

How to dope in cycling and get away with it

June 16 2015, by Craig Fry



Cycling books.

As an academic researcher, I have studied drugs in society for the last 20 years. In my current job, I also study cycling history and culture, and the place of drugs and doping in this sport.

I know a lot about this topic. But something new dawned on me the other day. I realised, that in all my years thinking about this issue, I have

learned much more about how to get away with doping than how to prevent it.

Sadly, it can sometimes seem like doping and other cheating is as fundamental to cycling as the wheels on the bikes themselves.

So, out of curiosity I decided to make a list - based on the books I've read, the academic literature I've reviewed, and the cyclists I have listened to at all levels in the sport. In the spirit of sharing, here are the 10 things I know about how to dope and prosper in cycling.

Hello, Lance Armstrong? With these strategies you'll be running the UCI one day. Seriously.

1. Don't get caught.

Seems obvious? Sure. But there's a bit of an art to this. To avoid getting caught, one thing you need to practise is being hard to find, being late to appointments, getting delayed, being unreliable.

All the best dopers have done this well. You can't be tested if you're not there.

Failed to show up for drug testing? Didn't answer the door for a random test? [Whereabouts program](#)? No problem. You slept in, phone went dead, you felt sick, you forgot, or...it was someone else's fault. Use your strikes. You get the picture.

Alternatively, if you're easy to find, or one of those obsessive-compulsive types who like to be on time, you've got more work to do. I've got four words for you – intravenous micro-dose, saline, and transfusion.

If you don't know what to do with these words, here's another one: [Google](#). I hear there's a whole mini-industry now around passing drug tests. Failing that, just buy any one of the recent flock of books by ex-dopers - it's all there in black and white.

If despite your best efforts you do happen to get caught, or you have to confess because you got unlucky, don't worry. It's not over yet. Here are some tried and tested strategies that have been used by the best dopers.

2. Lawyer up.

This will cost you, but remember your Cycling History 101: with a little effort, an ex-doper's career in cycling can be the gift that keeps on giving. The way things are now, with the right legal representation and a good story of mitigating circumstances, medical issues, therapeutic use exemptions, and a tainted food chain, you'll be a returned hero in no time.

If you can't find or pay for a good lawyer, don't fret. The odds are still in your favour due to: [inadequacies](#) of the World Anti-Doping Agency and other national anti-doping agency investigative and testing protocols; the [governance and structural difficulties](#) the International Cycling Union (UCI) has with exercising power; and the added safety net of the [Court of Arbitration for Sport](#).

3. Apologise, and look like you mean it.

Recorded interviews are terrific for this. But vet the questions if you can, or write them yourself and get a mate to ask them (see #10). You may also want to rehearse your facial expressions and body language first – there are folks out there [watching your every move](#).

And you might want to get emotional too if you are able. If not, try #4 below. You will probably have to apologise a few times, so get creative with the forum and the approach (see #10). This will seem unfair, because you probably know about other riders who doped and didn't get caught. But if you did test positive or confess, remind yourself: you're playing the long game now, and the good thing is it won't take that long.

4. Be a good bloke, or funny, but don't be arrogant.

This one is very important. Everyone loves a good bloke (especially in Australia), and it is much harder to dislike or sanction someone who is...well, 'good'. If you can't manage the 'good bloke' thing, then try to be funny - but no doping jokes, please.

Under no circumstances be arrogant or aggressive if you've been caught doping. It makes you a bigger target and much harder to like. No-one likes the unrepentant villain, unless of course you happen to also be attractive and charming – remember [Jacques Anquetil](#) anyone?

5. Start your own business in the cycling industry.

This is a sure way to get your name and brand out there, because although most fans may hate doping, they love new cycling stuff even more (see #6). Make sure your business sponsors high-traffic cycling blogs and news websites, cycling sport events, and even a cycling team if you can get away with it. And be sure to donate to worthy charitable causes.

Also consider leading cycling tours with middle aged men in lycra – many of this crowd have money and influence, and you may even meet a good lawyer or two which could be handy, or someone in marketing or public relations (see #2).

Remember, this is not just a way for you to continue making money from cycling. Think of it also as 'name laundering' - a key strategy to reframe your brand if your fans haven't reacted well to your doping.

6. Have a cycling thing named after you.

If you have been caught doping you'll need to get a positive counter message out there. The possibilities here are numerous. Ideally, you need your name on something high profile like a velodrome, criterium circuit, cycling race, [cycling kit](#), a new bike brand, wheels, etc.

Having your name associated with things that make people feel good, and that they identify with positive experiences, can work wonders for turning perceptions around. But don't expect financial return from any of this – remember, you're a cheating doper after all. Don't push your luck.

Of course, if you do make some money here because you have your own cycling business (see #5), that's okay, go for it...but again remember, donate to charity. You're a giver now, not just a taker.

7. Get a Directeur Sportif or coaching job in a professional team.

Seems counter-intuitive, but it works especially if you're very successful in this role. Nothing clouds the collective memory in elite sport better than success. Or money. Ideally, both.

To get the gig, throw in a bit of #4, and also make certain you announce publicly how hard you're going to work as an anti-doping advocate (see #9). Don't worry about actually taking steps to do that, or planning for it. Most folks will forget about it anyway.

It's even better if the person bankrolling the team you're working for is also very senior in a peak cycling organisation or body, or very wealthy, or a very big character. Throw in an official independent review of the team by someone from the anti-doping world or a university and you're set.

If you can't get a gig at the top of a successful team, you can always start by handing out wheels and musettes to riders in the big races (think like Erik Zabel supporting Movistar team in this year's Paris-Roubaix) – the 'helping' role plays well in the media (giving back to the sport and all that), and it's one step closer to running the show.

8. Get a book deal.

Even if you're just middle of the road famous, publishers will still probably fall over themselves to give you a book deal. Can't write? Don't worry. There's many a sports journalist out there just itching to ghostwrite your book (see #10).

The good thing is, you can pretty much say anything in your book. No pesky [body language](#) tells on the pages. It's your book, so you can reveal The Truth. It will be cathartic, and it might even make some money – in which case you know the deal...donate it conspicuously.

If you're super famous, 'successful', and a dooper (the 'triple threat' in sport) they'll probably also make movies and [documentaries](#) about you. Don't worry too much if these films are negative - they'll do a great job of getting people used to having you around. And the attention can be another platform to tell your side of the story. In time, people will start to feel sorry for you, or just get bored with talking about the whole doping thing.

9. Become a vocal anti-doping advocate.

This can work like magic. One minute you're a cheat and scoundrel. Next minute, hey presto! you're the expert in the room.

As an avowed 'ex-doper anti-doping advocate' no-one else knows as much about the causes and consequences of doping than you, right? So it also follows there's no-one better than you to help save cycling – as an example to all riders of the dangers of doping, or someone to help the hapless anti-doping experts do a better job.

Be careful here too though. If you get too much attention, have too much fun, or make too much money doing this, some smart-alec is sure to remember that you were a dooper and cheat.

10. Make friends with the cycling media.

This should be easy because you'll probably have mates from back in the day already working in the media. Even better than simply making friends with the media, try and get a gig co-hosting a cycling show. You can address the 'elephant in the room' your way, and announce you're ready to move on and give back to cycling. People will listen because you're on TV.

The cycling media, whether online or broadcast or print, depend on continued access to people like you. And they're fearful that running too much negative copy will turn the world of cycling off them - doping is ugly after all, and we love cycling because it's beautiful.

Apparently, there are current riders in the pro peloton and senior figures in cycling now who believe that ex-dopers should stay away from the sport, and who want reform. Relax though, these guys hardly ever say or

do anything about it. Thankfully, the riders are paid to just ride bikes, and cycling officials are all about the status quo rather than real reform.

All of this means you'll mostly get a good run with the cycling media, not too many difficult questions, and plenty of opportunity to re-frame your story (as long as you can achieve #3 and #4 too).

Heed these words though: In the [cycling](#) media there are two big exceptions to this rule, and their names are [Paul Kimmage](#) and [David Walsh](#). Whatever you do... Stay. Away. From. These. Guys. They will take you down.

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Citation: How to dope in cycling and get away with it (2015, June 16) retrieved 8 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-06-dope.html>

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