

VERY IMPORTANT Please Read!

Revised: 09/01/2024

NOTES ON ANTI-DOPING FOR COMPETITORS

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, incidents at the Olympics and Cycle races have highlighted the scourge of doping in sport. Luckily, motorsport remains relatively untainted by doping.

Under Article 1 of the Irish Anti-Doping Rules, National Governing Bodies of each sport adopted and agreed to abide by the spirit and terms of the National Anti-doping Programme and the Irish Anti-doping Rules. Motorsport Ireland has since incorporated these rules into its own rules. These notes are merely an overview of the anti-doping rules; the full text of the rules can be obtained from Sport Ireland, The Courtyard, Sport Ireland Campus, Snugborough Road, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, D15 PN0N or viewed and downloaded from their website: www.sportireland.ie/anti-doping.

WHY TEST?

There are few if any drugs which will improve your performance in motorsport competitions. In the past, stimulants might have improved wakefulness in competitors engaged in long-distance rallies. However, such rallies are a thing of the past. Almost all drugs will impair your performance and/or may constitute a danger to yourself, officials, fellow competitors or spectators.

Why then do we have to submit to the drug testing at races, rallies et cetera which has been going on for the last 20 years? The answer is firstly, we cannot be expected to be treated differently to other sports and secondly, we receive very substantial amounts of money from Sport Ireland – it would be unreasonable to sign up, take their money but refuse to abide by the rules. However, there are a number of substances which are relevant to motorsport, even if they are not performance enhancing, as follows:

ALCOHOL

Those of you who have already been tested will know that we differ from the majority of sports by testing competitors for the presence of alcohol prior to the competition. We are not alone in this – Archery has a similar procedure. It is a credit to our competitors that all tests carried out to date, except one, have been negative. However, be careful and allow 12 hours at minimum for alcohol to be cleared from the body. As the alcohol testing is done early in the morning, the best advice is not to drink alcohol the day before the event.

“ACCIDENTAL” TAKING OF A BANNED SUBSTANCE

In the early days of the testing programme, my concern as Anti-Doping Officer was that competitors would inadvertently take a banned substance, which might have been present in something innocent such as a cough bottle or over-the-counter medicines, i.e. medicines which you can buy without a prescription. The World Anti-Doping Agency produces annually an updated list of prohibited substances. These are of 2 types, Prohibited Substances and Prohibited Substances that are on the “Specified List”. WADA recognises that the latter (those on the Specified List), while prohibited, could be taken inadvertently and a less severe penalty could be applied to take this into account – but there are still penalties.

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To avoid the risk of taking a banned substance inadvertently, ask your chemist or doctor to check whether or not the medicine is safe to take – it can easily be checked in a booklet called MIMS, which every doctor and chemist in the country gets each month. Another source of information is the Sport Ireland website, which will guide you to the relevant section.

In relation to the former (Prohibited Substances), these are completely banned – an example would be anabolic steroids or their derivatives. A most serious view is taken if these are found to be present in a competitor's urine. It is important to understand that these can be detected in urine samples for periods up to 18 or 24 months after a person has stopped taking the substance and the disciplinary panel will not accept the defence that the substance was taken many months previously, or in relation to another sport, even before coming into motorsport. Also, the methods of detecting such substances are becoming increasingly sophisticated and are used to test samples which have been given several years before, as was the case in the drugs in cycling scandal.

Sport Ireland strongly advises all competitors to avoid taking food supplements, complementary medicines or herbal remedies, as up to 20% of such substances contain steroids.

Sport Ireland wants to ensure that nobody should be banned from a sport because of illness, for example if you have an illness for which you need to take a banned substance as part of your treatment (asthma being a good example). It is possible in certain circumstances to get what is called a Therapeutic Use Exemption. This can be applied for retrospectively, if you test positive at an event. Competitors who are in the Registered Testing Pool (top level drivers) need to get their TUE in advance, before competing. If you feel you need clarification about this, please contact myself by writing to me at Motorsport Ireland or by phone - 087-9790281 - or by e-mail to info@motorsportireland.com

RECREATIONAL DRUGS

The list of prohibited substances includes illegal drugs, such as cannabis, cocaine, amphetamines, heroin et cetera. Please be very aware that some of these substances can be detected in the body for a long time after it was last taken; in the case of cannabis, up to 6 weeks afterwards.

Finally, it is no excuse to claim that the substance was administered to you without your knowledge – it is the presence of the substance in your body which constitutes the doping offence and it is your responsibility to be vigilant and ensure that this does not happen.

REGISTERED POOL COMPETITORS

In common with other sports, Motorsport Ireland is obliged to identify to Sport Ireland a number of competitors who are considered to be international level competitors. These high-profile competitors may be subjected to 'out of competition testing', for example by spot checks to ensure that they are drug-free.

SUMMARY

We are subjected to a set of rules by which we must abide. Motorsport Ireland wants to do everything possible to help competitors in this regard; there is no intention on our part to 'trap' competitors – quite the contrary. However, competitors also have a responsibility to familiarise themselves with these rules and, if in any doubt, contact myself at Motorsport Ireland, or by phone - 087-9790281 - or by e-mail to info@motorsportireland.com

Further Information:

Dr. Declan O'Brien
Anti-Doping Officer
Motorsport Ireland

Sport Ireland Website –
www.sportireland.ie/anti-doping