

Rodrigo Pessoa's Horse Tests Positive for Banned Substance

The findings mark the sixth doping case from the equestrian events of the 2008 Olympic Games.

September 2, 2008

The 2008 Olympics are not setting a good precedent for equestrian sport in the Games. On September 1, the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI) announced that a sixth Olympic horse has tested positive for a banned substance: Rufus, ridden by show jumping champion Rodrigo Pessoa of Brazil. Pessoa is an international top-ranked rider, having medaled in both the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney as well as the 2004 Athens Games. During the 2008 Games, Pessoa placed fifth in the Individual Jumping Final aboard Rufus.

The FEI, which governs international equestrian sport, says the Rufus case is the "final doping/medication case" from the 2008 Olympic Games and that there are no remaining cases to be reported.

According to the FEI, a test carried out on Rufus following the Individual Final "revealed an A sample that tested positive for the banned substance nonivamide, part of the capsaicinoid family and classified as a 'doping' prohibited substance given its hypersensitizing properties." The substance is also prohibited because of its pain relieving properties.

The A sample was received by a testing laboratory on August 23 following the Individual Jumping Final at which Pessoa and Rufus placed fifth. A preliminary hearing was held by teleconference on August 28 before a member of the FEI Tribunal and a suspension was confirmed on August 29.

A B sample test is scheduled for September 2 in Hong Kong. If the B sample confirms the findings of the A sample, the FEI states that the process "will follow the Accelerated Medication Control Procedure during and after the 2008 Olympic Games which is part of the FEI Regulations for Equestrian events at the 2008 Olympic Games. Evidence and written submissions will be requested and a hearing will be held before the FEI Tribunal. However it is up to the Person Responsible whether or not they wish to exercise or waive their right to be heard. The panel will then, in light of all the evidence received, take a decision as to the applicable sanction if any."

In addition to the Pessoa/Rufus case, the FEI has received confirmation that the B samples of five other Olympic horses involving the presence of the banned substances have all yielded positive test results, confirming the initial positive findings from the A samples. Those cases involve the following horse/rider combinations:

Harmony's Mythilus ridden by the U.S.'s Courtney King-Dye (dressage); Norway's Camiro ridden by Tony Andre Hansen (show jumping); Ireland's Lantinus, ridden by Dennis Lynch (show jumping); Brazil's Chupa Chup, ridden by Bernardo Alves (show jumping); and Germany's Coster, ridden by Christian Ahlmann (show jumping).

Camiro was part of Norway's Team bronze medal effort in show jumping. If after further review Norway is disqualified, then there may be a medals' redistribution, with bronze possibly being handed over to fourth-place finishers Team Switzerland