

## Swimming Competition Plagued By Doping

Top coaches and others have warned that elite swimming is plagued by doping.

In an interview, John Leonard, the executive director of the World Swimming Coaches Association, remarked that the probability of clean [swimming](#) contests at Rio Olympics next year is "zero." Leonard added everything that is wrong with Russian athletics is wrong with swimming. Recently, Australia's head swim coach Jacco Verhaeren issued a warning that swimmers themselves were losing faith in the system. Verhaeren also commented that there are concerns about what is exactly happening to prevent doping use and added the lack of transparency is concerning.

The death of Qing Wenyi, a 17-year-old swimmer who had her sights set on next year's Rio Olympics, poses many questions. Her parents asked that an autopsy not be performed and a Chinese website reported that death of Wenyi was probably the result of a heart condition that is associated with [performance enhancing stimulants](#).

The association of doping and swimming is not new. The electrifying performances delivered by Chinese swimmers as far back as the 1980s and 1990s were always rumored to be associated with doping. To add to that, a surge of [positive doping results](#) and drug suspensions hit China after the 1994 Rome World Championships when the women's team captured gold medals in 12 of 16 events. In the past two years, Olympic 400m freestyle champion Park Tae-Hwan from South Korea and world breaststroke champion Yuliya Efimova from Russia got reduced bans that allowed them to compete at the Rio Olympics.

Leonard, the executive director of the World Swimming Coaches Association, commented nothing has changed since then. Leonard added doping tests are carried using obsolete techniques and the world governing body of aquatics, FINA, is deliberately ignoring a serious problem. John Leonard added he and others maintain that FINA is ill-equipped to oversee anti-doping efforts and athlete safety and added FINA doesn't want to catch anyone because their job is to promote the sport, and a fair number of top swimmers are cheating.

Ahmed El-Awadi, the chief executive officer of Swimming Canada, remarked he doesn't share all views of Leonard. However, he added he does have some concerns about how the case of Sun Yang, the Chinese swimmer who took home gold in the 400- and 1,500-metre freestyle events at the 2012 London Olympics and suspended for three months in May 2014 for using a banned stimulant was handled by FINA. El-Awadi added there is a lack of transparency in the process and of consistency in the application of the rules. The chief executive officer of Swimming Canada added we have Ryan Cochrane fighting for the same gold medal, so we'd love to know more about Sun Yang's positive test and how it was dealt with and also commented that we would love to see hearing and investigation notes. El-Awadi also said that international federations right now are put in a position where they have to test and punish their greatest assets, and potentially hurt their own revenue.