

[Home](#) » [Sport](#) » Article

Anger as guilty lifter gets to keep gold

Jacquelin Magnay
April 25, 2007

DRUGS IN SPORT

THE new investigative powers of the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority have been branded farcical following the bizarre two-year sanction imposed on Commonwealth Games weightlifting gold medallist Alek Karapetyan.

Karapetyan, 36, was banned for two years after ASADA found he had used the stimulant benzylpiperazine at the June 2005 Mermet Cup in the United States - using non-analytical evidence.

However, inexplicably, ASADA has ruled Karapetyan's suspension should start from the day after his last competition - the Melbourne Commonwealth Games on March 22, 2006, at which he took gold in the 94-kilogram class.

The silver medallist from that competition, fellow Australian Simon Heffernan, is furious that the penalty has not been applied from the time of Karapetyan's offence. That would have seen his Melbourne performance nullified and the Games medals redistributed.

Heffernan has questioned - as have many observers - why the day after Karapetyan's last competition was judged to be the start of his sanction.

"I just want my gold medal," Heffernan said. "What is the use of all this [ASADA] investigation if the bans are not retrospective?"

The lifter also queried the precedent now set for future drug cases that may come from the storage of some drug samples.

"What is the use of the new eight-year tank if future drug positive cases are not made retrospective?" Heffernan asked. "It is a farce. Does it mean every athlete can be retired and not have any real sanction? It was very cheeky that Alek's ban starts the day after his last competition and not the date of his drug test. I could understand it if he was banned from the date of the investigation, but just picking out March 22 is ridiculous."

Karapetyan is back in his former homeland, Armenia. It is unclear whether he is still competing or has retired.

It is understood the World Anti-Doping Agency may review the Karapetyan case, but ASADA chairman Richard Ings, already under fire for recent drugs cases concerning swimmer Ian Thorpe and junior rowers, said the Karapetyan case was complex.

"The sanction is based on non-analytical evidence," Ings said. "The competition was held in the US and there is the fact the athlete has relocated overseas."

"In considering the start date of ineligibility and any forfeiture of competitive results, ASADA took into account he had not competed since March 21, 2006 and had tested negative for performance-

enhancing substances during the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games.

"Karapetyan's results in the Mermet Cup have been disqualified. However, all subsequent results - from June 27, 2005 to March 22, 2006 - remain official."

Karapetyan is the latest to be caught by the ASADA investigation into drugs in Australian weightlifting headed by Richard Young. Another three lifters are facing drugs tribunals in the wake of Young's findings.

Heffernan said he was lodging an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport to seek an independent ruling on the issue.

Both the New Zealand and Scottish weightlifting authorities are also considering appeals to the CAS, as their lifters finished third and fourth.

When news happens: send photos, videos & tip-offs to 0424 SMS SMH (+61 424 767 764), or [email](#) us.

[SAVE 31% on home delivery of the Herald - subscribe today](#)

Copyright © 2007. The Sydney Morning Herald.