



IAAF Medical & Anti-Doping Department

Advisory Note – The Athlete Biological Passport, 2015

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ATHLETICS FEDERATIONS

ADVISORY NOTE – THE ATHLETE BIOLOGICAL PASSPORT

What is the Athlete Biological Passport?

The Athlete Biological Passport (ABP) is an indirect detection method involving the measuring and monitoring of selected individual biological markers, whose abnormal variations could indicate doping practice. The ABP is currently composed of two modules: the haematological and the steroidal module. In practical terms, the ABP consists of collecting blood samples (haematological module) or urine samples (steroidal module) and then screening and monitoring the variations of pre-defined biomarkers over a period of time, which could be indicative of the use of a prohibited substance or a prohibited method. The haematological module of the ABP aims at detecting blood doping, while the steroidal module aims at detecting the use of anabolic steroids. The use of 'biomarkers' for individual athletes allows for the detection of doping through indirect means, rather than via more traditional, direct detection through analysis. Such an approach harnesses the rationale that the biological effects of doping substances and methods (apparent through the analysis of 'biomarkers') remain present and detectable for a longer period of time than the substances and methods themselves.

Testing in this way means that an athlete can be monitored far more efficiently and effectively over the entire course of their career. Instead of referencing against a general athlete population, the ABP creates individualised reference ranges for each athlete. As such, each sample compares values against both previous and future samples, identifying fluctuations that may be indicative of the use of doping substances or methods.

What is the history of the ABP?

The IAAF was one of the first International Federations to collect blood samples, starting with the measuring of blood variables at the 2001 IAAF World Championships, in Edmonton. The purpose, at the time, was to conduct targeted EPO tests in urine on those athletes showing abnormal blood profiles. This approach proved to be efficient in the early days of EPO use, especially during *Out-of-Competition* training periods.

The [Operating Guidelines for the ABP](#) were first approved by WADA for implementation on 01 December, 2009, coming into effect immediately. These Guidelines have been established to harmonise the results of monitored variables within the ABP to ensure both legal and scientific robustness. The model is intended to give a firm, collective framework for the pursuit of Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs) in accordance with Article 2.2 ('*Use or Attempted Use by an Athlete of a Prohibited Substance or a Prohibited Method*') of the [World Anti-Doping Code](#), as well as supporting intelligent, targeted testing.

The IAAF Athlete Biological Passport Programme was formally launched in 2009, with the implementation of the WADA Operating Guidelines for the ABP, although the IAAF may be able to rely on blood data collected prior to 2009 in support of an anti-doping rule violation.

The latest release of these Guidelines, including the steroidal module, entered into force in October 2014.

Review of ABP profiles and consequences

ABP profiles are updated and reviewed on a regular basis by the IAAF. In accordance with IAAF Anti-Doping Regulations, ABP profiles identified as atypical are submitted to an Independent Expert Panel, which is required to give an opinion on the values or variations observed.

If the Expert Panel unanimously decides that the atypical values or variations in a profile may be consistent with doping, a disciplinary procedure must be initiated against the athlete who may ultimately be sanctioned.

To date, more than 30 international-level athletes have been found guilty of a doping offence and sanctioned on the basis of their Athlete Biological Passport Profile.

Who will be a part of the Programme?

The ABP will focus primarily on [IAAF Registered Testing Pool](#) (RTP) athletes. However, all athletes should be aware that they can be selected for ABP testing at any time, so should consider themselves part of the ABP Programme.

What does the ABP mean for traditional anti-doping testing?

More traditional, direct means of doping control are still representative of an effective anti-doping programme; but have some limitations against highly sophisticated doping regimes. More intricate doping programmes, as well as the development of new substances and methods, may be harder to detect through conventional analyses. Hence,

there is a need for anti-doping bodies to be constantly looking for new, refined ways to maintain the fight against doping.

The ABP is not intended or designed to replace direct testing. Instead, it represents one of several strategies that can be used to help. It sits alongside the direct testing of athletes, use of non-analytical evidence, Whereabouts information and performance monitoring. It is only through a robust, complementary combination of such strategies – alongside seeking out new ones to address emerging threats – that the global battle can remain current and effective.