

No needle policy set to be adopted for London 2012

Friday, 08 July 2011

By Duncan Mackay in Durban

July 8 - Syringes are to be banned at the Olympics in London next year outside medical areas as a new tactic was launched here today by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in the fight against doping.

The IOC Session Durban approved the "no needle" policy, proposed by Arne Ljungqvist, the President of the Medical Commission, in principle although the full details have not been given.

Ljungqvist claimed the syringes could be used for doping and suggested that all materials used for injections should be prohibited in the Olympic Village, dressing rooms and around the venues.

"We want to send a message that people should behave appropriately in regard to medical treatment" said Ljungqvist.

"We do not want treatment to take place anywhere and be administered by anyone.

"A doctor will, of course, retain the right to treat an athlete as he deems necessary, but we want to be kept informed."

The policy is an extension of those already adopted by the international governing federations in cycling, gymnastics and rowing.

What disciplinary action can be taken against anyone found to be abusing this policy is unclear.

"We don't want to act like the police in the Olympic Village," said Ljungqvist.

"But if we come across any inappropriate behaviour it will be reported.

After the 2002 Winter Games in Salt Lake City, the IOC opened a blood doping investigation after medical equipment was found in a house rented by Austrian athletes.

"The IOC has and other federations have experience of medical equipment, syringes, needles and infusion aggregates being found in dormitories and inappropriate places during and even after the Games," Ljungqvist said.

"I can refer to the Salt Lake City incident."

Ljungqvist also fears that the legitimate use of needles may often put riders on a slippery slope toward doping.

At the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin, Italian police raided the lodgings of the Austrian cross-country and biathlon team and seized blood-doping equipment.

Five athletes were later banned by the IOC for involvement in the scandal, but the Olympic body was powerless without the police action, Ljungqvist claimed.

"The Turin example is a perfect one and that is what I'd like to see in place when we have an Olympic Games or World Championships," he said.

"They had a criminal law criminalising the possession of doping substances and doping equipment when we were powerless.

"The importance of this was so well exposed in Torino."