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Subject: Press Release: Gea Johnson, Suspended for 21 Months for Out-Of-Competition Use of Stimulant, Responds To AAA Decision

Phoenix, AZ (July 7, 2017) – The American Arbitration Association issued its decision suspending masters cyclist Gea Johnson from competition from August 10, 2016 through May 9, 2018 for her use of the stimulant Nuvigil out-of-competition. Although Nuvigil is only banned in-competition, Ms. Johnson’s out-of-competition usage of the stimulant caused an in-competition positive test on August 10, 2016.

In issuing its decision, the AAA Panel found that:

- Gea Johnson last used Nuvigil more than 72 hours prior to the competition at which she tested positive;
- When Gea Johnson used Nuvigil, she knew that it was only banned in competition;
- The taking of Nuvigil itself did not constitute a violation, but rather, it was returning to competition earlier than when the last traces of the substance had cleared her system.
- Gea Johnson’s use of Nuvigil was unrelated to sport performance; and,
- The lack of scientific evidence on clearance times for Nuvigil would have made it difficult for Gea Johnson to determine how many days prior to competition she would have needed to stop using Nuvigil to avoid a positive test. The only studies available to a similar product (as determined by USADA) shows the substance to completely clear in 48 to 72 hours; Gea’s last use was more than 72 hours which should have been sufficient based on the scientific evidence available.

In responding to the AAA decision, Gea Johnson stated as follows:

“I am pleased that the Arbitration Panel agreed that I could not have known that my use of Nuvigil more than 3 days before a competition could have caused me to test positive at that competition; and that my out-of-competition use of Nuvigil was unrelated to any possible sport performance. This has been a very difficult and stressful ordeal, and I look forward to returning to competition as soon as possible, but I wish the punishment had been more fitting to the circumstances.

The revelation of this whole affair is that the classification of some substances as being only banned in-competition is a misnomer and a trap for athletes, when even out-of-competition use of these substances can result in a lengthy sanction, even where it is clear that there was no cheating attempted or achieved. Unfortunately, the concept of “cheating” has been so highly demonized, that few will ever investigate the details to see that my particular sanction was excessive and unfair.”

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