

SPEAKING NOTES
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Good Day to you all joining me from around the world. It is morning here in Toronto. I am joined by my Chief Investigator Martin Dubbey in London, England who will assist me in answering questions.

Thank you for joining us today.

On the 5th of January 2020 the German television network, ARD, aired the programme “Der Herr de Heber”, Lord of the Lifters. The documentary claimed the leadership of the International Weightlifting Federation, including President Tamas Aján participated in or had knowledge of numerous irregularities occurring within the IWF.

The allegations related to

- corruption; to
- manipulation of doping control testing and sampling; and to
- irregularities in doping cash fine payments.

There were also suggestions of financial benefit, favouritism, and the undermining of certain nations through cronyism and nepotism.

The International Weightlifting Federation took these allegations very seriously and acted swiftly.

On the 22nd of January of this year, the Executive Board of the IWF announced that an Oversight and Integrity Commission had been formed to oversee any investigation into the allegations arising from the ARD Documentary. The Executive Board concurrently suspended the powers of the President of the IWF, Dr Aján, for a period of 90 days and appointed Ursula Garza Papandrea to the post of Acting IWF President, with direct oversight responsibility for the investigation.

In February, the International Weightlifting Federation mandated me to look into the allegations presented in the ARD documentary. As the Independent Investigator, I was supported by a multi-disciplinary team having proven experience in complex investigations. The team was comprised of skilled interviewers and experts in forensic analysis, financial investigations, money-laundering AND with specialized knowledge in doping violations, laboratory regulation and processes. The lead members of the team are named in the executive summary of the report.

Dr. Aján resigned his Presidency of the IWF as of the April 15 of this year.

I was given the mandate to follow the evidence wherever it may lead; what allegations could or should be tested; and the lines of enquiry to be followed. The mandate was not limited to the allegations described in the ARD documentary.

From the start of the investigation, my team and I had full independence on all matters.

We were also granted the right to approach appropriate authorities with any evidence and findings.

The first phase of the investigation consisted of mapping out the elements described in the ARD allegations. The team created its overall investigative framework based on both the ARD allegations **and our own lines of enquiry**. The framework included an unannounced site visit to the IWF offices in Budapest, key witness interviews, evidence collection and processing protocols.

My team conducted over 50 witness interviews and spoke to other individuals who possessed first-hand knowledge or evidence relevant to the investigation. A number of these witnesses spoke to us in confidence. **The interviewing process was significantly hampered by the onset of the Covid-19 virus.**

Overall, I found an organisation that had been subject for close to half a century to an autocratic leader who dictated through various **control mechanisms** **everything** that occurred within the organisation.

This obsession with control created a culture of fear that prevented a vibrant and robust sport administration. We found systemic governance failures and corruption at the highest levels of the IWF.

In fact, the culture of fear continued even after the resignation of Dr. Aján.

Despite the required cooperation under the terms of reference, only two Vice-Presidents out of five, excluding the Acting President, came forward. Two out of eight congressionally elected members of the Executive Board and only one of the five Presidents of Continental Federations came forward, one refused when approached.

Even more surprising was that of 20 Member Federation Presidents and/or General Secretaries who were contacted by the team, only four responded and ultimately only one of those provided information of significant value to the investigation. Some members actively attempted to deceive and frustrate the investigation process. One Senior Executive Board member stated that he was unable to speak to the team because he did not have phone service. When it was put to him that this lack of cooperation would be noted in the Report, he

produced written material and provided it to the team one week prior to the release of this Report.

The appetite for members and stakeholders of the IWF to come forward was practically non-existent. Only one current athlete spoke with my investigators.

I WANT TO TURN NOW TO THE THREE AREAS WHERE THE INVESTIGATIVE TEAM HAS MADE KEY FINDINGS. I AM GOING TO INTRODUCE THE THREE AREAS THEN SPEAK TO EACH IN MORE DETAIL

- PRESIDENTIAL CULTURE OF CONTROL
- FINANCIAL MISMANAGEMENT
- QUESTIONABLE ANTI-DOPING ADMINISTRATION

Throughout our investigation we noted that IWF officials and member federation demonstrated a constant fear of reprisal by the president.

It was Dr. Aján's way or the highway.

His autocratic management style distorted, warped and atrophied the constitutional design and operation of the organisation. In short, it was a dysfunctional organisation intentionally designed **to ensure one man's absolute control.**

Amazingly, even after his suspension as president, Dr. Aján was still clearly in charge. During our March visit to the IWF headquarters in Budapest, nearly 45 days after Dr. Aján's suspension of duties, we witnessed him still carrying on with business as usual, running the office, organising an Executive Board meeting, having meetings with the IWF financial advisor and external auditors, KPMG.

In addition, Dr. Aján effectively blocked the Acting President from fulfilling the position granted to her by the Terms of Reference, which authorised her to manage and supervise the activities of the IWF and of the Secretariat. She did not even have a key to the office until the day before our visit.

In order for Dr. Aján to maintain his influence, control and power, he needed to stay president. To do so, he permitted the elections to be bought by the vote brokers. These were individuals who typically held the most senior positions in

the IWF and who acted on behalf of Dr. Aján to bribe member federations to cast their votes in his favour and the candidates he supported. The mechanics of the system were in full force during the 2013 and 2017 elections. Dr. Aján team ensured he had the numbers to win by creating a voting bloc of delegates. The voting bloc was provided with an aide-mémoire prior to going into the voting booth. The delegate had to take a picture of the completed ballot and show the vote broker this evidence before receiving the cash bribe.

The elections were bought not just for the Presidency but senior positions on the Executive Board. In this way he ensured re-election of those who could best support him without question and who would perpetuate this accepted systemic pattern of behaviour.

Aside from benefiting from bought elections to stay in power there were other equally ruthless controls used to govern the organisation.

Retaining and exercising the power of the Presidency required exclusive control of all aspects of the financial operation. He who manages the money and the purse strings controls the organisation. Neither operating staff nor the elected

Executive Board had a comprehensive and full understanding of the financial picture. Everyone was kept in financial ignorance through the use of hidden bank accounts, endless exchanging and transferring funds from bank to bank and one currency into another. There are inadequate checks and balances, and those that do exist were not enforced or were ignored.

The organisation was awash with cash.

Millions in cash was collected in doping fines with lesser amounts collected for other aspects of running the organisation. Some cash was accounted for. Some was not. Some was receipted and some was not. Reports of cash collected were only made when the President would decide to advise the part-time bookkeeper. He chose what was recorded and what was not.

Dr. Aján was the only person with signing authority over the operating account. He made **ALL** of the cash deposits and withdrawals. NO one else carried out this function.

His control mechanism here is what we have termed the Tyranny of Cash.

Cash collected, cash withdrawn, and cash unaccounted for.

The sport's rules regarding fining athletes and countries for doping infractions was the primary source of cash revenues. Fines could go as high as a half million dollars. The person who collected the cash fines was the President. These large sums were often collected at competitions and taken across international borders back to headquarters in Budapest.

Dr. Aján would spend some of the cash on legitimate IWF expenses; however, the REMAINDER appears to be unaccounted for. Without records, receipts and paper audit trails it is absolutely impossible to determine how much of the cash collected was used for legitimate expenses.

We identified several occasions when large sums were withdrawn in advance of Continental elections and Electoral Congresses, where it is alleged that Dr. Aján used the IWF's resources to buy votes, as I mentioned earlier.

Since the bookkeeper was only on occasion provided with receipts demonstrating how the withdrawn cash has been spent, it is impossible to know what percentage was used for legitimate IWF operations.

Additional unaccounted for cash came from a cycle of currency conversions and withdrawals. IWF funds were transferred from the US operating account to a second undisclosed bank and converted into Hungarian currency. Then, only a portion of the converted funds were transferred back to the operating bank.

What happened to that money not transferred back?

The investigation team has determined that \$10.4 million in cash cannot be accounted for.

How does this happen?

A complete lack of oversight into the finances of the organization and through the use of hidden bank accounts, unaccounted for cash payments, and unexplained withdrawals.

Where is that money?

Why has it only been detected now through our investigation when this has been going on over the 10-year period we examined? The preparation of accounting information is controlled by the President. Only he instructs the bookkeeper on what cash to record. She is not aware of the hidden bank accounts and the organisation's Financial Advisor and auditors tell us they were not aware of these hidden accounts.

The financial records prepared for the Executive Board are little more than bits and pieces of financial information. It was thus, impossible for the Executive Board to properly review the information because it was flawed and it lacked complete records. No one was permitted to question the financial affairs of the IWF.

An illustrative example of the autocratic control and the financial control was explained to us by a new Executive Board member, who, during attendance at their first Executive Board meeting asked the President some financial questions.

The Board member was told by a member of the Secretariat that you “DO NOT ASK QUESTIONS OF THE PRESIDENT CONCERNING MATTERS OF FINANCE.”

The last area I would like to describe is the questionable anti-doping administration.

Weightlifting has traditionally been a sport with a history of doping. Over 600 lifters in the past decade have tested positive.

Certainly, the evidence shows that the President interfered in some ways in the work of the independent Anti-Doping Commission of the IWF, but the real problem is the culture of doping that exists in the sport. However, I would like to note that there were individuals who pushed back to uphold the confidentiality of the anti-doping process.

The investigation uncovered 40 positives Adverse Analytical Findings hidden in the IWF records with incomplete results management. This concealment meant that the 40 dirty athletes could and did continue to compete. I very much regret to inform you that this includes a gold and a silver medalist who competed and

should have been banned but were able to compete because they did not have their samples dealt with. This information has been passed on to WADA for further investigation.

The investigation team discovered correspondence, which showed that Dr. Aján had delayed the suspension of certain Azeri weightlifters who tested positive for PEDS. The delay was done so as not to interfere with the Islamic Games and the Baku Grand Prix. Eighteen Azeri athletes did not receive their notifications of ADRVs for months after the laboratory notification. The result was the athletes competed and, in some instances, won medals at various competitions including the World Championships and Baku Grand Prix. The sanction of one athlete was nearly a full year after he provided his first positive result. Had the results management process been carried out in a speedier fashion, he would have been provisionally suspended and not able to compete in subsequent competitions. Some of the President's correspondence shows that the delay in notification of these 18 athletes AAFs was deliberately timed to occur after the Baku Games.

The final doping matter I want to draw to your attention relates to HUNADO, the Hungarian Anti-Doping Organization. Allegations have been made that it was

complicit in sample manipulations either through external pressure or financial incentives. We interviewed the Director, Dr. Agnes Tiszeker, and Ms. Barbara Kallo, a senior DCO within the organisation. We have concluded that Dr. Aján has not attempted to influence Ms. Kallo in the course of her work as a DCO. We have also concluded there is no evidence to support any allegations of HUNADO being complicit in sample manipulation and they have not conducted themselves in contravention of the WADA Code while acting as the Sample Collection Authority.

In sum, as it relates to doping, Dr. Aján abdicated his responsibility of putting in place a functional and transparent anti-doping process and clean up his sport.

The IWF is an organisation in need of resuscitation and fundamental foundational restoration. There is much work to do. Financial records remain hidden. People with knowledge of the real story are not talking. The Anti-Doping issues will likely be avoided in the future because of the outsourcing of the processes to the International Testing Agency. While there are antidoping matters of the past that require correction there should not be similar issues going forward.

There is certain information that I have reported separately, on a strictly confidential basis, to the O&I Commission. There are areas that require additional investigation. A further report may follow in due course. A report of findings in respect of antidoping controls will be filed with WADA and ITA, where appropriate.

IF the will is there to reform...

We have outlined a series of actions the new management can take to begin the process of restoring the organization to a functional capacity that can provide for the needs of weightlifting athletes and coaches.

And ultimately transform the International Weightlifting Federation into a well-respected organization that acts in the best interests of athletes, coaches, trainers and all those involved in international weightlifting.

It's time to turn the page. And begin a new era for weightlifting.

Thank you for your attention today. If you wish to read the full report, it can be found on the website www.mclarenglobalsportsolutions.com or the investigation website www.mclarenweightliftingenquiry.com.

Martin Dubbey and I will now take your questions.