Beat: Business

Rabobank quits as pro cycling sponsor over doping scandal

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USPA News - Rabobank said Friday it will stop sponsoring professional cycling teams at the end of this year following the publication of a report on the use of banned substances in the sport. The Dutch bank said it will continue to sponsor amateur cycling.

Bert Bruggink, member of Rabobank`s Managing Board, made the announcement during a press conference in the Dutch city of Utrecht. "It is with pain in our heart, but for our bank it was an inevitable decision," he said. "We have been active in cycling for 17 years, full of conviction and in my opinion a good story." The bank said last week`s report by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency USADA was the last straw. "The report is shocking and has caused a lot commotion," Bruggink said. "We are shocked by the many details which the report comes with, the widespread practice in many quarters of the sport are based on sworn statements issued by those directly involved." Last week`s USADA report into the Lance Armstrong doping scandal revealed the U.S. Postal Service Pro Cycling Team ran the "most sophisticated, professionalized and successful" doping program that sport has ever seen. The evidence was overwhelming with sworn testimony from 26 people, including 15 riders. "Cycling is a beautiful sport, which millions of Dutch people enjoy and a large number of those Dutch people are clients of Rabobank," Bruggink said. "But our decision stands: we are pulling out of professional cycling. It is painful. Not just for Rabobank, but especially for the enthusiasts and the cyclists who are not to blame in this." In a country where millions of people cycle routinely, Rabobank previously saw the sport as a good fit with the company and its clients. The Dutch bank said it remains committed to developing Dutch cycling talent in a fair and clean manner, and Rabobank will continue to meet its obligations under existing contracts. "We are no longer convinced that the international cycling world is able to achieve a clean and fair sport on its own," Bruggink said. "We don`t have the confidence that this will reverse in the foreseeable future, and our decision is therefore final. We are withdrawing from the professional cycling sport."

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