A Roadmap to Repair Pro Cycling

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Executive Summary

Professional cycling, for all its faults, is a beautiful and compelling sport to watch. The colorful flow of riders at speed on the open road, chasing a breakaway; the grace under pressure of a rider in solo pursuit; the explosion of joy at the finish line – these are the unforgettable images of the sport. This is what draws us in, makes us want to clip in, pedal off, and climb our own personal Alpe d’Huez or Mur de Grammont. Races tell beautiful stories that we retell and relive for years. For all these reasons we must repair and heal this sport.

Pro cycling is truly at an inflection point, and right now it has perhaps its best and last chance to “reboot” the system. How many times has the sport falsly proclaimed a “fresh start?” 1988, when the Delgado allegation broke? 1998, with the Festina affair, and what we now know from the French Senate report? 2006 and 2007, with the Fuentes, Landis and Rasmussen messes? The Armstrong implosion of 2012? This time pro cycling must truly change.

Unfortunately, the Union Cycliste International (UCI) has tended recently to just talk about how to fix pro cycling; now the time has come to really do something – to transform itself and the professional sport. With the conclusion of its latest Congress and the election on September 27, 2013, the UCI has hopefully changed course. We believe that the UCI should now embark upon a roughly two-year intensive process during which it will examine its historical and current challenges, and refocus its aspirations for the future. Some of this process will be painful; much of it will be complex and subject to endless debate amongst different stakeholders. But despite all these challenges, the UCI must now seize that rare, once-in-a-generation opportunity to reinvent itself.

Drawing upon our expertise as long-time business consultants, including experience within the sport’s inner workings, we propose herein an aggressive and concurrent four-point process that will repair public trust, restore integrity, and revolutionize the economics and governance of professional cycling. And as opposed to some of the loftier and more
superficial proposals of the past, we attempt to drill down to a
deeper level of analysis – and provide very specific and
immediately actionable recommendations.

In Section I, we discuss a transformative truth and
reconciliation commission (TRC) process – to provide a
catharsis for the professional sport that would include pardon
for the many alongside punishment for the few. This process
would include the riders, team managers, owners and
regulators (some of whom are themselves former dopers and
whose unwillingness to address the issue compounds the
problem). Cycling's legacy of omerta could finally be broken,
without fear of retribution. This TRC will preserve the rights of
all who bring testimony, and focus on rehabilitation and
reconciliation – rather than retribution – as a path to healing
all the damage of the doping era. However, as we discuss, a
TRC process does not guarantee amnesty for everyone.

In Section II, we address the development of a new business
model for the sport that incorporates stronger economic
incentives to drive future growth. Pro cycling must adopt what
we describe as a modified franchise model, similar to other pro
team sports, and simultaneously cultivate greater economic
value by improving its competitive structure and the balance of
its elongated season.

Pro cycling can no longer afford to rely solely on commercial
sponsorship for its financial base. Despite the UCI’s recent
report on the health of the sport, we are at the point where
fewer sponsors are buying what the sport is selling, and those
coming into the sport often seem to be outnumbered by those
leaving. Without the fundamental spark of sponsorship
dollars, there is nothing to support the economic engine of
cycling. We suggest numerous structural improvements and
economic incentives which could rebuild the sport and create
much stronger sponsorship interest.

We also discuss how professional cycling must diversify its
revenue base by developing more lucrative TV rights, and in
the proven mold of other successful sports, how it must then
develop a system for sharing that revenue between teams and
organizers. Only then will team owners be able to build true
long-term value in a franchise, with a correspondingly greater
economic incentive to invest in the future and protect the
integrity of the sport.

We recommend in Section III that a solid foundation of
ethical values be formalized for cycling, which will then
validate more consistent and harsher punitive measures. In
what would be perhaps the first instance in pro sports, ethics
training and certification must become a mandatory
requirement for holding a professional license – establishing
an irrefutable link between personal responsibility and
adherence to the rules.

We believe that stronger ethics and oversight controls will be
parallel forces for change. Athlete drug testing must be
completely delegated to an independent, scientifically-rigorous third party – one which would be funded at the necessary level by the sport’s stakeholders. While cycling may need to improve the hearings and appeals process, once guilt was established, individual riders and perhaps entire teams could face a clear set of punitive sanctions, with potentially severe economic losses to team owners and sponsors. This would create a powerful incentive for the teams, and especially the riders – who live together virtually 24/7 – to police themselves.

Finally, Section IV recommends five specific steps towards a more effective governance and leadership model for the sport. We support the growing consensus that the current structure of the UCI may no longer be the proper governing entity for professional road cycling; its purview is too broad, its management style too opaque and its relationships too fraught with potential conflicts of interest. We contend that now is the time to consider spinning off a new affiliated, but independent governing agency, a “pro league” focused solely on pro road racing.

We argue that pro cycling’s stakeholders should immediately collaborate to build a strong riders union – independent of the team owners and the UCI – which will provide more negotiating power to the bike racers, without whom the sport would not exist. A model based on the example of the NFL and the NFL Players Association would have a positive long-term impact on cycling for all stakeholders.

In short, selfish interests need to be set aside to grow the size of pro cycling’s overall economic “pie” – and then more effectively share it for the benefit of the whole sport. Although some of these changes may be difficult for certain parties to accept today, everyone will benefit from a larger pie in the long run.

Several key themes will be mentioned repeatedly throughout this document: “transparency,” “independence,” “accountability,” “third parties,” and the viewing and evaluation of pro cycling’s various challenges from more of a “business perspective.” These are the types of approaches and attitudes that will push the sport towards a new model.

We know that none of these proposed changes will be simple. We realize, in approaching many of these challenges or proposed solutions that (1) the “devil will be in the details,” and (2) any proposed solution is bound to upset many who have built their lives around cycling’s traditional business model. These twin concerns have stopped past efforts to reform the sport dead in their tracks. However, complications or resistance from some quarters do not diminish the urgency to adopt change, nor should they stand in the way of developing new solutions.

Change is never easy, but it is inevitable, and it is often required for survival. Too many times we have seen organizations resist change – or adopt limited and conservative modifications – only to fail. Change is often equated with risk, but the emphasis here should be on opportunity. There is simply too much upside at stake here not to risk change, and far too much downside consequence if change is limited by traditional approaches or personal agendas. Indeed, anything short of transformative change could lead cycling right back to the impasse where we’ve been – where a single high-profile doping or corruption case can destroy years of effort and investment.

There is nothing to lose by sharing and considering sweeping proposals for change. Let’s open the debate and not simply stand by while decisions take place in all of the tired, secretive and traditional ways. When we chose our title, “The Outer Line,” we did so knowing that it is a path often taken by riders

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unable to break into the lead-out train, but whose strength, resolve, and tactical sense can lead them to victory. The alternative path is clear to all involved; staying the course on the inner line, established by the old guard, will further lead the sport towards potential ruin. New leadership must be confident enough to take counsel from outside the traditional channels of the sport. Indeed, it is the reliance on tradition – already deeply compromised with deceit and a lack of clear direction – that put cycling on the edge of a fatal precipice to begin with.

We are pleased that the UCI’s delegates have taken the first step back from that edge, and towards credibility by electing change; now they must back up that resolve with action. The UCI must quickly breathe life into the four parallel and interlocking avenues that we propose here - this “roadmap” to the future. It must rally all the resources at its disposal and promptly build a new consensus with its three key stakeholders – race organizers, teams, and riders – and make the tough decisions to promote a common vision for change.

We urge the UCI to essentially reinvent itself and the sport by the start of the 2016 season. Starting immediately, the UCI must commit to a strategic roadmap, halt what has too often been a race to the bottom, and instead begin to create a race to the top. It is time to think big; anything short of this sweeping goal may be too little, too late.
Section I: Truth and Reconciliation, and the Amnesty Process

Professional cycling is in a state of transition; the situation is somewhat similar to the experiences of countries that are evolving from single-party or repressive minority rule to a transparent, majority-elected democracy. Cycling is at a crossroads, and the time is ripe for a complete overhaul of its administrative, financial, policy and communications models.

“Amnesty” have been proposed by many stakeholders within cycling as a way for the sport to move past the shame and disgrace of the past twenty-five years. If pro cycling can find the right way to construct and implement a TRC process, the sport may finally be able to end its seemingly eternal cycle of breaking the rules and then asking for forgiveness. A successful TRC process could facilitate giant positive strides towards repairing the public image of the sport, and facilitate the other economic incentives and controls that we propose further on in this document.

There has been much off-handed recent discussion about implementing a TRC in pro cycling, but few people understand or have investigated how the process actually works. Many of those who claim they will “be the first to line up” and give testimony to a TRC have no idea how these tribunals are run, or the fact that they may not simply be granted blanket amnesty. Many proponents are generally unaware that a TRC often leads to criminal charges and severe sanctions – for both those who were oppressors and sometimes, for those who believed they were oppressed. Amnesty from punishment is often one outcome of TRC proceedings, but it’s certainly not the only one.

The concept of a TRC has been around in various forms since the end of World War II, when the United Nations and international amnesty organizations proposed post-conflict truth-seeking committees in place of more vengeance-oriented tribunals like the Nuremberg Trials. These commissions were based upon the premise that they could encourage healing by better understanding and coming to terms with the past, and thereby help to draw a map towards a brighter future.
Best known is the TRC process implemented in South Africa when that country made its transition from Apartheid to majority democratic rule. Nelson Mandela and his cabinet recognized the failure of other nations to address historical grievances – in particular, the sweeping and ineffective amnesty decrees enacted in Argentina in the late 1980s and elsewhere in Latin America – and created a new TRC process which is now seen as the global model.

This TRC model is composed of representatives from all walks of society, it is independent from the government to allow impartiality in its activities, and its proceedings are held in an open, public format to encourage transparency and national participation. Testimony begins with known victims and expands to include newly identified victims and perpetrators as testimony proceeds, and as the scope of participation increases. Cases are not concluded until sufficient testimony and evidence are gathered, but the process nevertheless has specific start and end dates. The TRC is empowered to grant unconditional amnesty when warranted by full disclosure of testimony, it can subpoena testimony when required, and it can also deny amnesty if the crimes are too serious to ignore. Above all, however, it seeks “reconciliation” and “reparations” rather than “retribution.”

But the same process for forgiveness can also be unfairly used to help offenders escape consequences. This highlights a key potential problem with the TRC process; the outcome is typically dependent upon who sponsors or “owns” the process. In some cases, guilty offenders may even be rewarded – so-called “victim’s/victor’s justice.” If the historical oppressors are able to co-opt the TRC through implied threats of retaliation, or if the political party in power can unduly influence the outcomes, it is unlikely to be either cathartic or equitable.

This concern has direct implications for cycling, with a relevant question being – what might have happened had the UCI been able to successfully take over jurisdiction of the Armstrong case? Cycling will not benefit from a TRC process which is controlled by the UCI, despite the spirit of change.

In short, cycling must study successful and failed TRCs if it is to benefit from one of its own. A potential TRC in pro cycling represents completely new and uncharted territory, and in many ways will be different from the far more critical process of nation-building and societal healing. In cycling, the process must seek to break a long cycle of the illegal use of performance enhancing drugs, a corrupt culture of omerta and a de facto stranglehold on the sport by its governing body, all of which must somehow be dealt with before the sport as a whole can move forward.

It is impossible to summarize here all that has been written about TRC processes and outcomes in this short space, but in the context of cycling’s current situation, there are four key areas upon which a process must focus:

1) **Independent operation and agenda** from a majority government, or in this case, the ruling UCI agency. A TRC must follow and be answerable only to its own charter to uncover the truth, and should contain no committee members who serve in the current “government” – to avoid the impasse of the victim’s/victor’s justice problem discussed above. The TRC model really only works when the commission members have complete independence, so that they are unencumbered by any kind of vengeful agenda.

2) **Impartiality** to the victims and the perpetrators – it is just as important to hear why and how the perpetrators
acted as it is to hear about the suffering of victims, especially if we are to ensure there will not be new victims in the future. Victims must be able to step forward and have their stories heard, but so must those who created or helped contribute to the problem. As Bishop Desmond Tutu wrote in the foreword to the South African TRC findings, “It had to provide the space within which victims could share the story of their trauma with the nation; and it had to recognise the importance of the due process of law that ensures the rights of alleged perpetrators.”

3) **Legal Authority** – TRCs are only successful when paired with the power to compel testimony, grant unconditional amnesty, or recommend prosecution or sanctions; all stakeholders must agree that the TRC will have the final word. It must be noted that the ability to compel testimony may in some circumstances benefit the perpetrators, because they can choose to admit guilt and testify in return for leniency/amnesty before being accused or called to testify, essentially surrendering their testimony. This may help a perpetrator to control an outcome that in a true court of law would be beyond their reach.

4) **Funding** that is non-negotiable – the entity seeking to build future trust and understanding, in this case, professional cycling via the UCI, must underwrite the cost of the TRC, regardless of the outcome.

There is obviously no true comparison between the current situation in professional cycling and a torn, fractured country that has undergone decades of oppression and tyranny. However, from the perspective of an entity or organization that needs healing, perhaps there are at least some similarities. Pro cycling is a global sporting society whose governing body has been perceived as closed and secretive – not unlike a one-party authoritarian state. Rules are enacted from the top down, often without much opportunity for a democratic vote by the sport’s key participants. Leadership is often unaccountable to internal or external criticism; whistle-blowers and participants who speak out against the leadership have been black-balled or retaliated against.

Organizationala, a cycling TRC may be similar to a national TRC, but with no precedent for one in the sporting context, cycling will break new ground and set the tone for any future sports tribunal. The questions asked will certainly be different; rather than dealing with national issues of human rights, a cycling TRC will focus more on questions of human ethics. It will have to ask, “Who profited the most? Who corrupted others? Who hid evidence? Who simply went along to protect their jobs and livelihoods? Why did you choose to break the rules?”
The real question in cycling will be – what will the TRC choose to do about the answers that it uncovers? And could those answers lead to criminal charges? This may be possible based on the laws of many countries where the alleged offenses took place – and at the time when the offenses allegedly happened – if there is sufficient evidence.

Recalling many of the heinous acts that took place during Apartheid and the Dirty War, confession and contrition do not necessarily outweigh victims’ rights. This is why it is important to select the right TRC chairperson and establish a charter that defines how the commission will gather testimony and evidence, how it will interact with various legal institutions, and provide guidelines for amnesty or repercussions across many jurisdictions so as to preserve the dignity and freedom of all participants.

When discussing amnesty for those who believe they “had to” participate in corruption to simply have a career, compare what happens when individuals in other professions cross that ethical line. When a trader is convicted of securities fraud they are banned from that line of business, and physicians who deal illegal prescriptions lose their licenses to practice medicine – often for life.

By this measure, some of the more egregious leaders or enablers of doping should face repercussions. This underscores an unwavering foundation of all TRCs: amnesty is not automatic. Rather, it is a conditional outcome earned through the truthfulness and completeness of the participant testimony, if it corroborates other testimonies, and whether that testimony helps bring closure to unresolved events.

The gray area between the granting of amnesty and providing justice for victims is characterized by rehabilitation and reparations – what offenders can do to gain forgiveness and rejoin society. In some cases, amnesty has been granted to combatants who repented for actions they were forced to take simply to avoid becoming victims of their own regimes. However, there clearly have to be limits to the scope of forgiveness under a TRC. For example, the killers of Chris Hani – a South African activist assassinated in an attempt to derail the elections in ’93-’94 – were not set free, despite the fact that they cooperated and exposed all of those involved. The commission unanimously found this to be an unusually heinous crime, even in the context of the country’s internal struggles at that time.

Cycling should prepare for many new and shocking revelations to come out in a TRC process, some of which will result in amnesties, but others that may be too damning to ignore. A cycling TRC may choose to grant amnesty to some enablers of doping in recognition of (but not a pre-condition for) their full testimony. A parallel step may be to provide amnesty to riders who were coerced by the actions of others to cheat, recognizing the incredibly hard decision hundreds of racers had to make in order to actualize years of sacrifice and become pro cyclists.

Both outcomes – amnesties for dopers and for enablers of doping – are certain to anger many across the sports world, not just cycling. Just the same, when amnesty is deemed impossible, the TRC will have to define the terms of reparation and rehabilitation so that those offenders who wish to continue in the sport make appropriate amends and/or investments to undo the damage.

A key outcome of most successful – and many unsuccessful – TRCs is a new level of transparency that leads to future accountability. Testimony and discoveries in TRCs lift the lid on the secrets held by oppressors and victims alike, making it more difficult for similar acts to be repeated in the future. TRCs have further influenced governments by insisting on
policies that permanently install transparency and accountability in legal and parliamentary processes. A cycling TRC could likewise positively change the UCI’s voting, financial reporting, competitive governance, and communications policies.

With a successful TRC, cycling might finally be able to stop the vicious cycle – by rehabilitating or ridding itself of the worst offenders across the full spectrum of racers, team support and management, and administration; by exposing and condemning the worst offenders who ushered in the EPO era; and finally by setting new and enforceable ethical standards across the board.

But it is also important to recognize that whatever the final outcome, there will still be a middle ground of punishment and absolution – and it will be an unpopular place in cycling, because the sport will have to recognize tainted accomplishments and devalue the contributions of clean riders in the same breath.

In evaluating the results of a cycling TRC, it must be remembered that thousands of clean riders never had the opportunity to turn pro over the past twenty years, and were robbed of their life’s dreams and investment in the process. In addition to all of the economic and purely financial costs, the true impact that must be measured and dealt with here is the same as in any other TRC – the human cost. The outcome of a cycling TRC must acknowledge the loss of a whole generation of aspiring cyclists and the corruption of many others, and must balance amnesty and justice by this basic standard.

If professional cycling chooses to go down this route, a true TRC must be convened swiftly to begin this process of change; the current atmosphere of indecision and spiritless debate about TRCs must be replaced with a resolute push and momentum to move forward. We recommend the following action plan to create, successfully implement, and set a precedent for truth and reconciliation in sport:

**Specific Recommendations:**

- A Commission Chairperson should be selected within 60 days of the start of the new UCI President’s term. Rather than direct appointment by the UCI, an external agency specializing in Transitional Law should be contracted by the UCI, possibly in conjunction with WADA, to select a Chairperson of unquestioned moral standing and authority who will then initiate and manage the TRC process independently. (“Transitional Law” is the legal field that supports nation-building through mediated reconciliation and reparation, and
there are several well-respected organizations that provide this expertise. The cycling TRC Chair, when selected by an independent and expert transitional law foundation, will have the true independence and impartiality that will remove any possible conflicts of interest.

- Commission members demonstrating the same independence and unquestioned moral authority should be proposed by the Chair, with assistance from key stakeholders within the sport, and should be confirmed by the Transitional Law agency within 60 days of the Chair’s appointment.

- A budget assuming 24 months of professional services and tribunal staging (travel, facilities, and administrative costs) should be allocated by the UCI at the time of the full committee’s confirmation – estimated to be somewhere in the range of perhaps US $5 to $6 million.

- A neutral location should be chosen at the time of the full committee’s confirmation that is amenable for convening the majority of its members – perhaps in a major national cycling Federation location in Western Europe. Satellite locations could be supported at other locations and video collaboration technologies could tie the TRC sessions together as necessary.

- A TRC charter should be published within 90 days of the appointment of the Commission, which would roughly outline the conditions for amnesty and the legal provisions in each Federation’s country of jurisdiction that will limit criminal and/or civil liabilities, in exchange for truthful and complete testimony.

- A TRC schedule would then be published and testimony should begin within two months; there should be at least four testimony sessions scheduled for two to three week intervals to provide a wide enough window for calling witnesses.

- In theory, the cycling tribunal could be comprised of the following individuals: a well-known and widely-respected judge whose moral authority is beyond question; a cycling representative recognized by his or her peers as a clean rider; an expert on the legality of TRC admissions; a leading and widely respected individual representing the team ownership and management ranks; legal and administrative support personnel; sports scientists; and perhaps a member of the religious clergy, to assist in the moral foundation and difficult character judgments that will undoubtedly have to be made.

- There should also be a professional rider who actively doped but who has been completely transparent with the outcomes – suspension, return to sport, or retirement. It is important to understand sin from the perspective of the sinner. Without fully understanding the points of view of both the oppressor and the oppressed, the process may not be successful.

- The first and preliminary TRC decisions could be published within 15 months, but at the very least, a final report with all decisions should be finalized in 18 to 24 months, with closure of the TRC process thereafter.
Section II: A New Business Model, and More Favorable Economics

Cycling is a unique sport – freely accessible to tens of millions of fans who line the roads every year to watch, and cheer on their favorite teams and riders. An estimated 15 million people watch the Tour de France each year, and almost none of them have to walk through a turnstile or pay admission for the privilege. This is one of the great allures of the sport – the ability to get up close and personal with the riders, and truly experience the race first-hand.

But these same attributes which make cycling such a unique and engaging sport also burden it with unique challenges. Most other sports are played in large stadiums, making it easier to collect tickets and charge admission at the “gate.” Because cycling lacks this fundamental means of generating revenue, it has historically wrestled with financial shortfalls and economic challenges. Cycling has, for these reasons, always been virtually totally dependent upon commercial sponsorship for its financial viability.

Unfortunately, to make this tenuous and unpredictable situation even worse, cycling’s leadership has allowed the sport’s image to be overshadowed and stained by decades of continuous doping scandals – diminishing its public appeal, and in turn reducing the general level of sponsorship interest in the sport. In other words, cycling has allowed its already challenging revenue situation to be made much worse by failing to maintain control of its public image. After all, who wants their product or brand to be associated with a sport perceived to be saturated with cheaters and illegal drug takers?

However, the most problematic issue, from the long-term perspective, is that if there are no dependable and sustainable sources of revenue and profit in the sport, then it is much more difficult to create teams or racing events that have significant economic value. And without the ability to create sustained economic value, cycling will never be able to attract long-term investors to the sport. This is the root economic problem of professional cycling. Until cycling teams are able to develop significant economic value, and until more events than just the Tour de France are able to build real sustained value, cycling will never be able to attract the necessary level of financial investment. Different sponsors may pop in and out for a few years, but that alone will never provide the necessary level of financial stability for the sport.

And when the requisite financial backing is always in a state of uncertainty, an underlying atmosphere of instability is created that affects everyone in the sport. Sponsors come and go, as do marginal teams, on a regular basis. Team managers must always be on the hunt for new sponsors. Riders and other employees worry constantly about whether their team will survive – and whether they should be looking for employment elsewhere. Add in the always-present specter of potential doping on the team, and there is no sense of security. This atmosphere of continuous turnover, uncertainty, anxiety and a sense of financial foreboding is extremely unhealthy; over the long-term it could be fatal to the sport.

Hence, we believe that cycling is faced with three critically important financial and economic challenges: (1) it must not only grow but also diversify its sources of revenue; (2) it must
do everything it can not only to maintain existing sponsors but also to attract new and larger sponsors; and (3) it must determine a reasonable and equitable way to share those revenues amongst the various stakeholders for the maximum benefit of the overall sport. In a nutshell, the fundamental question here is – how can the sport develop a stronger, more predictable and more sustainable business model to address these issues in the future?

Fortunately, there are multiple possible steps and alternatives that cycling can investigate and undertake to modernize its competitive structure and financial landscape. Although many of these ideas and approaches have been discussed and debated before, there has generally been little progress made towards actually implementing any of them. Moving towards a new and more economically viable structure for the sport will obviously require a bold new leadership, as we discuss in more detail in Section IV – one which is willing to make serious changes, try new things, occasionally break with the past, and manage the sport differently than past leadership has.

Below, we address some of these new directions or approaches. These should be immediately investigated, evaluated and potentially implemented.

1) Development of a modified franchise structure and system of team ownership and organization:

Cycling must develop some sort of a franchise system in order to put in place a structure which will allow the gradual building of real economic value in the sport – similar to what most other professional sports did many decades ago. This would entail a model where some twelve to twenty permanent franchises were established at the top level of the sport. Franchises for the top division – perhaps fairly similar to the present WorldTour teams – would be granted simultaneously; a lower division (or divisions) – perhaps similar to today’s Pro Continental level – would be established at the same time.

The lower divisional franchises would be separately owned and operated, but some of them might be associated as a “developmental team” with a specific top division team, similar to the minor leagues in American baseball. The lower division might have a “modified” franchise structure, in which aspiring new lower-level teams could enter the system and replace bottom-end franchises which were not performing strongly enough – hence allowing new teams to occasionally work their way into the top professional structure. In such a modified franchise system, successful teams would be permanent, yet there would also be a way for highly-performing new teams to enter the structure at the bottom and work their way up.
These franchises would be issued and become permanent fixtures of the competitive structure at the highest level of the sport. If a new team wanted to get into the sport, they could work their way into the second division as per the example above, or they could buy a lower division franchise from a current owner, acquire some good young riders, and gradually work their way up. Or they could also obtain a top-level franchise simply by buying one from another owner – similar to how things work in American football and baseball.

To protect and ensure competitive standards at the top level, there would be some provision each year by which weaker top division teams might be dropped down into the lower division, while successful second division teams would have an opportunity to move up to the top division. This would be a dramatic change from the historical structure of pro cycling, but this kind of structure and mechanics would not be difficult to design and implement – this is exactly the economic engine driving every other major team-sport league on the planet.

Given the confidence that the team franchise was going to “be there” over the longer term, and the certainty and stability which this would reinforce, these franchises could gradually acquire a greater economic value. Although cycling teams will probably never develop the billion dollar values of the major American sports and European football clubs, a new sense of permanence would allow at least incremental economic value to be built. Teams would become more stable, owners would have more of an incentive to invest in the longer-term sustainability of the franchise, sponsors would be more likely to invest, and team staff and racers would have greater confidence about the future. Today’s system breeds short-term thinking and instability; a modified franchise structure could create stability, confidence and greater excitement about the future of the sport.

2) Abolishment of the current UCI points system for team licensing:

Few aspects of top-level professional cycling have been as controversial as the “points system” for the ranking and licensing of Pro Tour teams over the past few years. This system, which somewhat arbitrarily assigns points to individual riders for stage wins, victories and top placement in key races, has been under fire ever since it was established. Those teams with the most points for the coming season are guaranteed spots and licenses at the top level of international racing.

So far, so good – but the hugely controversial aspect of the system is the ability of a team to in effect purchase these points by simply hiring those riders with the most points from the previous year. This tilts the entire competitive structure of the sport towards the richest teams, undermining the ability of smaller or poorer teams to work their way up by identifying and nurturing the best young riders.

By promoting a “class system” which allows the rich to get richer, while condemning the poor to get poorer, pro cycling is effectively shooting itself in the head. This system has been directly responsible for the demise of highly successful but perhaps financially weaker teams. Fortunately, the development of a franchise system would allow the points system to be done away with.

3) A shorter, more select and more balanced pro race calendar:

The sport should investigate and develop a modified race schedule and calendar. Perhaps pro cycling could study how NASCAR has consolidated its television rights into an empire
that builds importance into every race in its schedule – not just one event. Consolidation of race “properties” into collaborative agreements that tie multiple races into a true championship format could do away with the ungainly and arbitrary system of the WorldTour, and force teams to adapt strategies that target events throughout the season, knowing that the team standing/championship has a significant monetary value and prestige. Race organizers and the UCI should work together and reposition the schedule so that one event leads into another, which would also help to support and reinforce the team franchise business model.

This could entail a shortened prime season – perhaps from March through September, similar in length to other major sports – with fewer races, in which all teams and some portion of their top riders would be required to participate. Some races might have to be moved around in the schedule, so that they did not overlap with one another, and so that a more balanced season could be developed. While the great historical races would be preserved in this schedule, there would also be room for new races in new geographies or at different times of the year – which would continue growing the international and cultural diversity of the sport. The top division would race these top events, while the lower divisions would race the lower-rated races, and so on. By setting a new schedule with fewer but more critical races in which everyone participated, cycling could in effect create a “scarcity value” and greater fan participation and excitement, which today’s vast and lengthy race schedule makes impossible.

The multitude of professional races run today might be classified and stratified into different levels for a new divisional approach by looking at the total UCI points of all the riders in last year’s version of the race – perhaps a proxy for the significance that team managers assigned to the race. Or perhaps estimated recent attendance figures could be used as a means of very crudely estimating the relative significance of an individual race.

Obviously, this recommendation will be highly controversial with cycling traditionalists, and any changes must be evaluated in a very careful and considered way. The devil will truly be in the details here but nevertheless, cycling must move towards a more modern and balanced schedule if it truly wishes to address the economic concerns described above.

4) More focus on cycling as a team sport:

As a by-product of a revised schedule, all of the stakeholders of pro cycling should try to put more emphasis on the team aspects of the sport, and more focus on trying to shift fan attention and appreciation to the teams. Cycling is a team
sport, and there should be less focus on individual achievement, with more attention paid to team achievements and performance. Individuals would still win races and garner the glory that comes with victory, but teams would also get victories and points for every race, and new categories would be devised for team statistics and performance. At the end of the season, there would be a championship team which would win the greatest prize money.

This same model can be adopted by the national Federations in their amateur programs, reinforcing the team concept early with those who could be pros later. With more focus on the team, and with greater financial stability and continuity of teams, riders would be less likely to change teams all the time, as is the widespread practice today. In turn, this would allow fans to build up a greater focus and attention on their favorite teams, rather than individuals, and help create a self-sustaining upward spiral supporting the longevity, fan appreciation and ultimately the economic value of the individual teams.

5) Balance and diversify the key events and revenue drivers within the sport:

The global audience, the visibility and the current revenue-generating capability of pro cycling are all overwhelmingly focused on a single event – the Tour de France. With as many as three billion people in almost 200 countries tuning in to watch, the Tour is clearly one of the world’s largest sporting events. And just as the sport’s popular visibility comes largely from the Tour, so does the lion’s share of potential sponsorship return and profitability – it’s estimated that as much as 80% of the typical team sponsorship return derives from that single race. Hence, it’s clear that any plan for the future of cycling must place the Tour de France front and center; without the participation of the Tour, any future plan for modernizing cycling is clearly a non-starter.

However, with that said the overall size and growth of the sport – including the Tour – will be much greater over the long run, if a more balanced and sustainable calendar of events can be promoted. The upside of the Tour is that there are almost no other sporting events with that kind of reach – but the downside is that many other cycling events struggle to achieve recognition and profitability, and many are in danger of dying.

6) Develop new sources of revenue for the sport:

Pro cycling must also start to explore new means of revenue generation, and move away from its historical dependence upon third-party sponsorship. The negotiation of stronger TV revenues is perhaps the most important item on this list, and is closely intertwined with developing more compelling race coverage, mentioned in the next paragraph. It is important to realize that, with the exception of a few of the largest and most popular cycling races, TV coverage is actually a cost – not a source of revenue. Although the Tour and the Giro d’Italia and a few other races generate significant television rights revenues, in most cases the race organizer has to buy TV time, in order to be able to attract sponsors. This situation must be addressed, and begin to be reversed. Changes to the organizational structure and the annual calendar of the race will help to address this concern.

More generally, cycling must work harder at other means of generating revenue at the race site. This includes things such as merchandise sales, hospitality events and premium viewing at the start and finish lines, paid admission events, public rides, Gran Fondos and other parallel-participation events associated with the pro race. There is much that pro cycling
can learn here from other sports, and particularly from other sports that are “played on the road” such as marathons, XTERRA™, X Games™, and triathlons.

7) Develop more compelling TV and media race coverage:

Cycling must examine ways of making television coverage more interesting and entertaining in the future, in order to grow the potential licensing rights from greater TV coverage of cycling. There are a number of specific approaches that have been discussed in the past in this regard, including a greater focus on various intra-race strategy and tactics, “inside stories” or competitions between individual riders, and other “human interest” or “drama” within the peloton. There are also numerous new technology options – such as on-bike cameras, individual bike GPS tracking systems, and power output meters that could be better utilized to track the race and individual riders in more detail – and which might make for much more interesting and compelling TV than the current crank-by-crank type coverage.

Many of these technologies or approaches are easily feasible or common in other sports, but the UCI has limited them in the professional peloton – and when they are used they are largely ineffective in drawing attention. In summary, cycling must do everything it can to become more interesting to a broader array of fans; it should not be stuck in a “this is the way we’ve always done it” mentality.

8) Devise a revenue-sharing mechanism to grow the overall sport:

Finally, one of the most critical underpinnings for long-term growth and success is the development of some method for sharing the overall revenues of pro cycling with all parties – in order to ensure a growing, competitive, but balanced and entertaining sport. Cycling is the only widely-televised sport where the revenue is generally not shared with the teams and the athletes. Although the Amaury Sports Organization (ASO) and other major race organizers pocket most of that revenue today, the lesson from other major sports is clear – for cycling to really blossom and grow, those revenues must be somehow shared with the teams and riders which make the whole sport possible.

This issue is closely interwoven with various governance issues and constraints within pro cycling. For example, in order for the riders themselves to have significant and meaningful input into a discussion of appropriate revenue sharing, it will be necessary to build a meaningful rider’s association or union – one with some sort of bargaining powers akin to the players’
unions in the major American sports. It may not immediately evolve into a full collective bargaining arrangement, but the team owners and the players must both have stronger representation vis-à-vis the race organizers so that true revenue sharing can evolve. These governance issues are discussed in Section IV.

A move to revenue sharing in pro cycling is obviously going to be a very controversial step, and it will undoubtedly be strongly opposed – at least initially – by some of those who pocket most of the limited revenues and profits of the sport today. However, there are already encouraging signs that some of the race organizers, like RCS Sport, are open and willing to consider different alternatives for the greater good of the sport. But if it allows the primary participants in cycling to become more financially secure, and hence promotes greater investment and growth within the overall sport, the overall revenue base will grow faster. The primary challenge here will be to convince the ASO and a few other parties that a slightly smaller piece of a much bigger pie will be in everyone’s interest.

The UCI’s new leadership must reconfigure the competitive and structural landscape of cycling. This will enable the sport to become more financially stable and economically self-sustaining, and allow it to take its rightful share of the global sporting audience. In addition, all of these factors will contribute to making cycling much more attractive to sponsors – more and larger sponsors will compete to get into the business, rather than running away in fear. The discussion, evaluation and implementation of some version of the various recommendations above – while perhaps heretical to some and personally painful to others – will create a whole new array of self-sustaining benefits and will restore the overall image and character of the sport.

**Specific Recommendations:**

- The UCI President should immediately convene a Committee on Structure and Economics (CSE), consisting of ten to twelve individuals who are representative of all of the stakeholders in the pro cycling community, to carefully evaluate these sorts of basic competitive, structural and economic changes to the sport. This CSE should include at least one widely-respected current rider and one former rider, one or two team managers, one or two race organizing officials, one or two team owners, two appropriate officials of the UCI, and two outside and unaffiliated members to be nominated and chosen by the group at their first meeting. (This would be similar to the efforts of the Professional Cycling Council unit of the UCI over the past two years; perhaps some of the results and recommendations of that body could be reviewed and utilized here, to accelerate the CSE’s process.)
- This CSE would convene its first meeting within sixty days, and at that meeting would discuss and finalize the full list of possible changes and enhancements to the sport which it would consider during its tenure. That list would be drawn from the recommendations above, and from the recent PCC committee. The CSE would also discuss and nominate two additional outside members at that meeting.
- The CSE would then conduct a series of three or four two-day meetings over the following twelve-month period, after which time the committee would disband and cease to exist.
- The CSE would have one paid strategic planning facilitator to organize, chair and manage its meetings, and one paid full-time staff assistant during its tenure to manage the logistics of the committee, gather information, conduct external interviews, and write
reports, and so on. This person would also assist the committee in the formulation and fine-tuning of a final report and set of recommendations.

- Participation on this committee would be conducted on a voluntary basis, but the travel expenses of the members’ work in relation to the effort would be reimbursed.

- Ultimately, this Committee would recommend to the UCI management committee a thorough-going set of changes to amend and modernize pro cycling, while balancing those changes with the historical legacy and uniqueness of the sport. This final report would be due within twelve months of the formation of the committee, and the UCI would be bound to implement those recommended changes within a specific time period.
Section III: Enforcing the Rules, and Reinforcing the Ethics

Doping scandals have over-shadowed pro cycling for over twenty years – and there is as much debate around what to do with the Armstrong era Tours as there is on whether the exploits and triumphs of the newest champions can be trusted. The sport must begin working aggressively to resolve its historically weak testing methods and systems, and finally take preemptive steps to prevent new crises from driving the future sport even deeper into despair. Not doing so could prove fatal to professional cycling.

Unfortunately, wherever there is competition there will always be cheaters of one sort or another. In cycling, this began with common thuggery – riders being set upon by muggers in the night, bicycles being sabotaged, riders punched in the face by opposing fans, even tacks thrown on the road in the 2012 Tour de France. Collusion among teams or among riders has not been uncommon through the history of pro cycling. Some teams or riders have cozied up to the powers behind the velvet rope for special favors, and there have allegedly been secret pacts with those in the know to stay one step ahead of suspicion. Unfortunately, some of these melodramatic practices have continued right up through the present day.

The historical breadth and scope of chemical and biological performance enhancers is at once breathtaking, ghastly and disheartening. From painkillers to stimulants in the early days, anti-inflammatory medications to muscle-builders in more recent times, to autologous blood doping with one’s own blood or homologous doping by loading up with someone else’s blood, all the way to forcing one’s body to produce more of its own red cells with EPO – all of these practices and performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) have come to be called, simply, “doping.”

And pro cycling has truly represented a high-technology doping laboratory and arms race over the past twenty years – always changing and refining, misdirecting, and seemingly always one step ahead of the weak controlling agencies and testing methodologies. It is a heavy legacy of deceit which the sport must cast off and move beyond if it is to survive.

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The common denominators in this escalating proxy war between cheaters and the overseers are a lack of enforceable ethics and the need for a system of meaningful deterrents. The sport now needs to focus on the cause rather than the symptom; it must shift from enforcing reactionary rules and focus back on its core business model – bicycle racing, and the people within the race.

The clear first step must be to change the testing model and the inter-agency agreements that manage testing protocols across the sport. An expert Committee on Athlete Testing (CAT), comprised of scientific testing experts, should be convened by the UCI to study alternatives to the current model and make recommendations to improve it within the next 12 months. The committee should draw experience from and study the practices of other Olympic sports in terms of drug testing, sanctions, and competition management.

From this Committee’s recommendations, new working relationships should be forged between the sporting agencies (the UCI, the International Olympic Committee and the various national federations) to establish deterrents so strong that no competitor, team, or official would dare cross the line. The drug testing itself needs to be made completely independent from the UCI, and handed over to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) or a third-party independent agency to be designated by WADA.

Although the UCI and WADA have long been engaged in a public spat over who has authority to do what, the delegation of testing responsibilities to WADA would only be in line with its original charter – to be the world’s independent drug-testing agency for all sport. By facilitating this transition, cycling can finally escape the criticism that the “fox is guarding the henhouse.” It should be clear to all that the current model by which the UCI controls both the testing and punishment in a self-policing model is a glaring conflict of interest – and it must change.

The Committee should recommend a new structure of consistent testing and appropriate avenues of independent review and appeal. It must also propose an annual funding level and budget necessary to support the testing activities – essentially contracting out these testing requirements to WADA via a professional services agreement. This would allow the UCI to refocus on the more critical issue of incentivizing and enforcing a higher ethical standard within professional cycling.

Before diving into any reactionary discussion of crime and punishment, we must recognize that true change can only be charted by creating a new ethical model for the sport. Competition is not just about the rules of the game. It is also about understanding the context of why we have rules to begin with, and how our individual actions affect the game as a whole. In business, we use ethics to define how we take our actions, and our actions must follow the rules. Without that system of ethics, cycling has inadvertently encouraged a culture in which cheating has become the norm – because no one has been accountable to do the right thing.

At the most fundamental level, a lack of ethics is pro cycling’s biggest failure. This fact dilutes the core, defining term of the sport: “professional.” Across all professional industries, from finance to medicine to Federal agencies, employees must be certified in the ethical standards of their profession and in the specific guidelines of the organizations in which they work. For example, healthcare company executives must put in place annual training on the proper professional conduct of their practitioners and support staff. The executives themselves are answerable to an even higher standard of ethics guidance set in place by a board of directors or by various Federal agencies. In
many private firms, public agencies or other organizational entities, a failure to meet such standards of ethical conduct is usually punishable by suspension, demotion, or even termination.

Professional cyclists are at the zenith of their vocation. They are subject matter experts in sprinting, climbing, team tactics and physical conditioning. Professional team managers are in the same category as they are at the top level of their profession. Federation and UCI executives sit at the very top of the sporting organization. Unfortunately, however – and perhaps unbelievably to an outside observer – there has been no expectation or agency or general culture within pro cycling to set a standard for responsible and ethical behavior – the requirement to “do the right thing” even when no one is looking.

Instead, through a predicament of unfocused leadership and a doctrine of growing the sport at all costs, pro cycling has tacitly allowed a separate and unspoken system of expectations to evolve – a separate or “shadow” set of rules and interpretations. Furthermore, the UCI has often punished or marginalized those who fell out of line with that unspoken interpretation of the rules. This double standard and complicity represents a complete ethical breakdown, and it has in turn encouraged individuals to exploit the limits of the rules to their own advantage.

The UCI must mandate an ethics training program for all participants in the sport, which clearly defines a code of conduct, rather than just a responsibility to know the rules. Knowing the rules simply presents a blueprint by which an employee or a company may try to navigate the blind spots of oversight to achieve success. A system of expected ethical behavior, on the other hand, closes the blind spots by setting a foundation for making responsible decisions. Ethics reinforces a self-policing system, and provides the backdrop for a more serious and possibly permanent level of punishment when one gets caught breaking the rules. An external agency like WADA will have the charter to enforce those rules.

There are two key paths by which pro cycling can start this effort. The first is to commission a Task Force on Ethics (TFE), similar to the drug testing Committee mentioned earlier, although this effort would bring together experts in the field of business and organizational ethics across a wide cross-section of industry and government. This task force would work with riders, team owners, UCI and national federation representatives to develop a framework of ethics applicable to the sport that could be reviewed and formally adopted within twelve months.

This first ever code of ethics for cycling would be applicable at all levels – as relevant and formative to the development and
behavior of new riders and juniors as it would be to the seasoned pro and masters competitor. In addition, an expanded and more comprehensive blueprint for ethical behavior would be developed for those at the higher management and oversight levels in the UCI and national federations.

The second path is to dovetail and join together with the emerging results of a successful Truth and Reconciliation process, leveraging the expertise of that process and panel to develop a longer-term ethics framework that can be expanded on by the sport’s leaders. This path may require some additional time, owing to the Commission’s primary goal of repairing the sport; on the other hand, this path may also carry more clout because of discoveries that may help shape the breadth of the ethics model.

Regardless of how the sport addresses these alternative paths to the future, formal ethics training must be made mandatory for all professional riders, team management, medical, and executive leadership. Riders above a certain competitive level should be suspended from competition until they successfully pass the training in a specified time frame. Team management should face suspension and fines for the same reason. And the higher-level executives in the regulatory and oversight agencies should be subject to the same consequences as they would be in other professional fields – including the specter of termination. These individuals guide the sport and they must lead by example.

Sporting ethics must start early and be reinforced often. In this light, versions of any proposed pro cycling ethics training must be adopted by national Federations and be part of the category promotion model for all competitors. For example, junior riders should be exposed to the ethics training as part of their racing license application. Riders applying to move between categories must attest that they have read and will abide by the ethics of the Federation. Professionals must take a refresher course of the most current version moving forward every year. Coaches, soigneurs and medical staff will need to have an attestation every year to maintain certification. There will be many implementation details to iron out, but making this a backbone of the sport will undoubtedly have a positive effect.

We turn now to the flip-side issue of punishment. What will be the appropriate penalties for those few who violate the ethics code and choose to cheat the system? In the past, penalties have not been a significant enough deterrent in cycling; they have perhaps represented dents in the career path, but not career-enders. During the past twenty years, no real hard examples have been made of individual riders until two, or even three or more offenses have occurred. One has to commit audacious crimes in the manner of a Danilo de Luca or a Riccardo Ricco to truly get tossed one-and-for-all. And even then, the pro sport has tended to speak of rules rather than behaviors.

When everyone agrees to follow the same code of conduct, punishment can be made commensurate to the infraction and truly hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. Moreover, when the infractions are highly organized and group-managed (such as the USPS and Festina operations apparently were) the enablers of the infractions can be held to a similar standard. In such cases, entire teams rather than individual riders may be sanctioned, punished or even thrown out of the sport – similar in finality to the punishment dealt out in the European football match-fixing scandals of the mid-2000s, or the harsh “death penalty” given to Southern Methodist University football program by the NCAA in 1986. There is a close analogy here to “cheaters” in other walks of life – the drug-dealing physician, the inside trader at Goldman...
Sachs, and so on – and the expectations and punishment in pro cycling should be consistent with what we observe in other professions. Violate the standards of the medical profession, and your license is taken away, often forever; trade in securities on the benefit of insider knowledge, and go to jail.

The same system of consistent and known deterrents must quickly be implemented by WADA in the world of pro cycling: increase the first offense for steroids, stimulants, and corticosteroids to four years; conviction of blood doping or EPO or other biological PED usage would get six years. In both cases, the punishment for a second offense should be a lifetime ban. Four to six years of suspension would effectively remove the peak years of potential performance for most athletes and hence, aspiring cheaters would have to think very hard before they decided to take that risk.

Ethics would also guide the path back to the sport, and rehabilitation and reparation must be part of the sanctions process. Perpetrators must understand that they took spots from clean riders and stole from everyone in the sport before they return. With this in mind, cycling might choose to assign financial reparations as a condition to doping offenders in the future: make any return to pro cycling contingent on paying a fine, the amount of which is a reasonable percentage of what was dishonestly earned through victories, sponsorship allocations, endorsements, and appearance fees. We envision that the UCI could put this money towards a foundation that seeds the next generation of champions through training, oversight, and drug testing. In this way, reformed past offenders might return after learning an incredibly humbling lesson.

But the worst offenders should, by any ethical standard, be kicked out from all organized sports forever. Not the opportunistic cheater, but ones who not only doped, but actively participated in, recruited others into, and sought further assistance from programs that helped them dope better.

However, placing the full weight of the punitive system on the riders is misdirected and will not solve the problem. Some sort of proportionate sanctions should be proscribed for those who corrupt the sport from positions in management, training or medical oversight. Managers, coaches or soigneurs and other staff should receive at least a six year ban on the first conviction of supplying drugs to a rider, and a lifetime if that rider is under the age of 18 – even if it is the first offense. Physicians should be permanently banned from cycling (perhaps all sports) if and when convicted of deliberately providing drugs to the riders; furthermore, they should be recommended for board review and sanctions in their own professional medical licensing.
And the time has come to put in place stronger self-policing incentives, in which the transgressions of individual riders and coaches could affect entire programs. Examples might include the mandatory suspension of teams above the Continental status after the second rider or staff member offense within a three month period. Pro Tour license privileges might be totally suspended for a full calendar year upon a third offense in six months. A team could be suspended from all competition (similar to the NCAA “death penalty” mentioned earlier) if an organized doping program was proven. The details of a punitive system could be debated and resolved by the proposed Committee, but the bottom-line would be a consistent and equitable, but also harsh and unforgiving punishment that would strongly discourage future cheaters.

Accountable leadership, a stronger and better understood framework of ethics, and the development of an appropriate punitive system will take cycling into a new and uncharted but positive territory. Indeed, with such a move to clearer ethical standards, cycling could set a standard for the broader sports culture, one which could help all participants – whether or not they ever turn pro – to be better prepared for the real world.

**Specific Recommendations:**

- Convene a Committee on Athlete Testing (CAT), comprised of scientific and policy experts to study alternatives to the current drug testing model and make recommendations that draw experience from and study the practices of other Olympic sports in terms of protocol, sanctions, and competition management.
- Forge new working relationships between the UCI, the International Olympic Committee and the various national Federations to act adopt new deterrents that are stronger than those in use today.
- Contract all drug testing to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) or a third-party independent agency to be designated by WADA, via a professional services agreement, so that oversight is completely independent from the UCI and eliminates conflicts of interest.
- Convene a Task Force on Ethics (TFE), consisting of experts in the field of business and organizational ethics across a wide cross-section of industry and government to work with riders, team owners, UCI and National Federation representatives to develop a framework of ethics applicable to the sport to be formally adopted within twelve months. (Or, as an alternative, leverage the outcomes and teachings of a successful cycling TRC to perform this same task.)
- Mandate ethics training as a pre-requisite for obtaining a pro racing license and pro cycling accreditation as a coach, soigneur, manager, medical officer or UCI administrator.
- Mandate annual ethics refresher training for all pro riders, team management, medical, and UCI executive leadership. Failure to complete the annual training on time will result in consequences ranging from suspension to termination.
- Mandate various levels of ethics awareness communication and training across all cycling Federation competition levels to reinforce positive behaviors from the junior development ranks, through to the masters categories.
- Link the severity of sanctions, bans and financial penalties to the understanding of cycling’s new ethics code, such that the penalties are commensurate with the context of the offenses at the level of the individual and the team, and introduce new concepts of rehabilitation and reparation as part of the punitive process.
Section IV: Progressive Leadership and a Modernized System of Governance

If any of the changes and proposals mentioned here are to be effectively realized, cycling must simultaneously develop a more modern and effective system of governance, and promote a bold new generation of accountable leadership willing to force these issues to the forefront of the sport. This requirement will apply not only at the top level of the UCI and the national Federations, but also at the level of the individual teams, and the various organizations representing all of the diverse stakeholders of the sport.

We believe that there are five key milestones that will comprise this new organizational model: (1) a modernized constitution for the UCI, (2) stronger interagency agreements, (3) strengthening and alignment of team and race organizations, (4) a stronger and cohesive riders' union, and (5) the creation of a new cycling league that focuses solely on the development and management of pro level road racing for men and women.

At a fundamental level, there has been a growing crescendo that the current governance structure of the UCI may no longer be appropriate to govern professional road racing. The purview of the UCI is too broad, its management is too opaque, and its organizational function – as representative, licensor and regulator of the riders – is fraught with multiple conflicts of interest. And these hard-wired conflicts are exacerbated by the fact it has to stretch its resources to govern every discipline in cycling – from grassroots development to professional oversight. The UCI simply lacks the appropriate level of focus to govern strongly in one area while being pulled in several other directions.

Even with a change of leadership – and more importantly, the institution of a new approach and attitude of transparency – the current structure of the UCI needs to be fundamentally transformed. We therefore strongly recommend the following steps:

1) Target a thorough review and modernization of the UCI constitution by the start of 2015:

The UCI should conduct a systematic review of its internal governance and personnel roles, with recommendations for streamlining and modernizing its business operations, charter, and constitutional by-laws.

This internally-focused effort should be led by the UCI president and the current Management Committee, with input from carefully selected rider, team, and race representatives. This modernization process will leverage the findings and recommendations of the previously-mentioned and on-going Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Committee for Athlete Testing, Task Force on Ethics, and Committee on Structure and Economics. This will enable the UCI to better understand how the old governance model impeded change, and to help it to devise a more streamlined and efficient ruling organization for the future. The result of this exercise should be transparency, financial accountability, and global trust in the values and practices of the UCI.
2) Review and build stronger interagency agreements:

As the UCI works to get its own house in order, it must also turn its attention to immediately resolving the historical disputes and turf battles with the other controlling agencies of the sport (as discussed in the previous Section). Most notably, it will have to forge a new working relationship to coexist amicably with WADA and the various key national cycling federations, through which the sport’s participation level can be expanded.

Professional cycling has clearly been a failure at policing itself, and much like any business – which must be focused on promoting its own core competency – cycling should divest itself of what it is demonstrably not good at, so that it can focus on improving and optimizing what it is good at. Too much time and effort has been spent by the UCI trying to lead the market in a line of business where most of the talent works for someone else – namely, the field of drug testing. The UCI must focus on the riders and the races, leave the police work up to the experts at WADA, and leave the national Federations’ internal issues to those local constituents, so long as the Federations abide by the spirit of the UCI’s interagency agreements.

3) Strengthen and better align the efforts of the team and race associations:

The other key stakeholders in professional cycling also need to clean up and strengthen their individual organizations and their means of representation in the broader sport. The AIOCC – the organization representing the race organizers – is already a fairly strong entity, although it is dominated by a handful of the largest races. As mentioned earlier, global cycling could learn a lesson from the way that NASCAR and Formula One motor sports have consolidated television and merchandising rights into empires that build importance and suspense into every race in their calendars.

Race organizers should work together and with the UCI to reposition the schedule, as we discussed in Section II, so that one event leads into another – which would also help to support and reinforce the team franchise business model. These kinds of revolutionary changes would allow the sport to grow more quickly, by increasing the suspense, elevating the status of smaller but still competitive races, and ultimately building a self-sustaining and highly entertaining media product that major advertisers would hasten to support.

The Association International des Groupes Cyclistes Professionels (AIGCP) – the organization of the teams and team owners – is becoming more vocal, recently saying that cycling can only grow “if all stakeholders – including teams –
have a fair and equal say in the decision-making process.” Recent leadership of this group has strengthened its position at the table, but it needs to be further funded and more extensively staffed, so as to appropriately represent the interests of the teams – as well as their sponsors – when negotiating with the race organizers and the UCI.

4) **Create a much stronger riders union:**

One of the most critical gaps in pro cycling, as mentioned earlier, is the need for a much stronger and separate rider’s association or union. The examples from almost all other professional sports show that an individual sport can never blossom and grow without the players having a spot at the table.

There is a nominal rider’s association, called the Cycliste Professionnels Associés (CPA), but it is unfortunately a small and basically powerless entity – so obscure that many pro racers themselves have never even heard of it. Unfortunately, stronger rider representation is something which the sport has never tolerated – or even been mildly concerned with. There has always been a sense that there is an endless supply of aspiring riders out there. In turn, there has been a fear that the minute some riders started to organize themselves, they would simply be cast out of the sport by the owners and regulators – to make way for a more malleable set of new riders looking for fame and fortune. This legacy model treats riders as mere commodities, which by extension encourages cheating to achieve results. Individuals in the old world had strong incentives to take irresponsible steps just to keep his or her precarious place in the game.

There are also other institutional reasons – perhaps somewhat unique to cycling – why a strong riders union has never been formed. Professional cyclists come from a wide variety of economic and cultural backgrounds, and speak many different languages. This disparate and diverse nature of the rider population has historically contributed to the lack of organization or establishment of a base of power. Furthermore, generally low rider salaries have meant that there was no significant funding source.

So although the creation of a stronger riders union may initially appear to be antithetical to the interests of both the teams and the organizers, it is essential that all parties pitch in and financially contribute to help fund the initial development of a stronger riders association. And once it is formed, a new and successful riders union needs to focus on cycling’s similarity to other team sports – i.e., individual players may be great athletes, but no single player can carry the whole team unless everyone is working towards the same goal.

This emergent organization would be financially subsidized by the governing agency and the race organizers for the first three to five years of its existence. Over the longer-term, the association would transition to funding by the professional racers themselves, who would be levied a small fee each year to support the association and a small permanent staff – similar to other professional sports. This group would have elected leaders to represent the safety, health and economic interests of the peloton, and would also elect representatives to speak for its interests on the various other committees mentioned earlier.
Ultimately, a strong union would eventually provide for the kind of collective bargaining seen in Major League Baseball. This balance of power would reinforce the position of all riders, such that the UCI and team owners would no longer be able to conspire to, for example, force riders to ride when they are sick or collude to force down the market value of professional racers. The rider’s union would also be able to negotiate to protect the rights of participants so that they have adequate, unified representation for airing grievances and reaching compromises.

5) Finally, a new professional cycling oversight body or “league” must be formed:

With the playing field appropriately leveled to have unified rider representation, team and race organization alignment, governance changes and inter-agency agreements, professional road racing would be ready to spin off as a separate pro team sport. At this point in time, it would deserve its own governing body, dedicated to growth and long-term financial stability. It is time to consider the best way in which to make that change.

We therefore propose that the UCI should create a separate and free-standing affiliated multi-level pro cycling league, with a modified franchise format as discussed in Section II. The purpose of this entirely new organization would be to manage, oversee and grow professional road racing for both men and women. This separate organization would finally bring appropriate focus and dedicated resources to the task of growing the sport globally, governing the sport closely, and bringing parity to men and women who have dedicated their lives to the bicycle.

A proposed model for this organization could be loosely based on the relationship between the National Basketball Association (NBA), and the International Federation (Fédération Internationale de Basketball Amateur – “FIBA”). FIBA sets the global standards for basketball, overseeing the World Championships, as well as setting the international competitive rules of the game. FIBA is how most of the world experiences basketball, through development programs, nationally-affiliated amateur leagues, the Euro professional leagues, and pro leagues in Asia, Oceania, and South America.

The NBA and its affiliated leagues are on another level entirely – the pinnacle of the professional sport. The best athletes in FIBA strive to make it into the NBA. Its city-based franchises, licensing-based revenue model, players’ unions and exposure are what every player hopes to experience; an incredible visual experience of fast breaks, powerful dunks, and lightning fast changes in tempo. Each game is like a Classic; each playoff series like a Grand Tour.
FIBA and the NBA are closely intertwined, with agreements in place that help to identify talent, stage international competitions, and govern athletes. World Championships, which are contested by national teams, are held under FIBA’s competitive rules, but contain many NBA players. This is remarkably similar to UCI trade teams breaking ranks and riding for their national teams in the UCI World Championships.

While not a perfect marriage, the working relationship between FIBA and the NBA is strong enough that the organizations have globalized the sport, groomed talent, and elevated the game into a premier, multi-billion dollar entertainment source that grows year after year. This is a good model for a proposed pro cycling league to study and strive toward, despite the fact that it means breaking a lot of new ground.

Considerable progress could be made in the sport with the successful evaluation and implementation of even just some of the governance recommendations in our five key focal points. With this progress, the current executive leadership might find itself voted back for an extended period to continue the evolution that’s been started.

On the other hand, such a departure from cycling’s traditions is certain to ruffle the feathers of many people in the upper reaches of the UCI, teams, and the ranks of the former pro riders. Change is a necessity in any business, to adapt products to markets and adapt organizations to changing business environments. On both counts, cycling needs to step forward has and ensure that it continues to provide a product that audiences will be motivated to follow.

**Specific Recommendations:**

- Five key milestones must be achieved for cycling to evolve and enhance its governance and leadership model. And these objectives must be accomplished in step with the recommendations that come from truth and reconciliation, economics, and ethics committees proposed earlier.

- Modernize the UCI constitution. Convene an internally focused review of its governance and organizational structure, and propose realistic reforms that streamline, balance and modernize the UCI by-laws. This governance review process should be completed with a final set of policy decisions within an 18 to 24 month time frame, after which the UCI must put in place a more transparent executive committee that reviews and approves all future policy changes.

- Foster interagency agreements. The UCI must settle its disagreements and jurisdiction disputes with regulatory and federation agencies, with the goal of divesting drug testing, sanctioning, and appeals processes to trusted third parties.

- Strengthen and align objectives between the team and race organizations. The UCI must work with team and race executives to balance the racing calendar and adopt mutually beneficial strategies that ensure participation, build racing viewership, and improve the competitive suspense of the annual cycling calendar. This effort must study other successful sports business models to enhance the team focus in professional cycling, while building anticipation and importance into every race.

- Create a stronger and effective riders’ union. The UCI and its stakeholders must help the riders to build a professional union that balances the interests of the participants with progressive change in the sport’s
business model. The union – which may encompass men and women, or two separate groups – will elect representatives who will serve on various executive committees or other commissions that guide UCI policies.

- Spin off a professional cycling league. This league will be a related, but non-subsidiary group to the UCI, focused exclusively on professional road racing. This will allow cycling to achieve the final step towards parity with professional leagues in other global team sports. Ultimately, this new agency might move towards complete operational independence from the UCI. The charter for this proposed “pro league” must continue in the spirit of the UCI’s agreement with WADA to ensure fairness and equitable treatment for amateurs and professionals alike.

- Following adoption of all these sweeping governance reforms and other transformative changes to the sport by early 2016, the leadership of the UCI should then consider calling for new elections, as a means for the overall sport to ratify and reinforce the sweeping changes and advances which will hopefully be accomplished or well underway by that time.
Concluding Remarks:

Many of the issues and recommendations in this document have been discussed before, some of them repeatedly over the last few years. What we have done in this “roadmap” document is drill down to a deeper level of analysis regarding many of these topics, and provide detailed and actionable recommendations.

In one form or another, the sport of cycling desperately needs to find that perfect outer line to regain the head of the race, and use all of its internal and external resources to:

1. Wipe the historical slate clean;
2. Breathe new life into the business model through transformative economic incentives and business infrastructure;
3. Adopt an ethics-based regulatory model that enforces a system of harsher but equitable punitive measures; and
4. Create a new regulatory framework with stakeholder representation and passionate leadership to move the sport forward to greater heights.

The difference between cycling and many other team sports is its accessibility – the individual fan’s physical connection to it. Few people can afford to sit front row at Cowboy Stadium or Madison Square Garden, inches away from the action, or get the chance to mingle with their favorite players after a game. But they can do that in cycling. And we all have the ability to get on a bike and ride or compete at almost any age. With each pedal stroke we nurture a stronger connection to a more global peloton. Cycling’s participants and devotees collectively share a unique feeling that it is our sport. And we should all work now to try to heal and repair our sport.

Our goal in writing this document has been to spur more active and constructive debate. We believe that these proposals can help the UCI chart a path back from the brink and grow the sport into a global celebration of athletic ideals and exciting entertainment – helping to make our sport everyone’s sport.

We have no personal stake in this discussion other than wanting to see a beautiful sport restored to respectability, and for it to prosper in the future. As the philosopher and statesman Edmund Burke said, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

It is clear that approaching pro cycling’s dilemmas in a half-hearted or piecemeal way won’t solve the problems. The UCI must meet the challenge head-on and be brutally honest in its self-examination, and equally bold in terms of the solutions it devises. This time, change must be real, and must be transformational. This time, professional cycling has to make it stick.
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This report can also be downloaded from [www.theouterline.com](http://www.theouterline.com).

All photos by Steve Maxwell

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