

Fundamental Changes Required In Sport, Says EWF President

The highest-ranking weightlifting administrator of Europe has remarked the sport is required to make fundamental changes to its culture, its rules and the way competitions are presented.

Antonio Urso, President of the [European Weightlifting Federation](#) (EWF), told member nations at their Congress that we need a new way and direction. The EWF President recounted his embarrassment at the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro when he heard spectators laughing about the seemingly endless stream of [doping cases](#) that have sent weightlifting to an all-time low in terms of public opinion.

The Italian said he was at one of the medal ceremonies and he could clearly hear the people behind him who said those medals will be in different hands in a few years. Urso added we are losing credibility as a sport.

The spectators were reacting to results of the retesting of samples from the Olympic Games at Beijing 2008 and London 2012 by the International Olympic Committee's (IOC). The sport of weightlifting accounted for nearly half of all retrospective positives with 30 athletes stripped of their medals and 48 cheats caught. Of the 48 positive tests, 42 were from former Soviet Bloc countries. Seven lifters tested positive including all three medalists in the notorious 2012 men's 94 kilograms competition. Tomasz Zielinski of Poland was promoted from ninth place to bronze medal position but was sent home from Rio 2016 for a doping offence.

Speaking a day before the European Junior and Under-23 Championships, Urso said 2016 has been the worst year ever for our sport, but he is not surprised. The President of the European Weightlifting Federation also commented he three editorials in the European Federation magazine in 2008, 2009, and 2010 and underlined that some of the results were not human results, that some women were becoming a man, that doping was beyond control. Urso also said some people attacked him unfortunately and said he was destroying weightlifting but today those people can see all too clearly what everybody else can see that doping is destroying us. Urso went on to comment that weightlifting will be nothing if we lose our place in the Olympic Games. The Italian also said the National Federations should accept "a new vision" for the sport.

Urso believes the biggest need for change is in the culture of coaching and in holding coaches responsible, and punishing them, for doping by their athletes. The EWF President said the coach has the highest responsibility in matters of [doping](#), and yet you can have someone as head coach of a national team who was banned for life as a lifter for doping and added this is unacceptable.

Urso will stand for Presidency of the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) next May against Tamas Ajan and two or three other candidates. Ajan has been President since 2000 and was secretary general of the IWF for 25 years. Urso said he has full respect for the IWF and the rules but we need a new way, a new direction and commented that we are running fast into the future of the sport. Urso also said the organization and presentation is really old and it is up to the National Federations at the election in May whether to stay the same or go for a new vision.