

Play the Game

Athlete power on the

13-16 October

Colorado State



Play
the G
2019



Chapter 3

THE LOVE AFFAIR THAT EXPOSED A DOPING CRIME

History is packed with examples of how both democratic and authoritarian rulers mix sport and politics with the purpose of framing their nations as strong and successful. To that end, politicians have often resorted to doping as a shortcut to prevail in sport.

After the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, the East German Stasi ('State Security Service') archives exposed one of the largest known state-sponsored doping programmes. The archives show that thousands of East German athletes, some of them minors, were forced or coerced to take part in politically motivated doping experiments that intended to prove that East Germany was superior to the West during the Cold War.

Since then, state-run doping programmes didn't attract much public attention until a Russian love affair helped reveal a very close relationship between Russian sport and politics, in a close conspiracy with one of the most prestigious international federations.

When the Russian middle-distance runner Yuliya Rusanova married the Russian anti-doping officer Vitaly Stepanov in 2009, the talented athlete soon told her husband that she was part of a state-run doping programme involving many elite athletes in Russia.

Yuliya and Vitaly Stepanov's testimony in 2014 was decisive in revealing the doping and corruption scandal organised by international and Russian sports leaders. After their revelations, they had to live abroad and could speak to Play the Game's audience for the first time in 2019 in Colorado Springs. Photo: Thomas Søndergaard/Play the Game

DRUGS, BRIBERY and the COVER-UP

As Russia prepare to host the World Athletics Championships, a Mail on Sunday special investigation reveals...

Russia's path to host the World Athletics Championships next month will take them through a series of hurdles. One of the most significant is the anti-doping scandal that has engulfed the country since the summer of 2011. The Russian Athletics Federation (RAF) has been accused of covering up a series of doping scandals involving elite athletes, including the world champion sprinter Yelena Isinbayeva. The scandal has led to the suspension of the Russian Athletics Federation from the IAAF and the suspension of several Russian athletes from international competition. The Mail on Sunday has conducted an exclusive investigation into the scandal, revealing the extent of the cover-up and the role of the Russian government in the scandal.

Athletes 'ordered to dope by coaches'
Anti-doping chief arrested on drugs charges
Officials 'demanded cash to mask positive tests'

SPECIAL REPORT
 By Martha Kellner and Nick Harris

The Mail on Sunday has conducted an exclusive investigation into the scandal, revealing the extent of the cover-up and the role of the Russian government in the scandal. The investigation has uncovered a network of officials and athletes who were involved in the cover-up, including the Russian Athletics Federation and the Russian government. The investigation has also revealed the extent of the doping scandal, which has led to the suspension of the Russian Athletics Federation from the IAAF and the suspension of several Russian athletes from international competition.

Senior athletes are said to have used a network of officials to help them evade anti-doping tests. The investigation has also revealed the extent of the doping scandal, which has led to the suspension of the Russian Athletics Federation from the IAAF and the suspension of several Russian athletes from international competition.

Not only does an athlete have to take drugs, he also has to pay our anti-doping lab for substituting the samples.
GRAND PRISONER The Russian Athletics Federation (RAF) has been accused of covering up a series of doping scandals involving elite athletes, including the world champion sprinter Yelena Isinbayeva. The scandal has led to the suspension of the Russian Athletics Federation from the IAAF and the suspension of several Russian athletes from international competition.

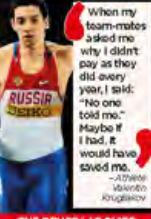
The investigation has uncovered a network of officials and athletes who were involved in the cover-up, including the Russian Athletics Federation and the Russian government. The investigation has also revealed the extent of the doping scandal, which has led to the suspension of the Russian Athletics Federation from the IAAF and the suspension of several Russian athletes from international competition.

HOW SHARP WAS CHEATED OUT OF HER GOLDEN MOMENT
 The investigation has uncovered a network of officials and athletes who were involved in the cover-up, including the Russian Athletics Federation and the Russian government. The investigation has also revealed the extent of the doping scandal, which has led to the suspension of the Russian Athletics Federation from the IAAF and the suspension of several Russian athletes from international competition.

The investigation has uncovered a network of officials and athletes who were involved in the cover-up, including the Russian Athletics Federation and the Russian government. The investigation has also revealed the extent of the doping scandal, which has led to the suspension of the Russian Athletics Federation from the IAAF and the suspension of several Russian athletes from international competition.

The investigation has uncovered a network of officials and athletes who were involved in the cover-up, including the Russian Athletics Federation and the Russian government. The investigation has also revealed the extent of the doping scandal, which has led to the suspension of the Russian Athletics Federation from the IAAF and the suspension of several Russian athletes from international competition.

THE BANNED ATHLETE



When my team-mates asked me why I didn't pay as they did every year, I said: "No one told me." Maybe he had, it would have saved me.
 —Yelena Isinbayeva

THE DRUGS LAB CHIEF



Are Russia fit to stage global sporting events?
 The investigation has uncovered a network of officials and athletes who were involved in the cover-up, including the Russian Athletics Federation and the Russian government. The investigation has also revealed the extent of the doping scandal, which has led to the suspension of the Russian Athletics Federation from the IAAF and the suspension of several Russian athletes from international competition.

44 Russian athletes are currently banned, the most in the world

The investigation has uncovered a network of officials and athletes who were involved in the cover-up, including the Russian Athletics Federation and the Russian government. The investigation has also revealed the extent of the doping scandal, which has led to the suspension of the Russian Athletics Federation from the IAAF and the suspension of several Russian athletes from international competition.

Martha Kellner and Nick Harris from the UK paper Mail on Sunday were the first to reveal systemic cheating in Russian and international athletics in 2013, but reactions were scarce.

In the following years, Vitaly Stepanov sent hundreds of e-mails to WADA about the Russian doping programme. But it wasn't until 2013 when his wife was banned from athletics for two years, following abnormalities in her biological passport, that Jack Robertson, a chief investigative officer at WADA, told the couple to contact the German journalist Hajo Seppelt. Then Yuliya Stepanova herself started collecting evidence about the Russian doping programme.

Also in 2013, on the eve of Russia's hosting of the World Athletics Championships, British journalists Martha Kelner and Nick Harris wrote a special report for Mail on Sunday on 'Drugs, Bribery and the Cover-Up' in Russian athletics. Based on interviews with the Russian athletics coach Oleg Popov and other Russian sources, the report exposed that Russian athletes were ordered to dope by their coaches and that Russian officials were demanding money from athletes to mask positive tests.

Furthermore, the report stated that the head of the WADA-accredited anti-doping laboratory in Moscow, Grigory Rodchenkov, had been arrested on suspicion of being involved in a doping ring, but was later released to continue his work at the lab. Although the British journalists informed WADA, IOC, IAAF, RUSADA, and the Russian Ministry of Sport of their findings, they received no comments and the international sports authorities didn't react to the numerous doping allegations against Russia.

Finally, on 3 December 2014, things got moving when Yuliya Stepanova's secret recordings of audio and video footage of her conversations with Russian athletes, coaches, doctors, and sports officials, were broadcast on German public television station ARD in Hajo Seppelt's documentary 'The Secrets of Doping: How Russia makes its winners'.

"You must dope, that's how it works in Russia. You need aid to get medals, and doping is this aid," Yuliya Stepanova told ARD, and another Russian runner, Liliya Shobukhova, confessed to having paid the Russian Athletics Federation (RAF) 450,000 euro for covering up a positive doping test prior to the 2012 London Marathon.

Both the Russian Athletics Federation (RAF) and RUSADA denied the accusations. In Moscow Times, RAF president Valentin Balakhnichev, who was also a treasurer of the International Athletics Association (IAAF, now renamed World Athletics), described the accusations as "a pack of lies". RUSADA's managing director Nikita Kamaev told R-Sport Agency that "they do not have the facts or the documents, which support any offences carried out against the anti-doping principles."

Nevertheless, the IAAF and WADA said that steps were already taken: “Insofar as the particular allegations against Russian authorities and others are concerned, these will be carefully scrutinised,” WADA stated.

An attitude from the Cold War

On 11 December 2014, WADA appointed an Independent Commission, headed by Canadian IOC member Richard W. Pound, a lawyer, former president of WADA, and winner of the Play the Game Award 2013, to investigate the allegations against Russia.

“I do believe, as many have said here, that sport has become so important that we in fact do face a crisis and that we should not wait until we hit the wall before we do something. Because once you hit the wall, you have no idea what sort of chaos will result and how long it takes to earn back a reputation that you’ve built up for many years,” Richard W. Pound had said when receiving the Play the Game Award.

This prediction came true only one year later when the global fight against doping in sport hit the wall. The Russian–international doping affair deeply compromised the credibility of anti-doping, and WADA had no idea of how long it would take to earn back its reputation.

Pound’s investigation included corrupt practices around sample collection, results management, and administration of anti-doping processes at the WADA-credited anti-doping laboratory in Moscow and the RUSADA.

But before the Independent Commission concluded the investigation, its role was extended by WADA in August 2015 following the release of another ARD documentary, ‘The Secrets of Doping: The Shadowy World of Athletics’, containing new allegations of widespread doping in world athletics.

Shocking and appalling report

In late 2015, WADA released the Independent Commission’s first 325-page report on its investigation of the two whistleblowers’ allegations. The WADA president, Sir Craig Reedie, said that the report contained a series of findings that would “shock and appal athletes and sports fans worldwide” and highlighted current deficiencies with the anti-doping system in Russia.

“While the contents of the report are deeply disturbing, the investigation is hugely positive for the clean athletes as it contains significant recommendations for how WADA and its partners in the anti-doping community can, and must, take swift corrective action to ensure that anti-doping programmes of the highest order are in place across the board. WADA is fully committed in its role of leading the charge to protect the rights of clean athletes worldwide,” the WADA president said.

In Geneva, Richard W. Pound held a press conference stating that the allegations of widespread doping in Russia were substantiated by the investigation and that many of the findings were still current in Russian sport.

To him, the Independent Commission report uncovered a “deeply rooted culture of cheating”, and the findings were redolent of “an inherited attitude from the old Cold War days” and probably only “the tip of the iceberg.”

Russians in denial

The report also said that the head of the Moscow lab, Grigory Rodchenkov, admitted to intentionally destroying 1,417 samples in December 2014, shortly before WADA officials were due to visit the lab. Furthermore, the report stated

- that the 2012 Olympics in London were “sabotaged” by the “widespread inaction” by the IAAF and the RAF against Russian athletes with suspicious doping profiles
- that RUSADA was under improper influence from the Russian sports ministry
- that the agency had given athletes advance notice of tests
- that its employees routinely took bribes from athletes to cover up doping.



“Once you hit the wall, you have no idea what sort of chaos will result and how long it takes to earn back a reputation”, was IOC member Richard W. Pound’s warning to sport at Play the Game 2013. The warning proved relevant only one year later. Photo: Thomas Søndergaard/Play the Game

Regarding the improper influence of the Russian government, the report stated that “it would be naïve in the extreme to conclude that activities on the scale discovered could have occurred without the explicit or tacit approval of Russian governmental authorities.”

At the press conference in Geneva, Richard W. Pound even said it was inconceivable that the Russian sports minister, Vitaly Mutko, was not aware of the scale of the problem: “It was impossible for him not to be aware of it. And if he’s aware of it, he’s complicit in it.”

But Vitaly Mutko denied the allegations. The Russian sports minister told the Interfax news agency that he would be happy to close the whole Russian anti-doping system because “we will only save money”, while other Russian officials tried to paint a picture of Russia as the victim of a political anti-Russia campaign in the US and Europe.

Based on the report, the Independent Commission made a series of recommendations, including the need for WADA to insist upon compliance by all its signatories, and to prioritise regulating compliance of anti-doping programmes. And there were specific recommendations for WADA to declare the Moscow lab and RUSADA non-compliant and for the IAAF to declare the RAF non-compliant, meaning that Russian athletes wouldn’t be allowed to compete internationally.

Athletics leaders arrested in France

At the WADA press conference in Geneva, Richard W. Pound was holding back part of the report pending a French criminal investigation into IAAF officials, which was kick-started when the Independent Commission handed documents to Interpol. One week prior to the press conference, the French police arrested Lamine Diack, the IAAF president for 16 years, Habib Cissé, an IAAF legal adviser, and Gabriel Dolle, a former head of the IAAF anti-doping unit.

“When we release this information to the world, there will be a wow factor. People will say: How on earth could this happen? It’s a complete betrayal of what the people in charge of the sport should be doing,” Richard W. Pound told *The Independent*.

Lamine Diack was accused by the French police of accepting more than 1 million euro in exchange for covering up athletes’ positive tests. And when the second part of the Independent Commission report was published on 14 January 2016, the report also put pressure on the new IAAF president, Lord Sebastian Coe, who had served as a vice president

under the regime of Lamine Diack and now had become the president of the federation which has been renamed World Athletics.

IAAF Council could not have been unaware

The report revealed that the IAAF council “could not have been unaware of the extent of doping in athletics and the non-enforcement of applicable anti-doping procedures. There was an evident lack of political appetite within the IAAF to confront Russia with the full extent of its known and suspected doping activities.”



The late Lamine Diack, international athletics president from 1999-2015, combined corruption and doping in a way no one had seen before. He was convicted to four years in prison and fined 500,000 euro for blackmailing 23 Russian athletes to the tune of 3.2 million euro. Photo: Lintao Zhang/Getty Images for IAAF

Furthermore, the report added that Lord Sebastian Coe's right-hand man Nick Davies, who only one month earlier stepped aside from his position as deputy general secretary, was "well aware of Russian skeletons in the cupboard." According to the report, a leaked email from Nick Davies to Lamine Diack's son, Papa Massata Diack, who worked for the IAAF as a marketing consultant, showed that the IAAF deputy general secretary discussed a plan to delay the announcement of positive tests by Russian athletes.

Although the report noted that "failure to have addressed such governance issues is an IAAF failure that cannot be blamed on a small group of miscreants", Richard W. Pound said at a press conference in Munich that it was now the responsibility of the IAAF to seize the opportunity to move forward and pointed to Lord Sebastian Coe as the right man for the job:



Mourners pay tribute to Nikita Kamaev, one of two leading Russian anti-doping officers who died mysteriously in early 2016 when the Russian doping scandal was still not fully unravelled. Photo: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

“There is an enormous amount of reputational recovery that needs to occur here, and I can’t think of anyone better than Lord Coe to lead that.”

Lord Sebastian Coe denied any knowledge of the IAAF cover-up and followed up on Richard W. Pound’s appeal: “We can’t just sit here and say we deserve trust. We don’t, we have to win that back,” the IAAF president said, but the investigation of the Russian doping case was far from over.

Two mysterious deaths

One month later, on 14 February 2016, the former managing director of RUSADA, Nikita Kamaev, died of a massive heart attack at the age of 52, two weeks after the death of Vyacheslav Sinev (58), the agency’s general director between 2008 and 2010. The surprising deaths of two Russian anti-doping officers, who knew all about how RUSADA was run, were so mysterious that some international news media indicated the two men were assassinated.

Regarding Nikita Kamaev, the media speculations only grew stronger when first *The Sunday Times*’ chief sportswriter David Walsh and then the Danish professor Verner Møller told the news media that Nikita Kamaev a few months prior to his death approached them separately because he was planning to reveal the Russian doping cover-ups and needed help to write a book in English.

A connection between Nikita Kamaev’s book and his death was never proven, but soon the investigation of the Russian doping affair took a new direction that further indicated the involvement of Russian authorities.

On 8 May 2016, Vitaly Stepanov appeared in an interview at 60 Minutes on CBS stating that he had recorded conversations with Moscow lab director Grigory Rodchenkov claiming that Russian gold winners at the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi were doped and that positive tests were removed from the Moscow lab with the help from the FSB, Russia’s intelligence service.

Four days later, on 12 May 2016, Rodchenkov – who had left Russia in January 2016 to start a new life in the US – confirmed the allegations in an interview with *The New York Times*.

Rodchenkov said he created a doping cocktail of three anabolic steroids to help Russian athletes enhance their performances at the Sochi Games, and he switched positive doping

samples, when the lab – assisted by the FSB – discovered how to open and re-seal glass bottles with urine samples.

He also said that Russian athletes when tested, took photos of the serial numbers on their urine bottles and texted the numbers to the Russian sports ministry. At night during the Games, about 100 bottles with samples showing traces of steroid use were delivered through a small hole in the wall at the lab and later handed back with clean urine in the bottles.

“Beyond a reasonable doubt”

To most sports fans, Grigory Rodchenkov’s story sounded like a James Bond movie. But it prompted WADA to launch a new investigation headed by Canadian law professor Richard H. McLaren.

On 18 July 2016, the first part of Richard H. McLaren’s report on the matter was released. The report confirmed the allegations and concluded that it was “beyond reasonable doubt” that Russia’s sports ministry, the FSB intelligence service, and the Moscow laboratory had operated to protect doped Russian athletes.

The report stated that a minimum of 643 positive samples disappeared in Russia between 2011 and 2015 and recommended to the IOC to ban Russia from the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. Six days later, the IOC rejected the recommendation and announced that a decision would be made by each sports federation and that each positive decision should be approved by CAS.

On the eve of the Rio Olympics, the IOC announced that 278 out of 389 Russian athletes listed for the Games were cleared to compete. In clear contrast, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) decided to ban all paralympic athletes from Russia.

The IOC decision was met with resistance from WADA and strong criticism in the world press, and the committee was also criticised for not allowing Yuliya Stepanova to compete at the Olympics as a neutral athlete, on the grounds that she did not “satisfy the ethical requirements”.

To the Russian whistleblower, the IOC decision was a huge disappointment because she was free to compete after her two-year sanction was lifted in 2015.

At the beginning of the Rio Games, Yuliya Stepanova also experienced some of the consequences of being considered a national traitor in her home country as she was labelled ‘Judas’ by an official in Russian president Vladimir Putin’s government.



The mastermind of Russian doping, Grigory Rodchenkov, inadvertently became the lead character of the Oscar-winning documentary 'Icarus'. At Play the Game 2019, the movie director Bryan Fogel (right) told how that happened and called for support for Rodchenkov, who had exiled himself in the USA. Photo: Thomas Søndergaard/Play the Game

Attacked by Russian hackers

On 11 August 2016, a hacker group called Anonymous Poland allegedly defaced the CAS website and leaked data stolen from WADA and CAS servers, including accounts belonging to Yuliya Stepanova. When WADA confirmed her ADAMS account, the agency's Anti-Doping Administration and Management System containing medical data of athletes, had been hacked, Yuliya Stepanova told a video press meeting:

“The only reason somebody would hack an ADAMS account is to find out your exact location. We decided it was safer to relocate. If something happens to us, you should know that it is not an accident.”

According to cyberespionage analysts, the Russian hacker group Fancy Bear did the hack and used Anonymous Poland as a proxy to leak the stolen data information. Fancy Bear is connected to GRU, Russia's military intelligence agency. A few weeks later the group leaked personal data of 29 athletes, including Yuliya Stepanova, tennis players Serena and Venus Williams, gymnast Simone Biles, and cyclist Chris Froome.

The leak focused on athletes who had been granted Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE), which allows athletes to use otherwise banned substances in cases of illness or medical conditions. Fancy Bear claimed that these dispensations were "licenses for doping" and described WADA and the IOC Medical and Scientific Department as "corrupt and deceitful".

However, Fancy Bear couldn't prevent the Canadian investigator McLaren from publishing the second part of his WADA investigation into Russian doping. The report was released on 9 December 2016 and found that at least 1,000 Russian athletes across more than 30 sports benefitted from the state-sponsored doping programme between 2011 and 2015.

"It is impossible to know just how deep and how far back this conspiracy goes. For years, international sports competitions have unknowingly been hijacked by the Russians. Coaches and athletes have been playing on an uneven field. Sports fans and spectators have been deceived," Richard H. McLaren said, but the Canadian refused to comment on whether Russia should have taken the country's hosting of the 2018 FIFA World Cup away or be banned from the 2018 Olympic Winter Games:

"My function was to be an investigator and to investigate facts. It is up to the different parties, like the IOC, to make their decision."

Two IOC investigations

Following Richard H. McLaren's report in July 2016, the IOC decided not to organise or give patronage to any sports event or meeting in Russia and not to grant any accreditation to officials of the Russian Ministry of Sport or any person implicated in the report for the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. Furthermore, the IOC established two IOC Disciplinary Commissions to investigate "the alleged facts".

The first IOC Disciplinary Commission was chaired by Samuel Schmid, a member of the IOC Ethics Commission and former president of Switzerland. The objective of the

commission was to investigate “disciplinary actions related to the involvement of officials within the Russian Ministry of Sport and other persons mentioned in the report because of violations of the Olympic Charter and the World Anti-Doping Code.”

The second IOC Disciplinary Commission headed by Denis Oswald, a Swiss IOC member, was established to “initiate reanalysis, including forensic analysis, and a full inquiry into all Russian athletes who participated in the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi in 2014 and their coaches, officials, and support staff, and to take decisions regarding the individual athletes’ situations related to the possible violation of the WADA Code.”



For years, international sports competitions have unknowingly been hijacked by the Russians, Richard H. McLaren said when launching his second report on the systemic cheating in Russian anti-doping. Here he speaks at Play the Game 2019. Foto: Thomas Søndergaard/Play the Game



In spite of so-called 'strict conditions' imposed on Russian sport in the wake of the doping scandal, the IOC allowed no less than 168 Russian athletes to take part in the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea. Here some of them arrive at the opening ceremony in what was supposed to be a neutral outfit. Photo: Chung Sung-Jun/Getty Images

Just a few days after Yuliya and Vitaly Stepanov together with Hajo Seppelt received the Play the Game Award 2017 for “pulling aside the curtains that were hiding the truth”, the IOC-led Schmid commission confirmed on 2 December 2017 “the existence of a Disappearing Positive Methodology as well as tampering methodology, in particular during the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi in 2014, as described in the final report by Professor Richard H. McLaren.”

The Schmid commission also confirmed “the seriousness of the facts, the unprecedented nature of the cheating scheme and, as a consequence, the exceptional damage to the integrity of the IOC, the Olympic Games, and the entire Olympic Movement.”

However, the Schmid commission said, Russian officials admitted wrongdoing by individuals within the Russian institutions, but never a “state doping support system”. And the commission did not find “any documented, independent, and impartial evidence confirming the support or the knowledge of this system by the highest State authority.”

‘Olympic athlete from Russia’

Based on the Schmid commission’s recommendations, the IOC made a decision three days later to suspend the Russian Olympic Committee and to not accredit any official from the Russian Ministry of Sport for the Olympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang. Furthermore, the former Rus-

sian minister for sport, Vitaly Mutko, and the former deputy minister of sport, Yuriy Nagornykh, were excluded from any participation in all future Olympic Games.

The president of the Russian Olympic Committee, Alexander Zhukov, was suspended as an IOC member, and the Russian Olympic Committee was asked to reimburse the costs incurred by the IOC for the investigations and to contribute to the establishment of the Independent Testing Authority (ITA) for the total sum of 15 million US dollars.

Nevertheless, the IOC decided to invite individual Russian athletes “under strict conditions” to the Olympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang under the name ‘Olympic Athlete from Russia’. By December 2017, the Oswald Commission had banned 43 Russian athletes from the Olympics for life, but CAS overturned 28 of the bans. In the end, 168 Russian athletes were allowed to compete at the Pyeongchang Games in February 2018, and the IOC decided to reinstate the Russian Olympic Committee by the closure of the Games.

To many sports fans and anti-doping experts, the IOC decision was a huge disappointment. That sentiment grew stronger in September 2018 when WADA decided to reinstate RUSADA on two conditions: That Russian authorities accepted the reported outcomes of Richard H. McLaren’s investigation, and that the Russian government no later than 1 January 2019 provided access for appropriate entities to samples and electronic data at the former Moscow laboratory, which was sealed off due to a federal investigation of the case.

Manipulation of doping data

Three weeks after the January 2019 deadline, WADA finally had access to the Russian data, including more than 2,000 samples. However, following an analysis of the data, WADA said on 9 September 2019 that the data were incomplete and contained inconsistencies and that RUSADA was to be declared non-compliant with the WADA Code for a period of four years for manipulation of the data.

“For too long, Russian doping has detracted from clean sport. The blatant breach by the Russian authorities of RUSADA’s reinstatement conditions, approved by the WADA Executive Committee in September 2018, demanded a robust response,” WADA president Craig Reedie said.

“That is exactly what has been delivered today. Russia was afforded every opportunity to get its house in order and rejoin the global anti-doping community for the good of the

athletes and the integrity of sport but chose instead to continue in its stance of deception and denial.”

The people who tampered with the Russian doping data have never been exposed. In December 2019, Russia was finally banned from international sports events for a period of four years for tampering with the data, but one year later the ban was reduced to two years following a Russian appeal to CAS.

The then newly elected WADA president, Witold Banka from Poland, was disappointed with the decision by CAS, but noted that “WADA is not the judge, but the prosecutor”, and that “these are still the strongest set of consequences ever imposed on any country for doping-related offences.”

Ten years after Vitaly Stepanov first approached WADA and six years after ARD’s exposure of Yulia Stepanova’s audio and video documentation of the greatest national doping programme in modern sports history, the Russian state was given the same two-year sanction as any individual athlete caught for doping.

The sanction was not for having established a state-run doping programme in Russia, but for tampering with the possible evidence of its existence. And the sanction did not include all Russian athletes. In 2021, the IOC allowed 335 Russian athletes to compete at the Olympic Games in Tokyo representing the ‘Russian Olympic Committee’ or ROC.

But the Russian case was not about doping only. It was also about bribery and corruption. And some of the men who made the Russian doping programme possible by protecting Russian athletes from being caught for doping and sanctioned for breaking the international anti-doping rules did not escape punishment.

A programme of ‘full protection’

In 2015, when WADA’s Independent Commission handed over documents to Interpol, the French police began to investigate Liliya Shobukhova’s allegations of corruption involving officials at the Russian Athletics Federation and the IAAF. First, the police arrested Lamine Diack, the long-time IAAF president and IOC member from Senegal, in his room at the Sheraton Hotel near the Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris.

In Lamine Diack’s computer, the police found much of the evidence that five years later led to the conviction of the former IAAF president and five other athletics officials for bribery and corruption. In September 2020, Lamine Diack was sentenced to four years

in prison and fined 500,000 euro for having collected 3.2 million euro from 23 Russian athletes in exchange for hiding their doping cases.

During the court case, it was revealed by the French prosecutors that Lamine Diack first suggested offering Russian athletes ‘full protection’ in doping cases at a meeting in November 2011 with the then-Russian sports minister Vitaly Mutko. According to the court, shortly after his meeting with the Russian sports minister, Lamine Diack was able to deliver what he had promised with the help from Valentin Balakhnichev, president of the Russian Athletics Federation and treasurer at the IAAF, the Russian coach Alexei Melnikov, Gabriel Dolle, head of the IAAF anti-doping unit, Habib Cissé, a lawyer and IAAF’s legal advisor, and the president’s own son, Papa Massata Diack, who worked for the IAAF as a marketing consultant.

The 23 Russian athletes each paid between 100,000 and 600,000 euro to avoid being sanctioned for doping, the chief judge Rose-Marie Hunualt said when detailing how Lamine Diack and his five helpers corrupted international athletics:

“The money was paid in exchange for a programme of ‘full protection’, purely and simply to escape sanctions. You violated the rules of the game,” the judge said to Lamine Diack. In 2021, before serving his full prison term, Lamine Diack died at the age of 88.

Valentin Balakhnichev was sentenced to three years in prison in absentia and Alexei Melnikov was also in absentia given two years in prison. Gabriel Dolle was given a two-year suspended prison sentence and fined 140,000 euro. Habib Cissé was given three years in prison, of which two were suspended. And Papa Massata Diack, who also was tried in absentia because Senegal refused to extradite him to France, was given a sentence of five years in prison, fined 1 million euro, and banned from sport for 10 years.

“I am appealing their stupid decision. My lawyers were not there because of COVID-19. This trial was a joke,” Papa Massata Diack told The Guardian.

A character assassination

For those trying to fight doping in Russia, the case was no joke.

In 2017, Yuriy Ganus, a businessman from Skt. Petersburg, applied for the job as the Director General of RUSADA. He was hired to clean up anti-doping in Russia, and soon he became internationally respected for his outspoken criticism of the wide-spread doping culture in his home country.

Crossing the Atlantic to take part in Play the Game 2019 in Colorado Springs, Ganus gave a riveting account of how deeply entrenched doping is in the Russian sports system.

Carefully avoiding to criticise the Russian Head of State, Vladimir Putin, he pointed his finger at the sports movement:

“Instead of fighting for pure sport, it intensified the doping poisoning of Russia’s sports environment,” he said.

“Shadow forces among the decision-makers are playing a huge role in the Russian sports environment. The Russian sports area is unfortunately not in the proper priority of the highest level authorities. There is a low control of the tools to achieve goals in sport by the supreme authority. This provided an opportunity for the shadow forces to choose tools and approaches that go beyond common values and principles.”

His honest account was highly appreciated by Play the Game’s audience, but less so by his employers.

In Ganus’ own view, the turning point came in December 2019 when he did not agree with the decision of RUSADA’s board to challenge WADA’s four-year ban for data manipulation at the laboratory in Moscow. When Yuriy Ganus in his capacity as the director general of RUSADA signed the WADA challenge, he added a private note explaining his critical position towards the decision. For that note, he was never forgiven.

In early 2020, the governing body of RUSADA in secret hired the Russian auditor FinExpertiza to produce a confidential audit report on the agency. Without providing any facts of criminal actions or other wrongdoings, the audit report accused Ganus of “possible corruption” and “conflict of interests”.

Ganus stated that the audit report was “based on incomplete information” and conducted to “discredit a new independent RUSADA”. But in August 2020, he was fired based on the conclusions of the report. Six months later, Yuriy Ganus in detail explained his version of the story to Play the Game’s website claiming he was the victim of a character assassination ordered by the governing bodies of RUSADA:

“It was a deliberate report that was intended for the authorities to replace a RUSADA management that was inconvenient to them by using baseless accusations aimed at discrediting me. I invested myself in RUSADA. The agency was my life. After all this, I am still thinking about my future in anti-doping.”

In August 2020, Yuriy Ganus was fired from his job. All charges against him were later dropped.



When the Russian anti-doping director Yuriy Ganus confessed to the failures of Russian sport to Play the Game 2019, many in the audience were sceptical. Was this another smart Russian intelligence operation? However, the firing of Ganus within a year after baseless accusations vouched for his credibility. Photo: Thomas Søndergaard/Play the Game

Fighting doping from the inside

One year before Richard W. Pound (below) was put on a mission by WADA to investigate the allegations of Russian doping brought forward by the German ARD TV broadcaster, he received the Play the Game Award 2013 for his efforts in cleaning the IOC of corruption during the Salt Lake City scandal and in establishing WADA as its first president from 1999-2007.

“He is ruthless and direct when it comes to pointing his fingers at all the critical points in the international fight against doping,” the vice-chair of Play the Game’s board, Søren Riiskjær, said when he presented Pound with the award.



Photo: Thomas Søndergaard/Play the Game

“It is necessary to have these very direct but still constructive critics at the very centre of the sports movement – and it is necessary that people from the inside are also willing to and able to engage with the outside world. [Richard Pound] has always put himself at the disposal of the public debate – also in stormy waters and when the winds were not in his favour.”

The allegations against Russian and international athletics that Richard Pound was asked to investigate, were put on the international agenda by the Play the Game Award winners in 2017, the Russian couple Yuliya and Vitaly Stepanov, in cooperation with German investigate reporter Hajo Seppelt. On the photo to the right, Seppelt is seen holding the award while the Stepanovs are on a Skype connection as they could not leave their current exile in the US.

In his speech, Play the Game’s international director Jens Sejer Andersen praised the Stepanovs for being symbols of the highest ethical practices in sport despite experiencing huge personal costs after becoming whistleblowers:

“You gathered, over a long period of time, convincing documentation through secret audio and video recordings, in spite of the obvious personal risks. And you decided to come forward and step out of anonymity with your eyewitness accounts on Western television, knowing well that this might lead to accusations of being renegades and national traitors, and provoke



Photo: Thomas Søndergaard/Play the Game

negative reactions from the public, the authorities, colleagues, friends and family – as it has certainly also happened on an unprecedented scale.”

To Hajo Seppelt, Andersen said: “Your work was carried out while observing the highest standards of the journalistic profession. It is always a temptation for a

journalist to spice up the story with a little more drama than the documentation can necessarily bear, but you always let the documentation speak almost for itself, with a shortness and sharpness that matches the television format very well.”