

## Paolini Receives Doping Ban Of 18 Months

Italian road bicycle racer [Luca Paolini](#) has received a doping ban of 18 months from the world governing body of cycling. The cyclist tested positive for cocaine during last year's Tour de France.

The 39-year-old was facing the possibility of facing a ban of two years when his hearing took place in March. Paolini's case was one of the first cases heard by the UCI's Anti-Doping Tribunal. Cocaine is classified as a banned substance in competition under the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) code. However, athletes are not banned if they test positive for the social drug out of competition.

Paolini's teammate Alexander Kristoff had previously revealed the cyclist's use of sleeping tablets. Kristoff remarked he knew Paolini was struggling to sleep at night and to wake up in the day. Paolini had himself already admitted to using the drug and also said he has an addiction to sleeping tablets, calling himself a slave to the pills. Paolini admitted he took cocaine in June at a personal training camp and also remarked it happened at a low point in his life after he spent years of addiction to the sleeping medicine Minias (Benzodiazepine). The rider has undergone treatment for his addiction to the sleeping medication since he was suspended from racing following his [A-sample test](#).

The suspension of Paolini will end 18 months from the date of the 'adverse analytical finding' and he can make a return to the Peloton as he will be free to race from January 6 next year, 11 days before his 40th birthday.

The rider however has the right to appeal the decision. Meanwhile, his former team, Katusha, has confirmed that it will not take Paolini back after nullifying his contract last year. A Katusha spokesperson said we are happy that there's now been a decision but for us it doesn't change anything for the team because we terminated his contract last year. The spokesman added he admitted at a certain point to us that he took cocaine and that is really against the team rules and added Paolini still has the right to go to appeal but it doesn't change things for us as we have strict anti-doping policy.

A statement on the UCI's website said the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) announces that the UCI Anti-Doping Tribunal has rendered its decision in the case involving Luca Paolini. The statement further reads that the Anti-Doping Tribunal found the rider guilty of a non-intentional [anti-doping rule violation](#) (presence of a cocaine metabolite - Benzoyllecgonine) and imposed an 18-month period of ineligibility on the rider. In accordance with the Procedural Rules of the Anti-Doping Tribunal, the decision will shortly be published on the UCI website.

Born on 17 January 1977, Luca Paolini has been professionally riding since 2000. Paolini started his sports career by joining Mapei–Quick-Step (2000–2002) and then its successor team Quick-Step–Innergetic (2003–2005) where he attained many wins, including first places at Gran Premio di Lugano, Giro del Piemonte and Gran Premio Bruno Beghelli. Paolini also won stages at Tour of Britain and Tour de Wallonie.