

Agency says hackers revealed more medical data

September 15 2016, by Graham Dunbar



This is a Sunday, July 24, 2016 file photo of Britain's Chris Froome, wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey, celebrates with a glass of champagne during the twenty-first stage of the Tour de France in Paris. Three-time Tour de France winner Chris Froome said Thursday Sept. 15, 2016, has "no issue" with his medical data being leaked, in an alleged criminal attack by Russian hackers on a World Anti-Doping Agency database. (AP Photo/Christophe Ena, File)

Three-time Tour de France winner Chris Froome has "no issue" with his medical data being leaked, in an alleged criminal attack by Russian hackers on a World Anti-Doping Agency database.

Froome was a headline name among 25 athletes—from Britain, the United States and Germany plus five other countries—whose confidential details of using authorized medications spilled into the public domain late Wednesday.

"I've openly discussed my TUEs (therapeutic use exemptions) with the media and have no issues with the leak which confirms my statements," Froome said Thursday.

Also leaked was detail of asthma medication used by Bradley Wiggins, another British winner of the Tour de France and five-time Olympic gold medalist.

"There's nothing new here," a statement issued on behalf of Wiggins said. "Everyone knows Brad suffers from asthma; his medical treatment is BC (British Cycling) and UCI (International Cycling Union) approved."

WADA confirmed a second round of leaked data posted online, after medical records of gold medal-winning gymnast Simone Biles and seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams were among four American female Olympians whose data was revealed Tuesday.

All 29 cases revealed records of "Therapeutic Use Exemptions" which allow athletes to use otherwise-banned substances because of a verified medical need. There is no suggestion any of the athletes broke any rules.



Sky's Team Christopher Froome of Great Britain holds his trophy on the podium after ending on second place at the Spanish La Vuelta cycling tour that finished in Madrid, Spain, Sunday, Sept. 11, 2016. Movistar's Team Nairo Quintana of Colombia win the race. (AP Photo/Daniel Ochoa de Olza)

The substances identified in the leaks are typically anti-inflammatory medications and treatments for asthma and allergies.

Froome's use of strong anti-inflammatory medication, approved by the UCI for the 2014 Tour de Romandie race in Switzerland, was widely

reported two years ago.

"In nine years as a professional I've twice required a TUE for exacerbated asthma, the last time was in 2014," said Froome, who won his third Tour de France title in July. He took a bronze medal in the time trial at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics last month.

The latest round of leaks identified 10 athletes from the United States, five from Germany, five from Britain, and one each from Czech Republic, Denmark, Poland, Romania and Russia.

"I am furious that the hacking group is using such insolent and illegal methods," said Michael Ask, head of Anti-Doping Denmark.

Danish swimmer Pernille Blume, who won gold in Rio de Janeiro in the 50-meter freestyle, had "done nothing wrong," Ask told Denmark TV2 channel. "She has followed the rules and gotten permission to use the asthma medication which she uses—like many other athletes."

The statement on behalf of Wiggins said the leak was "an attempt to undermine the credibility of WADA and that's something for them to deal with."



A screenshot of the Fancy Bears website fancybear.net seen on a computer screen in Moscow, Russia, Wednesday, Sept. 14, 2016. Confidential medical data of gold medal-winning gymnast Simone Biles, seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams and other female U.S. Olympians was hacked from a World Anti-Doping Agency database and posted online Tuesday Sept 13, 2016. WADA said the hackers were a "Russian cyber espionage group" called Fancy Bears. (AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko)

WADA said Wednesday that the Russian hacking group known as Fancy Bears had illegally gained access to its Anti-Doping Administration and Management System, or "ADAMS," and said it included confidential medical data.

"WADA is very mindful that this criminal attack, which to date has recklessly exposed personal data of 29 athletes, will be very distressing for the athletes that have been targeted and cause apprehension for all athletes that were involved in the Rio 2016 Olympic Games," WADA

director general Olivier Niggli said in a statement.

"To those athletes that have been impacted, we regret that criminals have attempted to smear your reputations in this way; and, assure you that we are receiving intelligence and advice from the highest level law enforcement and IT security agencies that we are putting into action."

Niggli said WADA had "no doubt that these ongoing attacks are being carried out in retaliation against the agency, and the global anti-doping system," because of independent investigations that exposed state-sponsored doping in Russia.

Russian officials have dismissed the claims as ridiculous.

"How can you prove that the hackers are Russian?" Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko said through a translator during a visit to Athens earlier Wednesday. "You blame Russia for everything. It is very 'in' now."

UK Anti-Doping Chief Executive, Nicole Sapstead said that her group "strongly condemns actions of this nature and we are appalled that five members of Team GB have had their private data published illegally online," calling it "grossly unfair" to the athletes involved.



A screenshot of the Fancy Bears website fancybear.net seen on a computer screen in Moscow, Russia, Wednesday, Sept. 14, 2016. Confidential medical data of gold medal-winning gymnast Simone Biles, seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams and other female U.S. Olympians was hacked from a World Anti-Doping Agency database and posted online Tuesday Sept 13, 2016. WADA said the hackers were a "Russian cyber espionage group" called Fancy Bears. (AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko)

Last month, hackers obtained a database password for Russian runner Yuliya Stepanova, a whistleblower and key witness for the WADA investigations. She and her husband, a former official with the Russian national anti-doping agency, are now living at an undisclosed location in North America.

The International Olympic Committee said after Tuesday's WADA statement that it "strongly condemns such methods which clearly aim at tarnishing the reputation of clean athletes."

The hackers, who have set up their own website, have not responded to messages seeking comment. Their chosen name, "Fancy Bears," appears to be a tongue-in-cheek reference to a collection of Russia-linked hackers that security researchers have blamed for a recent spate of attacks—and which WADA holds responsible for the current breach.

The group has proclaimed its allegiance to Anonymous, the loose-knit movement of online mischief-makers, and says it hacked WADA to show the world "how Olympic medals are won."

"We'll keep on telling the world about doping in elite sports," the group said Thursday. "Stay tuned for new leaks."

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