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FRIDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2006

FIS MEDIA INFO

WADA-supported Haemoglobin Variation Study in Cross-Country skiers shows that individual haemoglobin values do not vary significantly

Kuusamo (FIN), November 24, 2006/ -- Following the Olympic Winter Games in Turin, a study was carried out this summer and autumn to evaluate the possible causes for variation in the haemoglobin (Hb) values in elite Cross-Country skiers. Based on the initial findings of the WADA supported study, conducted by Professor Bengt Saltin in cooperation with the German, Swedish and French National Ski Associations, the Hb level is a robust and highly reproduceable variable on the individual level.

While the study showed some minor changes in Hb concentration in blood due to water intake, hard training or level of altitude, the individual variations were small. There was no difference between females and males or between athletes with naturally low or high Hb levels.

Based on the findings of this study, the large Hb fluctuations seen in some skiers cannot be explained by variables such as time of day, training at altitude or similar. Instead, the fact that only minor variations were measured on the individual level supports the use of blood profiling as a good method to deter skiers from using various forms of blood manipulation.

For the future, a possible development might entail the determination of individual Hb values around which a variation of +/- 10% would be allowed, as opposed to universal maximum allowable values as is presently used in a number of sports, including skiing.

However, it should be noted that it is critical for the validity and usefulness of the blood Hb tests that blood sampling and handling are performed properly and in a standardized manner. Moreover, the equipment used for the Hb measurements has to be calibrated regularly during the day of testing.

For more details on the WADA-supported study, please consult the accompanying FIS Fact Sheet on WADA supported Haemoglobin Variation Study in Elite Cross-Country Skiers.

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