

Arne Ljungqvist

A Rock, A Milestone in the Fight Against Doping

Arne Ljungqvist has always been in my horizon since I entered in the anti-doping arena in 1986. I was at that time the medical director of the Winter Olympic Games in Albertville 1992. This function resulted in quality in a membership of the IOC Medical Commission chaired by Prince Alexandre de Merode.

At that time, Arne was not yet an IOC member; he was vice president of the IOC Medical Commission and had already an aura of prestige due to the fact he was the chair of the very powerful IAAF. I remember, as a rookie, I was listening to the unending discussions between the tenors of the fight, Professors Donike and Beckett. Arne always remained calm in the midst of such storms, but his comments, all the time based on the experience he has acquired on the field, came at the right moment to calm everyone. He has always gotten his hands dirty, and this is one of the reasons he was and still is respected not only by his peers, but also by the athletes.

I remember the memorable night in summer 1988, where we had to discuss the issue of Ben Johnson, the most well-known athlete and winner of the most important race of the Olympics, the 100-meter track. I remember how Johnson's defenders at the hearing tried to involve Arne in a conspiracy which would have resulted positively to Johnson's case. Arne, chair of the IAAF Medical Commission in charge of the doping control station at

the stadium the day of the final, was accused of having allowed someone to enter the station by lack of vigilance and spike Johnson's hydration bottle.

It was at this time I became the medical commissioner of the IOC.

I remember the very long discussion in Nagano, Japan, when it came to discuss the issue of cannabis and of the case of the Canadian athlete and snowboarder Rebagliatti. After having heard a very courageous declaration made by the general secretary of FIS (International Ski Federation) at that time, Gian Franco Kasper, the IOC Medical Commission decided to have a vote on whether the case should be continued or not. After a much-tied ballot, the decision was yes. Arne, at this time, made a brilliant plea. Finally, the case was dismissed by CAS based on political reasons more than on scientific ones.

In 1999 Arne, a member of the IOC since 1994, was very instrumental at the time of the World Conference on Doping convened by the IOC. He added his huge experience gained in IAAF to the discussion and even sometimes was obliged to moderate for IAAF president Primo Nebiolo.

In 2002 my collaboration with Arne became more direct. Prince de Merode became ill and therefore could not attend the Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, and President Rogge asked Arne to act as interim president, which he did. Salt Lake City was an important milestone in the fight as we discovered at that time

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ARANESP (darbepoetin alfa), a new generation of EPO (erythropoietin). Arne understood quickly that based on the abnormal result produced by the on-site antidoping laboratory, no decision could be taken without totally convincing proofs.

The collection of these proofs was done by Professor Don Catlin who nightly liaised with the chairman of AMGEN company, who working from the migration diagrams sent to him by fax, recognised this as being produced by his company. Once the certitude was acquired, this helped the IOC detect two top-level Russian cross country athletes and a German/Spanish champion who had astonished the world by his previous victory also in cross country.

Arne took officially the chairmanship of the IOC medical commission in 2003. He was in the meantime a member of the executive committee of WADA and became its vice president in 2008. I remember during all this time sharing with him, almost on a daily basis our concerns, our reactions and our projects in our common quest, cleaning the field of play and find the best way to detect cheaters in order to respect the large majority of the clean athletes.

Arne was and still is always open to new proposals which, once carefully weighed, could help the fight against doping. He has always followed among others, my recommendations, not to transform the Olympic games in a field of experience where new methods or technologies could be implemented. He understood immediately that each time when this occurred, this resulted in a catastrophic outcome: the resolution in Atlanta 1996

where senior management of the IOC imposed the implementation of this technology without having enough elements; EPO testing in Sydney 2000, where the fight between on/off score and Paris method did not allow us to correctly implement what should have been done; and the blood analysis in Athens 2000 where WADA guidelines were not clear enough and resulted in the freezing of whole blood. Based on these failures, Arne edited strict rules on when and how a new method or technology should be implemented and this despite some criticisms and fights with WADA and supporters of these new methods or technologies.

One of Arne's major qualities is his capacity to listen carefully before taking a decision or to implement an action, without delaying such decision or action.

Arne has proved also an indestructible friendship towards the persons with whom he has worked collaborators or coworkers. Despite all the well-deserved honors which have punctuated his career, he has always remained humble, close to those he has always protected, meaning the clean athletes. This could not be otherwise, since Arne comes from their own world.

In conclusion, it was an honor and a privilege to work with such a man, and I do hope to be able to continue to work with him and to take advantage of his kindness, skills, and over all, his great humanity.

Thank you, Arne