

Doping In Rugby Ignored

People are turning a blind eye to doping in rugby in the same way that was once the norm in cycling, former France hooker Laurent Benezech has claimed.

Speaking to Le Monde Benezech, Benezech remarked the proofs of [doping in rugby](#) are in front of everyone but no one seems to be interested. The French hooker remarked rugby is in exactly the same situation that cycling was before the Festina affair, the infamous case in 1998 when a Festina team doctor was stopped by customs officers at the France-Belgium border and was found to be carrying various doping products. After this, several doping investigations happened and many cyclists admitted that they were doping.

The comments of Benezech come just a week after former France scrum-half Jean-Pierre Elissalde claimed [amphetamines](#) were widely taken in the sport during the 1970s and 1980s. A few months back, a high-ranking French anti-doping official Francoise Lasne claimed rugby had returned the highest proportion of positive dope tests in France in 2012.

Benezech, who was capped 15 times from 1994 to 1995, remarked one just needs to look at the statistics to see the evidence and blamed the clubs for being complicit in abetting doping by authorizing the use of banned substances for therapeutic reasons. He went on to say that there is the legalization in some clubs of the use of authorizations given by the doctors, the famous AUTs (authorizations for therapeutic usage), otherwise players would test positive and added the authorizations for therapeutic usage have developed in the sense that the doctor justifies the use of banned substances for medical reasons when it is clear that they are used to improve performance.

Rugby authorities had to stop burying their heads in the sand or the systematic use of doping would continue, Benezech said and added that we will not be able to avoid endangering the health of sportsmen as long as we remain in the dark and refuse to be transparent.

The former French rugby union footballer played first at Sporting Club Appaméen, until 1985 and then moved to Stade Toulousain, where he would stay until 1989, moving to Racing Club de France, that he represented for seven years. After spending a season at Harlequins, in England, he returned to play for RC Narbonne, where he would finish his career in 2000. Laurent Bénézech won the title of French Champion with Racing Club de France, in 1990 and was also selected for the 1995 Rugby World Cup finals, playing a single game in the 54-18 win over Côte d'Ivoire. Laurent also published a book, *Anatomie d'Une Partie de Rugby* (2007).

Recently, the International Rugby Board Anti-Doping Advisory Committee reaffirmed its commitment to the global fight against drugs cheats and endorsed the exhaustive approach of rugby to testing and education. The IRB undertook 1,542 In and Out of Competition controls across IRB tournaments and events in 2012, including the HSBC Sevens World Series, Rugby World Cup 2015 qualifiers, men's and women's Tests and Age Grade Rugby and was praised by WADA for its extensive testing and educational campaign.