by the Belgian Federation. Avermaet too was associated with Dr Mertens. In April, prosecutors requested for a doping ban of two years and a fine of €262,500 at a hearing. Final decision on the Classics specialist's fate is expected on May 7.

In January, the Belgian Court for Sport Arbitration (BAS) ruled that Tom Meeusen, Laurens Sweek, and Bart Wellens must be allowed to race the upcoming World Cup and UCI world championships.

Dr Chris Mertens is suspected of providing ozone treatment to 19 athletes, especially to notable cyclo-cross riders. Also known as [ozonated autohemotherapy](#), ozone treatment has the ability to increase the levels of oxygen in the body and is considered illegal under UCI rules.

Pieter Van Herck and Stefan Van Dijk so far have been handed bans as part of the investigation. Herk was given a two-year suspension after being found guilty of ozone-therapy conducted in 2011. Stefan Van Dijk was handed an eight-year suspension and 10,000 Euro fine for ozone therapy. According to Belgian media, Dijk had blood extracted and then infused on certain occasions and took ozone therapy during the 2011 season, in which he rode for Verandas Willems.