

The Performance and Effectiveness of the Cycliste Professionnels Associés (CPA): An External Audit and Review

Introduction: This document presents an independent review and analysis of the Cycliste Professionnels Associés (CPA) – professional road cycling’s only recognized athlete representation organization.

Following a brief historical background, **Part I** reviews the CPA’s activities and operations from an internal perspective – how has the organization operated historically and how it is performing today, relative to the guidelines, objectives and expectations set forth in its own charter and by-laws.

Part II reviews the CPA’s activities and performance from an external perspective – benchmarking the organization against an accepted set of broader industry governance standards. The relevant criteria here are: (a) the CPA’s level of transparency – and the degree of openness with which it conducts its operations; (b) the organization’s commitment to democratic processes; (c) its utilization of checks and balances to ensure that decision-making is robust, independent and free from improper influence; and (d) its responsibility to both internal and external stakeholders.

Part III provides a brief comparative perspective, and a review of the activities and capabilities of two other larger and more established sports unions, vis-à-vis the CPA. This section also examines the future capabilities and functions toward which the CPA might strive, and what it would take to get there.

Part IV provides a set of conclusions and specific recommendations for the future, and how the CPA can expand and evolve to provide not only stronger athlete representation, but also contribute to a stronger and better-organized sport.

(This review, analysis and set of recommendations could have been more thorough given the participation and input of the CPA itself. The Outer Line made several efforts to contact the CPA, both directly and through key intermediaries, regarding this review, but the organization said that it had no interest in participating or cooperating with any review of its operations and performance. Nevertheless, we have also offered the CPA an opportunity to formally respond to this review.)

Historical Context: The historically dominant cycling nations of France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Spain have had some form of national riders’ association for many years – decades in some cases – to look after the concerns and interests of the athletes. However, these different organizations were often ineffective, overlapping or simply focused on just their own national issues. The Cycliste Professionnels Associés (CPA) was formed in 1999, with the mission to better coordinate and internationalize these pre-existing efforts. The intent of the original CPA was to act as an umbrella organization or “association of associations” that could better coordinate these various national groups more efficiently, and according to its website, “act as a reference point” in the case of issues which went beyond national borders. In more recent years, several other countries have formally joined the CPA, including Switzerland, Portugal and a combined U.S./Canada group. Other countries are reportedly forming groups for formal inclusion in the CPA as well.

When it first formed, the CPA laid out a charter and set of by-laws (see Figure 1 below) and defined some general objectives to protect the rights and interests of riders. It was hoped that the organization would gradually gain political and financial strength, and that it would be able to speak with an increasingly influential voice for the riders. From the riders’ perspective, the hope was that a stronger union organization would work, first and foremost, to protect athlete health and safety, and to create a stronger support system – both during and after their active racing days – for the professional bike racer.

Among its important early accomplishments, the CPA developed: (a) a “joint agreement” with the AIGCP teams’ organization – a kind of precursor for a collective bargaining agreement – to help govern the

relationship between teams and their riders, and (b) a riders' "Solidarity Fund," similar to a basic retirement pension, to provide at least limited financial support to certain retiring riders. These were both significant and positive developments for the young organization.

However, due to its small size and continuing financial constraints, the CPA has struggled to grow or expand its influence in pro cycling very much over the intervening fifteen years. The Solidarity Fund payment is no larger than it was fifteen years ago, the Joint Agreement has not been revisited since late 2012, and riders are still being seriously injured or even dying in in top-level races. As we [reported](#) earlier, many riders are barely even aware of the existence of the CPA. The organization has not been able to live up to its original charter, and many racers and outside observers believe that – with on-going changes in the sport (which we will discuss below) – the objectives targeted by the CPA are more challenging today than ever.

Today, the CPA's management consists primarily of two part-time officials, President (and former double World Champion for Italy) Gianni Bugno, and Secretary-General David Chassot – both of whom are involved in activities outside of the CPA. They are supported by a small staff. The organization is technically governed by a "steering committee," consisting of representatives of the eight member-nation associations, which meets several times a year. The CPA's primary source of funding comes from a 2% share of the total prize money offered by various race organizers for WorldTour and Pro Continental events – which comes to about €240,000 per year. In addition, the organization receives an annual bequest from the UCI of about 100,000 Swiss francs, bringing its total annual budget to approximately €320,000. The operating budget has been fixed at this rough level for many years, and as we will elaborate below, without new sources of financing it has been difficult to expand the scope or influence of the organization.

Part I – An Internal Perspective on the Performance of the CPA:

Upon its establishment, the CPA put in place a charter comprised of 26 different by-laws to guide its management and operations. These by-laws are available [in French](#) on the CPA's website, and the key components are summarized below in Table 1. In order to dissect and evaluate the organization's recent performance, we have ranked the criticality of each by-law in Column 3 (high, medium or low). In addition, our subjective estimate of the current performance or compliance status for each item is summarized in Column 4, and by color (according to the key at the bottom of the Table).

As emphasized by the green areas within the Table, the CPA appears to be generally conforming to, or at least in partial compliance with, the majority of its by-laws. Most of these by-laws involve routine administrative procedures, such as definitions, meetings, keeping minutes, and so on.

Table 1: Assessment of Compliance with CPA By-Laws

#	CPA By-Law Article	Criticality	Status
1	Definition of the Organization	Low	Conforming
2	Goals of the Organization	High	Not Fully Conforming
3	Member Admission Criteria	High	Not Fully Conforming
4	Member Admission Process	Medium	Seemingly Conforming
5	Exclusion of Members	Low	Conforming
6	Resignation of Members	Low	Conforming
7	Annual Fees/ "Social Contribution"	Medium	Uncertain
8	Disclaimer of Individual Members	Low	Conforming
9	Definition of General Assembly	Medium	Conforming
10	Purpose of General Meeting (GM)	High	Uncertain
11	Validity/Procedures of G.M.	Medium	Conforming
12	Extraordinary Assembly (EA)	Low	Seemingly Conforming
13	Convening an E.A.	Low	Conforming
14	Meeting Minutes	Low	Seemingly Conforming
15	Steering Committee (SC)	Medium	Conforming
16	SC Powers	Medium	Seemingly Conforming
17	Convening the SC	Low	Conforming
18	Make-Up and Powers of the SC	Low	Conforming
19	CPA Commissions/Working Groups	Medium	Uncertain
20	Meeting Minutes for SC	Low	Seemingly Conforming
21	Signatures	Low	Seemingly Conforming
22	President	Low	Conforming
23	Sources of Financing, Calendar	High	Seemingly Conforming
24	Financial Control	High	Not Fully Conforming
25	Communications	High	Seemingly Conforming
26	Entry into Force	Low	Conforming

Color Code:

- Apparently Non-Conforming Area - needs further clarification or background
- Uncertain Level of Conformance - needs further clarification or background
- Fully or Mostly Conforming

However, there are three different by-laws (shown in orange) where, from an outside perspective, the level of compliance is assessed to be uncertain.

The first of these are the membership admission criteria, which specifically refer to the inclusion of women’s racers, as well as all individual men’s racers. First, there are no women members of the CPA, and as far as can be determined from various interviews with long-standing pro women racers, there has never been a formal attempt to involve women or to address the issues and challenges of women’s racing. The professional women racers contacted for this review do not believe that the CPA has any real intent yet to become involved in the women’s sport, and there are various separate efforts underway (described [elsewhere](#)) to organize a stand-alone women’s union.

In terms of the full inclusion of all professional male racers, there are numerous (and often very prominent) racers from countries that have no formal representation on the Steering Committee. Riders from more than 30 countries participated in this year’s WorldTour, and many were not represented by the current CPA; this includes two of 2016’s grand Tour winners, three Monument winners, and the three most recent world champions. It would seem that all professional riders deserve the same level of protection and

representation, since all riders are effectively funding the CPA via the diversion of event prize money. Although there is talk of several new country members, it is not clear what the CPA is doing to attract and help organize new country or “supra-national” association members – or for that matter, new independent individual members.

Second, Article 7 indicates that members of the CPA – whether as part of a supra-national organization, or as an individual – will pay an annual fee or contribution. There is no indication that this condition is currently being met – no riders that we spoke to are aware of any direct fees that are levied by the CPA.

Third, Article 19 states that the CPA will set up, maintain and staff various working groups to address specific issues of concern to the athletes or “necessary tasks.” The CPA *does* occasionally send out “position statements” and press releases, and it *does* have non-voting representation on certain UCI committees. Recently it has begun to send representatives to more major events to poll the racers on key issues such as race safety. Although this specific item is obviously difficult to objectively measure, it is a critical component of the organization’s overall purpose, and it appears that it could be more assertively or aggressively pursued.

Finally, there are three by-laws where the CPA would appear to be generally non-conforming (the lines shown in red). And Unfortunately, each of these items is also ranked in the “high” criticality category. Article 2 subjectively summarizes the broad goals of the organization, some of which are clearly not being met – such as safeguarding the interests of all female competitors. More critical however, are Articles 10 and 24, which discuss the transparency, reporting requirements, controls and auditing of the organization’s financial accounts. As far as can be determined, most of the CPA’s financial matters are conducted in relative secrecy, well beyond any public transparency, and even without the informed knowledge or direct oversight of most of the members of its own steering committee. In our discussions with Secretary-General Chassot in 2015, and in recent attempts to reach the organization, there has been no clarity or transparency regarding its financial operations.

Beyond the primary responsibility to uphold its own by-laws, the CPA’s other main areas of focus are on overseeing the Joint Agreement (JA) and the Solidarity Fund. The CPA is charged with maintaining the ongoing JA with the AIGCP as a framework for the rights and obligations of the riders – covering such critical athlete issues as minimum salaries, the definition of a neo-pro, maximum required days of racing, and other critical athlete’s rights. It should again be emphasized that this *is* one very important vehicle by which the CPA can work to improve the status of professional cyclists. In effect, it represents a framework for or the first step towards a true collective bargaining agreement (CBA) – one of the cornerstones of other successful pro team sports (as will be discussed in Part III). The CPA should be commended for putting this agreement into effect and attempting to maintain it; it is an asset which hopefully can be built upon in the future. However, the last version of the JA was negotiated almost four years ago and there is some question about its current enforceability.

The second key program overseen by the CPA is the so-called “Solidarity Fund” – a financial endowment (of currently unknown size) created to pay retirement benefits to qualified retiring pro riders. This program is technically funded by an additional 5% of the prize money from those same key races which contribute to the CPA operational account as previously mentioned, and totals about €600,000 per year. (In theory, most of the major race organizers cooperate and provide these funds, although the CPA has to invoice each individual race organizer and, according to some people familiar with the situation, it often struggles to actually collect at least some portion of these funds.)

Qualifying recipients receive a modest one-time payment of €12,500 from this Solidarity Fund, if they have at least five years of participation at the top level, are over 30 years old, and meet various other criteria. Unfortunately, until very recently, many riders have reported that they weren’t even aware of the program, or that they may qualify. Secretary-General Chassot told *The Outer Line* in 2015 that about 400

riders have received a retirement payment since it was first authorized in 2007.

When originally created, this retirement fund was intended to grow each year. In reality, however, it appears to have remained essentially flat. The financial characteristics and management of this fund are also not publicly disclosed, and hence it is not possible to factually comment on the solvency or supervision of this fund. The management and longer-term potential of this program do not seem to be understood by anyone outside of the CPA's inner circle.

In summary, from an internal operating perspective, although the CPA does comply with most of its by-laws and key objectives, it seems to fall short in the several of the most critical areas of financial management and transparency. (As mentioned earlier, *The Outer Line* made several efforts to contact the CPA and obtain more detailed input on these items, but the organization indicated that it was not interested in cooperating or participating.)

Part II – An External Perspective on the Performance of the CPA:

It is also important to compare the performance of the CPA using external evaluation criteria that are applicable to management of other sports or union organizations. This can provide a critical external contrast and comparison exercise for the CPA. Although this is a somewhat subjective process, for the purposes of our analysis we utilized the organizational and governance guidelines established by the *Sports Governance Observer*, 2015. (This report is published by the well-known sports think tank “Play the Game” – in conjunction with the Danish Institute of Sports Studies). This study lists four different criteria by which to evaluate the governance of sports management organizations – transparency, democratic processes, checks and balances, and “solidarity” or sustainability. We acknowledge that these guidelines may not be the perfect analogue for an athlete's association or union, but they *do* represent one widely utilized and respected set of sports governance criteria. As summarized in Table 2 below, we will now take a look at how the CPA stacks up according to these standards.

Figure 2: Assessment of Compliance with Industry Governance Standards*

#	Individual Objective	Criticality	Status
1) Transparency:			
	Publish statutes, by-laws, org charts, etc.	Medium	Partially Conforming
	Publishes agenda and minutes of website	Medium	Non-Conforming
	Publishes executive decisions	High	Non-Conforming
	Gives media access to meetings	High	Non-Conforming
	Publishes information about members	Medium	Non-Conforming
	Publishes executive contact details	Medium	Conforming
	Publishes annual report on website	High	Non-Conforming
	Publishes externally audited financials	High	Non-Conforming
	Publishes executive compensation	Medium	Partially Conforming
2) Democratic Processes:			
	Election of President and governance	High	Conforming
	Secret ballot election process	Medium	Conforming
	Opportunity to Present Manifesto	High	Conforming
	Defined quorum in governance	High	Conforming
	Term limits for leadership	Medium	Non-Conforming
	General Assembly meets once a year	High	Conforming
	Governing body meets regularly	High	Conforming
	Gender equity amongst leadership	Medium	Seemingly Conforming
	Opportunity for athlete participation	High	Partially Conforming
3) Checks and Balances:			
	Internal Audit Organization	High	Non-Conforming
	Organization is externally audited	High	Non-Conforming
	Integrated internal control systems	Medium	Non-Conforming
	Ethics code for all officials	High	Non-Conforming
	Conflict-of-interest rules	High	Non-Conforming
	Independent ethics committee	High	Non-Conforming
	Internal means for contesting decisions	Medium	Non-Conforming
4) Solidarity:			
	Allocates resources for grass-roots activities	Medium	Non-Conforming
	Educational/social services to members	High	Partially Conforming
	Financial support to attend meetings	Low	Conforming
	Clear anti-discrimination policies	High	Non-Conforming

Color Code:

- Apparently Non-Conforming Area - needs further clarification or background
- Uncertain Level of Conformance - needs further clarification or background
- Fully or Mostly Conforming

*adapted from the *Sports Governance Observer*, 2015

A quick glimpse at the red areas in this Table shows that the CPA does not perform quite as well, relative to this set of external guidelines. Particularly in terms of the transparency and checks/balances aspects of the guidelines, the CPA is judged to be non-conforming with quite a number of the standard recommendations. For example, the CPA does not appear to publish any sort of agenda, minutes, annual report, executive actions or financial statements on its website for its membership to review, let alone for the public to see. It certainly does not invite the media to its meetings or grant access to view decision

documents.

Although the CPA complies with several of the suggested guidelines for democratic operating processes, it doesn't appear to meet *any* of the suggested checks and balances guidelines recommended for a sporting organization. There is no public information to suggest that there are explicit internal financial checks or controls, or external financial auditing of the organization's books. There also does not appear to be a specific ethics code, or any mechanism to monitor and police conflicts of interest. The CPA also falls short on several of the "solidarity" or sustainability-oriented objectives assessed in the Table.

Without the explicit cooperation of the CPA, and given its reluctance to publicly disclose more detail about its operations, it is obviously difficult for an outside party to gauge the true nature or extent of some of these internal systems or guidelines. However, if the CPA does in fact have some of these sorts of true checks and balances in place, it seems that it would be to their strong advantage to reveal this at least to the membership and perhaps also the public, and to be more forthcoming in their reporting. (In the CPA's defense, it should be recognized that many of these perceived shortcomings may not so much be the intent, as they are simply the result of the under-resourced nature of the organization. If the CPA had a larger budget and more extensive and qualified staff, it would obviously be easier to put in place the systems, organization and safeguards to better comply with these sorts of governance standards.)

Although the CPA still has a long way to go, the governance standards and criteria shown in Table 2 represent the types of guidelines which the organization should strive to implement over the long term. In the immediate future, it is important for the CPA to study and improve upon the key transparency and financial management-related objectives highlighted above – particularly in terms of reporting to its own membership.

Part III – A Comparative Perspective on the CPA:

A brief look at some of the larger and more established sporting unions can also provide an interesting comparison, and a target to which the CPA might strive over the longer term. This section contains a brief "compare and contrast" look at two other athlete unions – the Major League Soccer Players Union (MLSPU), and the National Football League Players Association (NFLPA). The MLSPU was chosen because it is a younger and still developing players' association, and as such is a closer reference point to the CPA. The NFLPA was selected because it is often viewed as the most advanced athlete's union and an international model, due to the range of services offered to its membership both during and after their football careers, and its strength and power in the overall balance of the sport.

The MLSPU was established in 2003, and successfully negotiated its first CBA with the MLS in 2004. The organization today consists of three full time employees and a players' representative from each of the MLS teams. The players' representatives elect a 5-player Executive Board which is responsible for hiring union employees and major decision-making. The MLSPU renegotiated a new CBA in 2015, which included significant progress relative to an earlier version of the agreement. The new 5-year agreement covers yearly increases in team salary budgets and minimum salaries, fully-paid health insurance benefits, higher retirement contributions from the league, independent arbitration for disputes, as well as a Group Licensing Agreement negotiated with the league. On top of this new Group Licensing Agreement, all MLS players also pay dues to support the organization, and the MLSPU operating budget has likewise significantly increased.

Other notable aspects of the current CBA include injury guarantees, compensation and expense protocols, travel standards, drug testing, specified vacation time, player transfers, standards for participation in hazardous activities, league schedule, the standard player agreement, rosters, discipline regulations, grievance and arbitration, insurance coverage, MLS management committees, concussion protocol, and player obligations. The MLSPU is increasingly able to act on behalf of and protect the rights of the players

via the standards set in its CBA.

The NFL Players Association was established in 1956, and is now a large and sophisticated organization comprised of several different units: (a) NFL Players Inc. – the marketing and licensing subsidiary; (b) Players Services – the administrative and operating unit charged with protecting the rights of active players; (c) the Professional Athletes Foundation (PAF) – the subsidiary organization charged with supporting player transition after their retirement; and (d) “The Trust” – also a post-career support organization. The NFLPA’s primary stated objectives are as follows:

- To represent all players in matters concerning wages, hours and working conditions and to protect their rights as professional football players
- To assure that the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement are met
- To negotiate and monitor retirement and insurance benefits
- To provide other member services and activities
- To provide assistance to charitable and community organizations, and
- To enhance and defend the image of the players and their profession on and off the field.

NFL Players Inc. is the marketing and licensing subsidiary and the exclusive distributor of group licensing rights for all NFL players. It is also charged with providing access to the players for outside company’s business and marketing needs. These services include the licensing of the players’ names, numbers, images, services, and signatures.

The Players Services unit is the in-house program and resource center for active and former players. It focuses on active player programs to improve the athlete’s career, as well as prepare them for life after retiring. It provides assistance for selecting and dealing with agents, NFL drug policy education, and a variety of other NFL regulations including off-season rules, personal conduct policy, player royalties, medical second opinions, and workers compensation payments. It also provides continuing educational support in the form of program selection, tuition reimbursement, partnerships with the Kelley School of Business and Kaplan Test Prep.

Other more detailed Players Services programs include an advisor program, personal education, identity protection, personal security services, a pension, annuity and retirement plan for players who were active for three or more seasons, disability plans, HRA account, and 401k plans and severance packages. Its “health and wellness” services include supplemental education, health counseling/mentoring, DUI preventative services, and comprehensive insurance plans. The organization also helps to promote in-career development opportunities and off-season “externship” programs comprising three week job placements with corporate partners like Comcast, Marriott, Under Armour, and Capitol Hill. Finally, the NFLPA educates its members on how to access these services, and offers other programs to improve players’ marketability and leadership ability.

In terms of its PAF services for retired and former players, the NFLPA groups players into local chapters and offers various events and benefits including a joint replacement program, Medicare supplements, life insurance, neurological care programs, spine treatment programs, discount prescription drug cards, and assisted living facilities.

The NFLPA Trust develops strategic partnerships to provide comprehensive post-career assistance to NFL players. This includes future career, medical, nutritional, entrepreneurial, and continuing education services. A player must have completed two seasons in the NFL to be eligible, but he then receives a customized “game plan” to address all of his off-the-field needs. The Trust is designed to work in conjunction with NFLPA Players Services and the PAF, and offers partnerships that work towards continuing education, career development, job training, recruiting, and mentorship. There is an educational scholarship program, partners providing financial and business guidance, lifestyle transition,

comprehensive medical screening, and peer-to-peer networking.

The CPA might eventually grow to incorporate some of the models or standards illustrated by these other unions, but there is clearly a long way to go. In fairness, it should also be noted that pro cycling is a bit different than either pro soccer or football, in that there is not a single league structure with which a union can negotiate terms and conditions; and the UCI is a regulatory body, not a league. For this reason, the CPA has, to date, negotiated primarily with the AIGCP – the relatively loose organization of the pro teams. Furthermore, the AIGCP itself has limited power in the sport.

To summarize, while general intent of the CPA may be well-meaning, the limited impact that it has on the sport is predictable given its modest funding and organizational structure. However, despite the handicaps, the CPA could be doing better. First and foremost, the CPA's management must find ways to increase its financial resources. The CPA will otherwise find itself in a "Catch-22" predicament in this regard; it is difficult to provide athlete services and support without sufficient funding, while it is simultaneously tough to develop funding until the organization can demonstrate that it is providing a useful service. Once a more stable financial situation can be instituted, the CPA must begin to evaluate alternative avenues to grow its future services, and develop a range of specific efforts to have a greater impact on the sport.

(Editors' Note: Former Team Giant–Alpecin professional American racer Carter Jones assisted and provided much of the background for this section of the review.)

Part IV – Conclusions and Recommendations:

There are several logical and valid reasons why a strong and all-inclusive riders union has not developed within pro cycling. Professional cyclists come from a wide variety of economic situations and cultural backgrounds, they speak many different languages, and they have widely differing financial expectations. In pro cycling's current culture, individual athletes are mostly concerned with their own development and performance, and are laser-focused on doing whatever they can to succeed and sign a contract for the following season, thus extending their economic security for at least another year. Younger riders who might really benefit from a union usually don't have the influence or funds to contribute, while the older, more successful and more influential riders may already be economically secure and hence may not care as much about a union.

Unfortunately, the economic insecurity of the overall sport and generally low average rider salaries severely constrain the funding sources needed to support a comprehensive riders union. Furthermore, and off-the-record, some more cynical riders suggest that the current situation of an existing but relatively weak and under-funded union structure actually reinforces the general agenda of race organizers and the UCI. One very prominent ex-racer stated, "Whenever there is a rider concern or grievance, all the officials can just say, 'Fine, you already have a union; go ask them to do something about it.' A weak union fits their purposes perfectly."

Yet, according to most of the riders we contacted, a stronger riders' union is needed more today than ever before. Older or retired athletes believe that races are more dangerous today than they were in the past. This is not only because of continued inadequate race planning and poor infrastructure in many areas, but also because the peloton is simply stronger and more competitive today. Better coaching, training, equipment and nutrition, as well as a larger and more international pool of talent, means that the level of talent today is higher and more consistent. Hence, in any given race, the peloton tends to stay together longer and the crashes tend to be worse. More racers, more teams, and a longer season – which the UCI continues to push even today – also add to the problem of rider safety and exhaustion. And as we have seen, this in turn unfortunately often pushes athletes into doping or other forms of cheating.

Younger riders today also seem more willing to take risks; older riders say there is not as much respect and solidarity in the pro peloton as there was twenty or even ten years ago. All riders are out for themselves, reflecting the sort of instant gratification trend that we see across Western-influenced societies. Furthermore, as the peloton and the pool of talent have grown, job security has become more precarious. Even the top racers have little clue where they may be in two or three years; and if the athlete is injured, there is still not much of a safety net to support him. As one retired rider put it, “If a child feels safe and secure in its environment, it will prosper; if not, it will take risks, and there will be problems.” And even though the need for a strong union has perhaps never been greater, cycling’s overall organization continues to be so fractious that the CPA (or any alternative future union effort) faces a steep uphill battle in trying to address some of these challenges.

Although it may not at first appear to be the case, we would argue that a stronger union would actually be good for the other key stakeholders in the sport as well – the AIGCP and Velon, ASO, and the UCI. Cycling should follow the path of other sports like football and soccer, which made their greatest leaps in popularity and revenues following the development of a more powerful voice for the athletes. Strong athlete organizations in other women’s sports like tennis and golf also led to dramatic growth, and rapidly increased the earning power of both athletes and event organizers. The UCI itself believes the riders are the “essence of the sport;” when contacted for this project, the UCI said pointedly that the organization – and President Brian Cookson – believes that the CPA is “one of the essential stakeholders as we prepare cycling for tomorrow.” Nonetheless, many athletes question this commitment and wonder if much has really changed under Cookson’s reign – given recent UCI decisions to effectively extend the length of the season, and the number of teams. (Other key stakeholders in pro cycling, such as AIGCP and Velon, were also contacted. Some of these organizations responded but declined to comment, due to political sensitivities, or because they often may find themselves on the other side of the table from the CPA on various discussions or negotiations.)

Many observers have also pointed out that a stronger union, combined with strict regulatory oversight and enforcement could potentially help the peloton to better police itself and help resolve the doping challenge. As we stated in our previous [article](#) on the CPA, in the past doping was so prevalent that individual riders realized there was nothing they could do to control it or force out the dopers – and so more and more riders resorted to the same approach themselves. The peer-group mentality toward cheating worked to marginalize and force out anyone who even attempted to talk openly about the problem. On the other hand, a collective bargaining agreement which clearly spells out binding expectations for rider and team ethics could end this aspect of the doping problem. Greater rider unity and stronger external enforcement might be able to harness the exact same peer pressure – in a positive way – to help clean up the peloton. One prominent former racer points out that if the peloton would ratify this approach, there would be strong pressure within the group to maintain that clean status quo instead. “People trying to cheat would be chased down and forced out by the power of the peloton. The same kind of self-protection instinct that used to be so negative could be turned into a positive. A strong riders' union would help reinforce that.”

But there is one final, and perhaps most fundamental concern that must be addressed here. At the end of the day, nothing is likely to happen on any of these issues until the riders themselves step forward to speak out more forcefully. And unfortunately, there is still a significant but largely unspoken fear of standing up and speaking out. Riders still worry that they are vulnerable to being blackballed or replaced at the drop of a hat, should they fall out of line with their teams, or if they challenge the status quo in cycling’s entrenched leadership. In conducting this survey, even with riders who fervently support the development of a stronger union, we had trouble convincing many of them to talk openly on these topics, even completely off-the-record.

And still worse, some riders appear to simply not care much about the whole issue. The tough Darwinian economics of the sport seem to force many riders to focus strictly on themselves - their training, racing, and simply maintaining their employment. If this circumstance is ever really going to change, the riders –

as a group – must be encouraged to become more informed, and more invested in future reform negotiations. The pro peloton desperately needs an aggressive *patron*, or small group of influential leaders, to step up, educate and organize the riders, and fight for a louder voice in the sport. There is a clear aspect here of “strength in numbers.” If just a handful of prominent and respected athletes – perhaps from a few different countries – could collectively step forward and articulate the peloton’s concerns, it could provide the inspirational leadership and spark for a stronger union. And there *are* a few riders who seem to be more aware of and supportive of these key issues, but they still remain hesitant to “stir the pot” very much.

Given this background and context, given the lack of resources historically available to the CPA, and given the continuing selfish and territorial politics of pro cycling, we make the following suggestions and recommendations for the CPA going forward:

1) First, the CPA needs to collect more timely data and develop a more accurate idea of where it actually stands with the riders today, before it can effectively map out a realistic longer-term strategy. We suggest a quick research survey which could be distributed to all riders at the WorldTour and Pro Continental levels – and which would provide the CPA with valuable current information upon which to base its future. Only by clearly understanding what is on the minds of the riders today can it map out a logical path to progress and growth. (We have provided a brief template for such a survey as Attachment I below.)

The CPA might also want to canvass retired riders, as well as some who did receive the Solidarity Fund payout. Some of these athletes may have different and useful insights on the process, now that they are no longer active in the sport. Some sporting unions have a “veteran’s committee” to provide a forum for input regarding ongoing athlete concerns like changes to the pension or healthcare plans, and so on.

2) Second, the CPA desperately needs to investigate new sources of funding, so that it can support and sustain a larger effort and a more full-time and dedicated professional staff – and begin to address some of the gaps and shortfalls mentioned earlier. In the near term it should pursue aggressive collection of race organizer contributions, some of which have apparently sometimes been past-due or not fully paid in the past. It should also aggressively try to negotiate increased short-term financial contributions from both the teams and race organizer groups, as well as from the UCI. We also suggest that the CPA should attempt to develop additional one-time or recurring financial contributions from third parties – corporate or governmental – who have a stake in seeing pro cycling grow and prosper, and who may already support one aspect of the sport or another. Over the longer term, once it is more successful in the delivery of rider benefits and privileges, the CPA should put in place a new system of annual rider fees and team contributions, similar to how other successful sporting unions capitalize membership, and implement a sound financial investment strategy to grow the value of its reserves.

3) Third, the CPA should work more aggressively to build more influential relationships with the other key stakeholders in the sport – particularly the UCI, AIGCP and Velon. At this point in time, the CPA usually seems to be the weak party at the table with these other stakeholders, typically present only as an observer, if at all. If, as the UCI says, “the riders are the essence of the sport,” the CPA needs to find better ways of translating that fundamental truth into greater power at the highest levels and negotiating tables of the sport.

(This review has assumed that the optimal way to increase the voice of the riders, and to improve their standing and power within the sport, is to work within the existing confines of the CPA. To date, most would-be reformers and interested riders have been working within this existing framework to try to address their objectives. Given the simple existence and historical achievements of the CPA, this seems like the most logical way to strive for change. However, there may also be merit in examining the possibility of a totally new riders’ organization. This is not a topic which we will try to address here, but as the foregoing pages show, the CPA comes with a certain amount of historical baggage and a predisposed

way of doing things. There is always some potential value to a new and fresh approach for dealing with organizational challenges such as those faced by today's pro peloton.)

- 4) The CPA needs to put in place a full-time and experienced business management and executive team. Ideally, members of the CPA's executive circle should have broader business and/or legal training, and prior experience in sporting organizations and representing the interests of a labor force – perhaps as part of a trade union, or an athlete union in a larger sport. Simply being a former cyclist is not a sufficient qualification for managing and growing this organization. Indeed, it could be very productive to look outside of cycling's traditional power structure, to find new management which could bring a fresh outlook to the position, with no historical biases or tendencies. While prior experience as a rider can be of value in coaching and directing a team on the road, the changing landscape of cycling as a professional sport requires a different executive skillset in its union's leadership.
- 5) The CPA needs to develop a more formal strategic and tactical planning process. As in any formal plan, the organization should identify its key strengths and weaknesses, and develop an approach for maximizing its strengths and augmenting its weaker areas. It should also identify the threats and opportunities facing the organization in the broader sport, and identify means of dealing with those as well. This planning process should be developed with the input of both member associations as well as interested individual athletes. Once the initial framework of a strategic plan is developed, the process should be institutionalized and revisited on an ongoing basis, so that the organization can react to and plan for the changes and new directions which may emerge in the sport.
- 6) As a more immediate off-shoot of a general strategic planning process, the CPA should also clearly identify its two or three most critical current objectives – whether that be race safety, health benefits, post-career assistance or the like – and develop a short-term, specific and tactical plan by which it will draw attention to, and make incremental progress on those issues. If those critical issues are ones over which the UCI, the AIOCC, or the AIGCP (or other stakeholder) exerts more power or influence, the CPA must find a way to elevate and prioritize the discussions with those other stakeholders.
- 7) The CPA must find a way to better represent all the riders – to bring all professional level riders under its umbrella on an equal basis, so that all riders receive the same information, benefits, and opportunities to influence the future direction of the organization. The globalization of the peloton has outpaced the horizons of the CPA, and the organization should quickly develop a more thorough means of connecting, interfacing with, and developing the political support of all of the top-level riders.
- 8) Finally, the individual members of the steering committee of the CPA – the individual country associations – must take on a more active and aggressive role as directors of the organization, and both help and force some of the above changes to occur. Ultimately, the riders themselves must step forward and take a stronger and more vocal stand on these issues, and force their representatives in the CPA to achieve more rapid progress towards the goals mentioned above.

A stronger union could force progress on every one of the major challenges the riders face today; by better banding together and voicing their collective power, pro cyclists could enjoy more stable employment, safer racing conditions, higher wages, and a more predictable and secure long-term future. The CPA has made some progress, given its limited power and resources, but once a more viable and more powerful union is in place, and when the potential benefits to its members are better articulated, there will be much greater incentive for more riders to assume leadership roles. All of this will in turn help to promote a more secure, robust and sustainable sport of professional cycling.

Steve Maxwell and Joe Harris, The Outer Line, December 2, 2016

This survey should only take you five minutes to fill out. All information will be completely confidential, and only the overall group results will be published; however, you are encouraged to provide additional suggestions/comments if you wish. This will provide us with invaluable information in our assessment of how to strengthen the CPA – so that it can more efficiently and more strongly represent *your* interests as a pro cyclist.

1. Are you aware of the CPA, the Professional Cyclists Association, and are you generally familiar with its mission to improve the working conditions and status of pro cyclists? Yes ____
No ____
2. Do you believe there is an important need for an independent group or association to represent and ensure the financial, safety, health and post-career interests of pro cyclists? Yes ____
No ____
3. Have you ever been contacted by the CPA, providing information about a race or other issue, or asking your opinion on a pro cycling subject? Yes ____ No ____
4. Have you ever been invited to or attended a meeting of the CPA? Yes ____ No ____
5. Have you been told by the CPA, or are you aware, that you may be eligible for a post-retirement financial grant from the CPA of up to €12,500? Yes ____ No ____
6. Should the CPA include *all* current cyclists in the pro peloton? Yes ____ No ____
7. Are you aware of the CPA's "Joint Agreement" with AIGCP (the team owner's group) and the way in which that document governs and controls your rights as a pro cyclist? Yes ____
No ____
8. Do you think the CPA should formally take into account the riders' points of view and concerns, when it negotiates that Joint Agreement with the teams? Yes ____ No ____
9. The CPA is indirectly but primarily funded by you – the pro cyclist – in the form of seven (7) percent of the total prize monies from all WT races that would otherwise go to cyclists. Given this, do you believe the CPA should make its financial statements more transparent and available to all pro cyclists? Yes ____ No ____ To the general public? Yes ____ No ____
10. Do you believe that the CPA should have a formal budget, set of objectives and strategic plan, available to all pro cyclists? Yes ____ No ____ To the general public? Yes ____
No ____
11. Do you believe the CPA is generally fulfilling its obligations to the pro cyclist in a democratic and transparent manner? Yes ____ No ____
12. Please list below those specific activities and issues which you believe are the most critical for the CPA to pursue on your behalf (for example: race safety, medical and health benefits, financial planning assistance, post-retirement career training and assistance, etc.)

.....

Please provide any additional comments or suggestions in the space below, or feel free to contact us directly or anonymously via the following contacts: