

Olympic Champion Samuelsson tells WADA it's time to "listen and act" on world athlete community's "once in a generation" call for major change

- Superstar Swede and rising star of anti-doping movement Sebastian Samuelsson backs popular athlete-led anti-doping reform paper *The Alternative*, stating "the tide is turning...athletes have started an anti-doping revolution demanding radical change at WADA";
- Pyeongchang 2018 Gold and Silver Medalist in Biathlon Sebastian Samuelsson says the "once in a generation" outpouring of the global athlete community's voice is a strong sign of athlete democracy in action, and a clear sign that "the world's athletes are united in demanding and proposing positive change";
- 21-year-old Swede claims, however, that athletes' solutions for modernising WADA and greater athlete representation on WADA Boards are "falling on deaf ears"; and that the athlete community has "all but lost faith in the WADA President's leadership";
- Samuelsson, who garnered the respect of fellow athletes and the anti-doping community for his principled stance against doping after boycotting the IBU World Cup Finals in Russia earlier this year in defiance of the country's state-supported doping system, questioned why WADA was failing to acknowledge, listen or respond to the international athlete community's positive and logical solutions.

Stockholm, Sweden: Pyeongchang 2018 Gold and Silver Medalist in Biathlon, Sebastian Samuelsson, today told the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) the time had come to "listen and act" on the world athlete community's "once-in-a-generation" call for major change of the organization's governance and decision-making structure. In doing so, the Swede lent his official support to the popular athlete-led anti-doping reform paper [The Alternative](#), which he said was "the only sensible solution to the ongoing WADA Crisis".

Samuelsson has fast become a rising Olympic star in his native Sweden and has also become a widely-respected athlete voice in the anti-doping movement following his principled decision to boycott the IBU World Cup Finals in Russia earlier this year in defiance of the country's state-supported doping system. Today, the 21-year-old said: "The tide is turning, and the athletes have begun a march – a march for far-reaching and radical change of the World Anti-Doping Agency. The once-in-a-generation level of athlete voice we have witnessed lately, week after week, calling for real and radical change at WADA, means we are now in the midst of an anti-doping revolution. As champions of clean sport, we should be proud that athletes from all corners of the world have now burst opened the dam of status-quo thinking, and, for the first time in anti-doping history athletes are speaking as one, shoulder to shoulder with national anti-doping leaders, governments and sports fans in proposing positive and logical solutions for how the global regulator must overhaul its decision-making bodies so that it is more in tune with, and representative of, the athlete voice," said Samuelsson.

"However, we, the international athlete community, have growing concerns that the solutions we are putting forward - whether they be calling for greater accountability by WADA, more transparency, proper independence, or an end to discriminatory ageism and anti-free speech rules for WADA Presidential candidates - are falling on deaf ears. WADA should be welcoming, encouraging and embracing athlete ideas, but instead it is ignoring, belittling and criticising us, the reformers – shooting the messenger - instead of listening to the substance of the reformers' suggestions. I know I speak for the majority of athletes when I say that WADA's priorities and its distraction techniques seem worryingly misplaced, and that is why we, the athletes, have all but lost faith in the WADA President's leadership," added Samuelsson.

Support for The Alternative

The Reform Paper, *The Alternative*, was launched by Rio 2016 Para-Powerlifting Silver Medallist Ali Jawad on 9 October and has since been officially supported by the world's leading athletes including

Olympic Champion racewalker Jared Tallent, Olympic Champion Cyclist Callum Skinner, two-time World Champion skeleton racer Katie Uhlaender and, earlier this week, two-time World Champion Cyclist, Matthew Glaetzer.

Titled *The Alternative: Reforming WADA's Governance for a new Anti-Doping Age*, the Paper is the culmination of a series of ideas and proposals considered over the last couple of years by members of the athlete community and focusses on three core areas where WADA can improve: greater accountability, more transparency, and proper independence. *The Alternative* calls for the sport and government representatives on the influential WADA Executive Committee to be replaced by fully independent* members; and for future WADA Presidents to be selected as 'independents', instead of alternating the Presidency from the worlds of sport and government.

At the heart of the *The Alternative* is a new governance structure for WADA, consisting of three central bodies: a Foundation Board to be led by a fully independent President and Vice President; an overhauled 15-person Executive Committee, consisting of 12 members entirely independent from the worlds of government or sport (i.e. members selected from professional industries across broader society, to include the independent President and Vice President) and 3 athlete members; and an all-new Governance and Nominations Committee, comprising 5 independent members and 2 WADA Athlete Committee members, that would oversee the representation and assessment of both the Foundation Board and Executive Committee, and in turn ensure that there is much greater scrutiny of the decision-making process that impacts the lives of athletes worldwide.

Encouraging his fellow athletes to join the growing band of supporters of *The Alternative*, Samuelsson had a final message for the WADA leadership. "WADA must take stock of how its actions, or lack of, are appearing to the millions of sport fans worldwide outside its Board rooms. The public is bewildered by WADA's seeming lack of interest in moving with the times, and adapting to the growing public and athlete appetite for a new, stronger, more uncompromising regulatory stance against doping. WADA was never built to be an appeasement body or a service provider, it was designed to be a global *regulator* – a police watchdog for doping in sport that could command the trust and respect of athletes and fans. I do not need to remind the organization's leadership that the world is craving that approach now more than ever. It is time once and for all for WADA to stand tall alongside athletes, to start putting principle above politics and to distance itself from the International Olympic Committee. Anyone that truly believes in clean sport can see that that is the only solution to success."

The WADA Foundation Board convene for their critical meeting in Azerbaijan on 15 November, and athletes are urging WADA to begin engaging with *The Alternative* and to rethink the current proposals which fall far short of athletes' demands.

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Information

The Alternative: Reforming WADA's Governance for a new Anti-Doping Age (Summary Paper)

The Alternative: Reforming WADA's Governance for a new Anti-Doping Age (Detailed Paper)

*Independent member: Someone that does not have a material or pecuniary relationship with the sport movement (not holding any elected, appointed or paid position in sport) or governments (either at minister, parliament member or any other related bureaucratic position); and that is not connected to any related persons in those functions; and is free from outside control; and is not depending on another's authority within the last 6 months before being elected. No member qualifies as 'independent' unless the WADA Foundation Board affirmatively determines that the member has 'no material relationship' with the organization, either directly or as a partner, through the sport movement, government or as an officer of an organization that has a relationship with WADA.