

# BETWEEN THE LINES

March 10, 2017

## Sky High: Race of Truth in Cycling Doping Scandal

### Introduction

At BIA, we typically apply our proprietary Tactical Behavioral Assessment® (TBA™) methodology to analyze management teams' statements and provide insight into the completeness, transparency and confidence surrounding all types of business issues. However, in this edition of Between the Lines, we turn our behavioral lens to the cycling world, which is once again ensnared in a doping scandal. Britain's Team Sky is being investigated for a mysterious package delivered to Sir Bradley Wiggins during the final day of the 2011 Criterium du Dauphine race, which Sir Wiggins went on to win. The package's contents are now the subject of a UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) investigation. According to Team Sky, the package contained Fluimucil, a legal decongestant used to treat Sir Wiggins' asthma. However, the UKAD is currently investigating allegations that the package actually contained the banned corticosteroid Triamcinolone. Though Sir Wiggins later received an exemption allowing him to take Triamcinolone, he was not allowed to take it in 2011. BIA took a closer look at a video interview with Team Sky general manager Sir Dave Brailsford to see what our methodology could reveal about the package's contents and Team Sky's future.

### Wethinks the Sir Doth Protest Too Much, Package Likely Contained Banned Substance

In a January 2017 interview with BBC, Team Sky boss Sir Brailsford is asked two times whether he has provided any paperwork to prove that the 2011 package contained Fluimucil. He repeatedly attempts to give the impression that he and Team Sky have been completely forthcoming and cooperative with the UKAD investigation, stating that "we've provided all of the evidence" and "I've given them everything I've got." However, he never really answers the question either time. (Spoiler alert: his failure to answer questions is a recurring theme in this interview!) Sir Brailsford's repeated inability to say that he has provided the paperwork to prove that the package contained Fluimucil indicates that he does not have that paperwork, likely because the paperwork does not exist.

Sir Brailsford is also asked about UKAD chairman David Kenworthy's statements that the evidence the committee has seen is "extraordinary" and that the contents of the medical package were "very disappointing." Sir Brailsford immediately issues what BIA calls an "attack," a highly concerning behavior, in an attempt to discredit Mr. Kenworthy. "The only extraordinary thing I could see is the fact that he actually commented on the whole process himself" while the investigation is still underway. "The chair of the organization to discuss the actual contents of that investigation... that's the extraordinary thing in my mind." Sir Brailsford also says that he has given everything to the "right people," insinuating that any information shared outside of the legal process in suspect. This is an attempt to "paint the halo" around himself while further discrediting Mr. Kenworthy and his statements. Sir Brailsford's focus on discrediting Mr. Kenworthy instead of addressing the allegations against Team Sky suggests that he is unable to refute the allegations. Altogether, the inability to say that he has the Fluimucil paperwork and the efforts to discredit, but not refute, the allegations against Team Sky provide strong behavioral evidence that the package did not contain Fluimucil, but a banned substance.

### Is Resignation Around the Bend for Brailsford?

When asked whether he has considering resigning, Sir Brailsford once again does not answer the question. Instead, he uses a string of what BIA calls "protest statements," attempting to bolster his credibility and give the impression that he has no reason to resign: "I'm proud of what I've done... I've been doing this for twenty years and I'm very much focused on the season coming ahead." However, if he were

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not considering resigning, he likely would have just said so. He also exhibits a significant nonverbal behavior that BIA calls an “anchor point shift,” shifting his body in his seat while saying that “continu[ing] to win races, that’s what I’m focused on.” His movement during this phrase provides behavioral evidence to suggest that he has concerns about whether he will actually be around in the upcoming season. Sir Brailsford’s verbal and nonverbal behaviors indicate that he has felt some pressure to resign.

### **Froome Won’t be Brailsford’s Knight in Black Spandex**

Over the past few months, members of Team Sky have come out on social media backing their coach and defending the team. Notably absent from this public relations push is Chris Froome, Team Sky’s top racer and three-time Tour de France champ. And when asked about his general manager in January, Mr. Froome declined to comment. In this interview, Sir Brailsford is twice asked whether the lack of support from Mr. Froome is disappointing and undermines his leadership. Does he answer this question either time? Not at all! Instead, he attempts to excuse Mr. Froome’s lack of public comments in several different ways, saying that “he doesn’t need to be put in that situation, it’s not for him to answer” and “what we want to do, and he wants to do, is cement his place as one of the legends in the sport... we’re planning now on our strategy for this year.” These are all efforts to convince viewers that there is no animosity between them and that they will work together to have a winning season. However, Sir Brailsford’s failures to answer suggest that Chris Froome, and perhaps Team Sky as an organization, does not support him, which adds behavioral evidence to conclude that Sir Brailsford will not be around in the upcoming season.

Video interview source: <http://www.bbc.com/sport/cycling/39122401>