

Dear Professionals and Strong Amateur Players of the AGA,

I am writing to bring to your attention an important matter, namely the forthcoming implementation of an anti-doping testing program by the International Go Federation. IGF has published a “Frequently Asked Questions” (AD_FAQ.pdf) which is attached with this email. The movement to get mind games sanctioned by the International Olympic Committee, and the initiation of the World Mind Games, has brought us to a higher level of scrutiny and responsibility.

I urge you to:

- 1) Read the FAQ carefully, as it explains just about any questions on the testing regulations that you can think of;
- 2) Read the rest of this letter carefully, as I will try to explain what we know up to now about the actual implementation;
- 3) Go to this website if you still need more information: http://intergofed.org/members_documents/index.html where you will find the actual IGF Anti-Doping Regulations and the Prohibited List.

The reasons behind the anti-doping program are explained in the FAQ, so I will not repeat them here. The actual testing consists of two parts: an in-competition testing and an out-of-competition testing. Both are dictated by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

IGF’s tentative plan is to conduct the first in-competition testing in the 2009 Korean Prime Minister Cup. The top five finishers, plus one player chosen at random, will be tested immediately after the competition is over. From that point on, all future international competitions sanctioned by IGF or IMSA (the International Mind Sports Association – organizers of the 2008 World Mind Sports Games) will include in-competition testing. Specifically, WAGC, KPMC, the Asian Games in 2010 and 2014, future WMSG’s, and probably the International Pair Go Championship are examples of such events.

The out-of-competition testing will start in June this year. IGF will designate a pool of 10-15 players, all nationally competitive amateur players. Each player in that pool will report once every three months to IGF by email. In this email, the player needs to specify ONE HOUR EACH DAY that he/she can be contacted if necessary. So, you can say “every day 7-8 AM at your home”; and provide your home telephone number. The idea is that they can call you at this hour and ask you to be ready for an out-of-competition testing. However, IGF has negotiated with WADA to permit Go (and chess, bridge, and draughts) to use a relaxed definition that “any testing that is not conducted in-competition is considered out-of-competition testing”. With this allowance, IGF and FIDE both plan to use the time just before and just after each tournament to test those players on the list, instead of really going to player’s home to collect a sample. So, the bottom line is that, for Go players for now, there is not much difference between in-competition and out-of-competition testing. You are likely to be tested only if you go to an international tournament.

What do you need to do to be ready? If you are not selected to represent AGA, you probably do not need to worry about anything. If you are an AGA rep, then you need to look over the Prohibited List (or better, ask your doctor to do so) and see if you are using anything that can cause you trouble. If so, have your doctor sign a “Therapeutic Use Exemption” and mail it to IGF, so you are covered in case you get tested. Some of the most common things that people need to pay attention to are:

Beta-blockers, diuretics – commonly take by those with hypertension;
Dopamine and other ADD drugs;
Prednisone and other mild “steroids” – commonly used for strong allergy and injuries.

Caffeine and alcohol are specifically NOT prohibited.

The entire anti-doping program is still evolving. IGF is working hard to change some of the provisions that are only applicable for physical sports. Likewise WADA is trying to modify its requirements to suit the newcomers – the mind sports. From the changes that have taken place so far, I am encouraged by the good will and am hopeful that the anti-doping program will not be unreasonably burdensome for Go players.

Thomas Hsiang, our International Vice President, has worked hard to keep the burden to a reasonable level. Please read the attached material, and prepare yourselves for this aspect of international competition.

Sincerely,

Allan Abramson
AGA President