

Q&A : Whereabouts Requirements

What are whereabouts?

Whereabouts are information provided by a limited number of top elite athletes about their location to the International Sport Federation (IF) or National Anti-Doping Organization (NADO) that included them in their respective registered testing pool as part of these top elite athletes' anti-doping responsibilities.

Why are whereabouts important for clean sport?

Because out-of-competition doping controls can be conducted without notice to athletes, they are one of the most powerful means of deterrence and detection of doping and are an important step in strengthening athlete and public confidence in doping-free sport. Accurate whereabouts information is crucial to ensure efficiency of the anti-doping programs, which are designed to protect the integrity of sport and to protect clean athletes.

Where can whereabouts rules be found?

Whereabouts rules are part of the International Standard for Testing (IST, which can be found in the "World Anti-Doping Code" section of WADA's Web site). The IST is mandatory for Anti-Doping Organizations (ADOs, including IFs, NADOs, Major Games Organizers, etc.) that have adopted the World Anti-Doping Code (the document harmonizing anti-doping rules in all sports). The main purpose of the IST is to ensure a standardized approach for anti-doping organizations to plan effective testing and to maintain the integrity and identity of doping control samples.

Why were global whereabouts rules recently changed?

To build on the practical experience gained by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and its stakeholders (the Sport Movement and governments of the world) in the implementation of the World Anti-Doping Code since its inception in 2004, WADA undertook a full review of the Code and associated International Standards commencing in 2006.

How did this process occur?

The process was an extensive, open and transparent review where WADA solicited comments from all those interested in clean sport and who wished to contribute. Four rounds of consultation took place between 2006 and 2008, and on each occasion drafts and redrafts were published on WADA's Web site to engage more comments. More than 140 official submissions were received by WADA from athletes, ADOs, and governments. Many of these organizations conducted their own consultation within their jurisdiction and sphere of influence. In addition, WADA held meetings with numerous organizations and groups of stakeholders.

The final version of the revised IST was approved by WADA's Executive Committee (composed in equal parts of representatives from governments and sport) on May 10, 2008. The revised IST went into effect on January 1, 2009, at the same time as the revised World Anti-Doping Code.

What came out of the consultation process?

Throughout the consultation process, there was a clear call from all participants for greater harmonization and standardization of rules for the provision of athlete whereabouts information and missed tests.

Stakeholders had initially wanted some flexibility in the drafting of the original Code and International Standards that took place from 2001 to 2003. As a result, these provided broad flexibility for ADOs with respect to (a) what whereabouts information needed to be collected; (b) what constituted a missed test; (c) how many whereabouts filing failures/missed tests had to be committed (and in what period) to constitute an anti-doping rule violation under article 2.4 of the Code; and (d) what sanctions could be imposed.

One consequence of the lack of standardization was that it was sometimes problematic for one ADO to recognize a missed test declared on an athlete by a different ADO with testing authority over that same athlete. Another was the perceived unfairness arising from the lack of harmonization of sanctions, because athletes from the same country but from different sports were subjected to differing lengths of sanctions.

For these and other reasons, consultation identified a pressing need to create a mandatory standard set of whereabouts requirements, applicable to all sports.

What major changes were implemented in relation to whereabouts?

The two major changes that resulted from the revision of the World Anti-Doping Code and the IST in relation to whereabouts information and missed tests are:

- The requirement for top-level athletes included in the registered testing pool of either their IF or NADO to specify 1 hour each day (between 6 a.m. and 11 p.m.) during which they can be located at a specified location for testing. These athletes do not have to identify the 60-minute time-slot at a home address, but they can if they wish to. Previously this was a 24/7 requirement.
- The harmonization of what constitutes an anti-doping rule violation in relation to whereabouts and missed tests and what potential sanctions can be applied. Any combination of 3 missed tests and/or failures to provide accurate whereabouts information within an 18-month period now leads to the opening of a disciplinary proceeding by the ADO with jurisdiction over the athlete. Sanctions range between 1 and 2 years depending on the circumstances of the case. Previously this was discretionary for ADOs with a suggested range of between 3 months and 2 years.



Are all athletes subject to these whereabouts requirements?

No.

The new whereabouts requirements are for the limited number of top-level athletes who are in the registered testing pool of either their IF or NADO. They were designed to give those top-level athletes a flexible tool to show their commitment to doping-free sport, as well as appropriate, sufficient and effective privacy protection.

WADA is not responsible for deciding who should be part of these registered testing pools. IFs are afforded discretion as to who should be subject to these provisions internationally, and NADOs are afforded discretion to create a registered testing pool at the national level. It is WADA's recommendation that registered testing pools be of proportionate and manageable size and focus on top international and national elite athletes.

Is it true that whereabouts rules were made more difficult for athletes to manage?

No.

Following extensive consultation, this mandatory whereabouts requirement was in fact reduced from the more flexible yet more demanding 24/7 requirement previously applied by a number of sports and countries of the world. Now it is the same rule for all, with the same potential sanction. This avoids the scenario we saw in the past where an athlete from one sport was sanctioned 12 months for 3 missed tests, yet another athlete from the same country but a different sport received 3 months.

Athletes can update their 60-minute time-slot and their whereabouts at all times, including by emailing or text messaging their relevant anti-doping organization. If they miss a test, they have the opportunity of providing a reason. If this excuse is accepted by the relevant anti-doping organization, then the missed test is not part of any record and does not count as one of three missed tests required within 18 months before any sanction is considered by the relevant ADO.

All organizations and individuals (including athletes) who decided to participate in the consultation process that led to their approval of the revised IST agreed that these requirements were sensible, proportionate, and part of the responsibility of top level athletes to protect the integrity of their sport.

Do athletes have to provide and update their whereabouts information themselves?

Athletes can have their agent or another representative submit their whereabouts information if they wish to. In team sports, whereabouts information can be submitted by team officials on a collective basis as part of the team's activities. However, athletes are ultimately responsible for their whereabouts. As a result, they cannot avoid responsibility by blaming their representative or the team for filing inaccurate information about their whereabouts or for not updating their whereabouts if they were not at the location specified by them during the 60-minute time-slot.