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Speech of the Dutch sport minister Edith Schippers at the European Anti-Doping Conference on 15 June in Amsterdam

Where were you last night?
Where are you going to be tomorrow?
When will you be home?

Do you feel 17 again? And do I sound like your mother?
(Or maybe your wife.)

Ladies and Gentlemen,
For our athletes answering these questions is daily routine. Most of them sacrifice their privacy willingly: anything to have a shot at winning that gold medal. Or because they shared it on Facebook or Instagram already. However, the consequences of not providing the correct whereabouts are more severe than losing a few likes.

In sports it is: three strikes and you are out!

Of course we all want sports to be clean. We want our athletes to be safe. But what about their privacy. Where does it end? Or where does it begin?

How are we going to balance privacy and control? This is a dilemma. And it is the essence of today's debate.

Winning those gold medals, breaking world records, being Olympic champions. The ultimate dream of our athletes is to be the best of the best. We love them for it. They set a great example for our children. They inspire kids to take up sports themselves, or in setting personal goals in life.

No matter our age, great performances and successes are an inspiration to us all.

Our athletes are willing to do whatever it takes to rank amongst the best. They commit to merciless training schedules. They constantly improve their diet. They take vitamins and supplements to go

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that extra mile...

Ambition has no limits. Yet, the human body does.

Ladies and gentlemen,
When you have done the best you could, put everything aside, and still it is not enough...

Doping can be tempting. It sure is a thin line to cross. Especially because there is probably somebody right behind you who can advise you on what to use and when.


If you have endless ambitions running through your veins. How are you supposed to refrain from taking illegal drugs? Especially, when there are people who tell you it is okay; colleague athletes who are using, your doctor who tries to convince you.

To fight the temptation sports needs a culture that says NO to doping. A clear understanding of what is and is not allowed, of the consequences and dangers of using doping. Shared by everyone active in sports. Because all too often we seem to forget this shared responsibility. When the test is positive, we point the finger at the athlete. Yes, they broke the rules. But what about the people surrounding them. Those who somehow facilitated this use of doping? Their club, their team, their doctor?


It is my firm believe we have to adopt a broader look on the use of doping in sports. A broader look on control. Otherwise we are creating a never ending story.

Medical possibilities are developing at high speed. As are possibilities to improve our performance. How are we going to react? Ask even more questions? Put our athletes under twenty-four hour surveillance? Maybe even lock them up in closed institutions?


I believe we have to improve the system. And put serious effort in preventing people from taking illegal drugs in sports. We must improve

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education on the use and risks. The risks of strokes, heart attacks or diabetes. The risks of having to hand in medals worked so hard for. And about being dismissed from participating all together. And let's not forget about the legal consequences for accomplices. In my opinion we have to focus on the networks in sports which facilitate the use of doping. They institutionalise this use, they create the environment where use of doping seems normal. I am convinced that the fight against doping cannot be effective without fighting these networks.

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Of course we still need to enforce the anti-doping rules with controls. Anti-doping organizations gather information, analyse it and share it with colleagues all over the world. Athletes have a right to privacy, as does everyone else. They have the right to the protection of their personal data and medical information. Information that should be treated with care.

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We need to do all we can for a healthy and clean sports culture, a culture without doping.

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Ladies and gentlemen, may the best man - or woman - win. That is the essence of sports. Not: may the best pharmacist or doctor win.

Doping is a threat to the athlete's health. A threat to the integrity of sports. A threat to future generations losing their role models. We have a lot to fight for.

We need to protect our athletes, from their own ambitions, and from bad advice. We should make they have a level playing field. Fair. Honourable. And Healthy.

So let's find the best balance between trust and control. And let's do it together.