

## **WADA OFFICIAL WEIGHS IN ON ROLE OF MEDIA IN BATTLING DRUGS SPOKESMAN HAS BEEN IN MIDDLE OF NEWS REGARDING RUSSIAN DOPING SAYS THE PUBLIC STILL VALUES FAIR PLAY, MEDIA IS THEIR MOUTHPIECE**

Ben Nichols, senior manager of media for the World Anti-Doping Agency, addressed the specter of drugs in sports at the Stan Bergstein Writing Award presentation in Lexington Thursday even as his organization has been at the center of allegations of state-sponsored doping of Russian athletes that may have tainted the London Olympics.

WADA issued a report earlier this week of its investigation that found that Russian doping went on and was covered up over the course of several years.

Nichols served as a WADA spokesman as the media dug into the latest black eye for world athletics. Nichols originally came upon the radar of Team Valor's Barry Irwin this spring when he read an Op/Ed that Nichols wrote about the important role of journalism in exposing corruption in sports.

The English native touched on the latest scandal at the presentation of the Bergstein Award, which Irwin created to honor and encourage hard-hitting journalism in the world of racing.

"There is no doubt that [the Russian report] was the biggest day in WADA's 16-year history. If you believe some of the commentary in the media, this was the biggest day, the biggest scandal facing sport in a generation. And so it's all the more timely to be speaking to you this evening given that the WADA report was instigated by an investigative journalist."

Nichols said "Now doping may not shock the public anymore but it does continue to disappoint. And it leaves us with the thought that they are all at it. There are, ladies and gentlemen, ever larger doses of doping fatigue among the public. But media don't jerk away from giving significant television air time or dedicating column inches to doping in sport. It's the real investigative journalism however those in the media searching for an instance of doping, and looking to bring it to the attention of anti-doping authorities. It's the tail wagging the dog, if you like, that I want to speak to you about here this evening. And this is where journalism can have a real impact.

"Many journalists don't ask the tough questions to unravel instances of doping. Now perhaps this might be put down to what we call too much establishment journalism, a problem we might be suffering from in horse racing today. In this era of decline of traditional media and era of tight budgets is there too much of a cozy relationship between journalists and their paymasters such as advertisers or sponsors? Is there a conflict of interest or in what today is a very cluttered media sphere is there in fact too much vying for attention among the media organizations which spurs on sensational journalism in order for them to stand out from the crowd? Now as with much in life it probably is a bit of both. In the anti-doping industry we have to continually encourage media to support clean sport. Clean athletes are the overwhelming majority after all and it's the public who want to see a level playing field and believe in their sporting heroes on the field of play."

