

# Velo News <sup>1</sup>

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## *In search of relevance, a Cat. 3 turns to EPO and HGH*

By Matthew Beaudin

David Anthony tested positive at a gran fondo in New York in May. David Anthony didn't think they'd test him. It was a gran fondo, and he didn't win. He'd never been tested before. Why now?

"I knew there was going to be testing there. But I really did not think I was going to do well in that event, certainly not be tested," Anthony said. "I was a little bit shocked when I got the strong-arm of the chaperone."

Anthony later admitted using EPO after he tested positive in New York on May 20, at the Gran Fondo New York. He accepted his preliminary suspension on July 9 and was banned from racing for two years.

Of course, doping at a non-professional level is nothing new. In fact, the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency's suspension lists for cyclists include many more unknowns than stars. But why? Why cheat to win a Cat. 4 road race?

This is a story about a cheater. A man who loved to race his bike but slowly came to feel nothing at all on the bike, even when he won. This is the story of David Anthony.

### **Everything good about the sport**

Anthony began racing and training in 2009. He had that new-to-the bike joy and was consumed by the sport completely. He and a buddy, in the swirl of cycling. Everyone remembers those first moments of going fast on a bike, of feeling potential. Anthony was no different.

"We both kind of caught the bug together. It was awesome. It was fantastic. We were training like crazy. We got coaches. Everything that was good about the sport was happening to us," he said.

Anthony, who has a painfully analytical mind, took to the science of cycling as much as pedaling. He began to monitor his diet, to train harder and smarter. He won the Tour of the Battenkill in the Cat. 5 division. He was 42.

"And that momentum propelled me for a long time. That feeling of winning," Anthony said. "It was great."

He upgraded to a Cat. 4, but 2010 wasn't as easy as the year before. Anthony crashed while training in California, and another cyclist fell on him, crushing his collarbone, breaking a few ribs and fracturing his ankle.

"That whole year was up and down," Anthony recalls. "As I was coming back from that, when I was recovering, I was doing a lot of research. I started realizing that hematocrit was a big part of the equation."

Hematocrit, or the percentage of red blood cells in a given blood sample, has gained its notoriety as a benchmark in testing for blood manipulation. Naturally, Anthony's hematocrit value is in the low 40s. At the height of his blood manipulation, he was targeting a value of 52 or 53 — slightly above the 50-percent limit the UCI set in 1997.

To hear Anthony talk of the science of the sport is to hear an expert — someone so versed in its physiological aspects that it's startling, notably for an amateur racer. He rattles off the precise biology of the sport's most important physiological markers. It's an obsessive mind at work, and he says as much. It's what undid the single software developer.

Anthony looked into altitude training and other ways to boost his red blood cell count naturally, via a hypoxic machine.

“There was a pro from Jelly Belly who was selling his, and I ended up buying it. And I started using it. I was a [Cat.] 4. It was kind of ridiculous,” Anthony said. “That was sort of the begging to justify going in a bad direction.”

To suggest the idea of becoming faster consumed him is to vastly undersell Anthony's obsession with improvement. “It's more than that,” he said.

## **Upping your game**

In 2011, Anthony won another race as a Cat. 4, then joined a better team, and knew he would upgrade to a Cat. 3 soon, and he knew he wasn't anywhere near winning form.

“At that point, I'm like, ‘you know, you're not going to be that competitive,’ ” he told himself. “I was like, ‘you're going to need to up your game here.’ I was looking at everything. My equipment, my coaching, my training my eating. . . and I came across hormone replacement therapy.”

As the body ages, some of the hormones it produced when someone was younger taper off. Anthony was going to race against younger riders as a Cat. 3, and thought of hormone replacement therapy as a leveling of the field. He did his homework: there were zero side effects if Human Growth Hormone was used in a “normal” range, and it would help him recover from hard training efforts.

“I had this bad justification, which was, ‘all I'm doing is leveling the playing field,’ ” he said. Anthony worried his new team wouldn't keep him on the roster if he didn't produce results. He sought out HGH, which he said was easy to get. It cost about \$500 a month, but it was something Anthony was willing to pay.

“I noticed, right away, that I was recovering better,” he said. “I was using the tent, I had a higher hematocrit . . . I was able to train harder, and recover from those harder training days.

“It was this very slow progression of awfulness. That was the beginning of there being two Davids.”

The private David was doing HGH, and the public David was the guy who'd made the team, who had the great friends in the New York cycling scene.

In the offseason of 2010/2011, he trained like a pro. He had a CompuTrainer and upped his training stresses. He had a coach, but was reading every piece of training theory he could find . . . in his third year on the bike and as a Cat. 4. But the Tour of the Battenkill was looming.

“The HGH allowed me to really up my training stress. And then I won that race,” he said. “Even though I was doping on HGH, I still got, you know, some satisfaction out of that. Less than two years before, but I still felt pretty good.”

Then, Anthony upgraded to a Cat. 3.

“I was getting shelled as a three. I wasn't getting any results,” he said. “And that's when I started to look into the real stuff. The EPO.”

The human body secretes EPO, or erythropoietin, naturally when the body perceives a lack of oxygen in the blood. The chemical enters the bloodstream and eventually finds its way into bone marrow, which then sends a signal to produce more red blood cells, thus allowing the body to transport more oxygen and increase athletic performance.

“There were places it seemed like I could get it on the ‘net, but two things stopped me,” he said. “Number one, I was worried about having some sort of paper trail. I was very scared about that. The other thing I was worried about? How do I know this shit isn’t going to kill me?”

Anthony has since told the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency how — and where — he attained the drugs, but didn’t want to share with VeloNews because he was worried it would offer a roadmap to others. He did find EPO “through legal means,” he said.

Anthony began shooting the EPO into his belly fat. He was his own chemist and doctor, tinkering with dosages so that he could maintain a hematocrit in the low 50s. The dance between EPO and HGH was in step; with the EPO, he could train harder and with the HGH, he could recover faster and stronger. “It took a while to figure it all out,” he said. “There was no light-switch moment. But what did happen is that I could train more.”

And then, in the middle of the 2011 season in a race, the switch clicked. Anthony jumped in a breakaway with another rider, but eventually dispatched him and rode solo all the way to the line.

“I just stayed away for the entire race,” he said. “It was shocking. And everybody was like, ‘holy shit.’ All my friends, everybody else, was like, ‘holy shit.’

“And I was, too. I was, too.”

The next race was a hilly affair, but Anthony didn’t do anything special, landing a top 20.

“Let me put it to you this way: I’m classified as an all-rounder. So, what really happened was, I went up a few levels. And at the next level up, I was still an all-rounder,” he said. “I still struggled to make the selection at the next level up.”

## **This shit works**

Into the 2012 season, Anthony was primed. He’d done “a ton” of base training. Plus, thanks to a revelation in the wind tunnel, he’d found out he had a naturally aero body and position on the bike. A short version of the complicated calculus: due to the exponential quality, his advantage was enormous. His watts were up, and his drag was down. What’s that mean? Explosive time trial results.

“In my case, the EPO and the HGH were actually worth more,” he said. “I was like, ‘this shit works,’ and I was also freaked out. I never expected that. I thought I’d just be a little more relevant.”

To be more relevant, Anthony was spending \$1,000 a month.

The Tour of the Battenkill was near — the race he’d won twice before as a clean rider, the one that pulled him into the sport. “I could show you my files. I went over the deep end to prepare for this race,” Anthony said.

The finale came down to a five-man sprint.

“I sprinted out of this group, and I was like, ‘I’m going to die or I’m going to finish this race.’ And I won it. And I got to the end and felt absolutely nothing. I was trying to feel something. I wanted to feel that feeling that I had before. And it wasn’t there. It was completely empty.”

All the while, no one asked him about drugs. No one, he thought, suspected a thing. Anthony never told anyone.

When written out, the mere facts of Anthony's story are indicative of a deep obsession — something he said his personality lends itself to naturally. He was spending thousands on the drugs, was training under oxygen deprivation and racing three times a week as a Cat. 3. His best result while on the drugs was a 16th place in the Killington Stage Race's time trial in the Cat. 2 field, in late May of this year. He came into the sport weighing about 160 pounds. Three years later, he was tipping the scales around 144.

"By 2012, my entire life was in the service of racing. It was like, coach, power meters, tent, doping," Anthony said. "It was just off the deep end.

"The reality is that it was the most important thing to me in the world for whatever reason. I was willing to take drugs and inject them into my belly and do all sorts of other crazy, crazy shit to be the best athlete I could in that situation."

He received word he was to upgrade to a Cat. 2.

"My body was at the pinnacle of . . . it was at an amazing level. I was competitive at a Cat. 2 level," he said. "People were noticing. People were definitely noticing. And I'm feeling, like two inches tall."

It was then, he thought, that maybe people suspected something. Anthony still hadn't told a soul, and no one had ever asked him about it, either.

And then came the fondo. Anthony figured he would finish well out of suspicion, because he thought the field would be loaded. It wasn't. He finished fifth overall and won his category, based on his times up the climbs. And then came the chaperone. It had been five days since he'd last used EPO. It was the first time he'd ever been tested.

"I was thinking, 'boy, I wonder what's going to happen here,'" he said. "I'm scared, but I'm not that scared."

He went home, and then the clouds of doubt started to roll in.

"And now, I'm worried," he said. "I starting doing research. I spent the next five days deep, deep, deep into research."

He found a study that noted EPO stayed in the system for seven days.

"I knew I was at five. I was worried. I was pretty worried," Anthony said.

## **Folding cards**

The test came back positive. Anthony then hired an expert to watch the B sample's analysis. But something was tricky. The particular type of EPO Anthony was using had required a supplemental test to confirm the A test, and there wasn't enough urine for the extended analysis in the B sample. Anthony was on pins and needles. There was a high probability that the B sample wouldn't confirm the A test.

But his club knew . . . somehow.

"My team called me up," he said. "I thought about it for a while. Initially, I said that I was innocent, that they were wrong. I knew I was going to beat it. But I really couldn't live with myself. I was like, 'you know, it's very likely that I'm going to have to fight these guys for a couple months.' "

The thought of keeping it up was too much.

“I was like, ‘do you really want to be that guy who looks people in the eye and tells them a bold-faced lie?’ It’s one thing, you’re off on your own, shooting up some drugs, winning Cat. 3 races,” he said. “It’s another thing to tell people you’ve known, known for years, a lie.

“I said no. I folded my cards.”

## **Pariah is an understatement**

After his 16th in the Killington TT, Anthony broke his leg, in three places, in a club race in Central Park.

“I basically destroyed my leg,” he said. “So, I’m off the bike completely at this point, for a couple of years.”

The sport that pulled him in spit him out. He can’t ride, and if he could, he couldn’t race. Asked if he wished he had never raced a bike, Anthony said the jury was still out.

“To be determined on that one,” he said.

He hasn’t had many visitors. And only a few calls. The Internet is brimming with hate. Anthony accepts this now. There’s nothing he can do, anyways.

It’s been 65 days since he’s ridden a bike, and will be a lot longer than that until he can get back on one.

“There’s no justification for what I did,” Anthony said. “Over these three-and-a-half years, I got completely consumed by it. And I think that cycling is different. Somehow, it’s different than everything else. It rewards the obsessive, compulsive nature.

“It was a bunch of small justifications that end up in a big justification, and then a small kind of taking away of the pleasures,” Anthony said.

The only thing that was satisfying for him was making gains against himself — not even winning races.

What’s left now is Anthony, banged up and walking with a cane for six more weeks, out of the sport and reeling. He did not, over the course of an hours-long conversation, offer a defense for himself.

“It just slowly but surely sucks everything that’s good out of it,” he said of cheating. “I f—d up. I allowed myself to get to a place that is not acceptable . . . I did it. I own it. It’s mine. I’ve got the Scarlet Letter on my shirt.”

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Editor’s note: VeloNews reporter Matthew Beaudin sought out Anthony to discuss why he chose to cheat as an amateur. It was Anthony’s hope that if he told his story, others may choose not to dope.

## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup>[http://velonews.competitor.com/2012/08/news/in-search-of-relevance-a-cat-3-turns-to-epo-and-hgh\\_232611](http://velonews.competitor.com/2012/08/news/in-search-of-relevance-a-cat-3-turns-to-epo-and-hgh_232611)