

Former Cyclist Raises Doping And Sexism Accusations

Former Olympic and world champion cyclist [Nicole Cooke](#) has blasted the functioning and questioned the existence of British Cycling and Team Sky.

Cooke, who announced her retirement from cycling on 14 January 2013 at the age of 29, said cycling is “a sport run by men, for me” and added that the wrong people have been fighting the wrong war, in the wrong way, and with the wrong tools. The 2008 Gold Olympic medalist also remarked she had been encouraged as a 19-year-old to dope by two members of her own British team. Cooke remarked she was the Briton on her team in Italy and she was encouraged by two members of the management of her team to [dope](#). The cyclist went on to say that she had passed the information onto the forerunner of UK Anti-Doping when she was encouraged to dope as a 19-year-old but nothing was done.

Commenting on the "mysterious" bag containing medication that was transported by Simon Cope, Cooke said Cope was doing what he was told to do but it is surprising to learn that Cope, British Cycling women's team manager, had no other task left to perform besides delivering the bag. Cooke went on to ask why Cope, whose salary is paid out of the public purse, was asked by his managers to serve as a courier for [Bradley Wiggins](#) and spent some weeks riding a moped in front of him as part of a training regimen instead of performing his responsibilities for the women's team.

Cooke disclosed she was given four Therapeutic Use Exemptions during her career, namely to treat a serious knee injury. Cooke said she had a TUE for this treatment receiving the same steroid that Bradley Wiggins used more recently and added it could at the time could only be used with a TUE, whether in or out of competition. Cooke said that injection failed to address the medical problems and she continued not to race and ended up having surgery in May 2004. Cooke said the TUEs issued by the Team Sky/British Cycling medical team for this same steroid are of great concern. The former cyclist raised eyebrows on the functioning of British Cycling and Team Sky by saying the more relevant question rather than the strange coincident chronology of the ailment perhaps is to ask the Team Sky/British Cycling medical team how often has this steroid been issued to athletes out of competition. Cooke said it is important to know if the steroid is used properly to help recover from career threatening injuries or has it ever been used to assist athletes losing fat and gaining power in the out of competition preparation for major events.

Cooke also said very little was ever done to support female road riders during her career. Recounting her own exposures to sexism, the Commonwealth, Olympic, and World road race champion said odd riders at times would be supported for a period while they were 'in favor' but mostly that support was only ever transient. Cooke went on to said that plans were in place

in 2008 for the male only Team Sky that would use a variety of British Cycling Lottery funded staff in dual roles. The project, overseen by Dave Brailsford and others, was designated as "male only" and no successful appeal that it should be a male and female team was possible. Cooke said it was "run exclusively by men, exclusively for men".