



Sometimes the best weapon is trust. This was certainly the case for Annie Birchgrove in the famous ^{murder} case of 1998. A superb athlete, Annie had it all. She was the Australian four hundred metres hurdle champion and she was ~~or~~ becoming a household name. ~~The~~ At just nineteen years of age, the similarities between herself and new star Jana Pittman were uncanny. As Pittman trains for Athens in 2006, Annie was preparing for the commonwealth games of 1998.

Annie was having the time of her life.

She didn't know it was to be the last moments.

Annie Birchgrove was found ^{on} dead in her apartment, the morning of the Australian Championships. At 9:02am - Dr David Poyle found her



dead ~~when~~ he searched for her after she had not reported for urinal extraxtment for pre-race drug testing. At 9:04 am Doyle found her in bed. By 9:05 am he had confirmed to himself - that the former track queen was dead. Her dreams had been shattered.

After applying suitable latex gloves to his hands, Doyle quickly examined her for signs of murder. However he found nothing. No struggle. No wounds. No sign of suicide. No note. Not even a scratch.

It was then Dr David Doyle ~~to~~ caught the smell of her breath. Doyle hadn't been practising medicine within Athletics Australia for twelve years without learning anything.

What he smelt was the unmistakable
whiff of erythropoietin, the performance
enhancing drug commonly referred to as
the "better-dead-than-second" drug or simply
as EPO. EPO ~~para~~ stimulates the production
of red blood cells which carry oxygen
around the body. This ~~also~~ helps the
muscles to function more effectively and
efficiently. It can be administered
orally or externally and has the danger
of making the blood gluey, causing
clotting or possibly thrombosis. A harmful
drug. A drug which Doyle could not
believe Annie would ever use. Her
drug tests had all been negative and
she only had one rival in her race.
The world was her oyster.

It was then, that Dr David Doyle ~~re~~
remembered the type of people that



take EPO.

marathon runners.

Road racing cyclists.

Long distance swimmers.

Athletes who competed in endurance events.

Not sprinters.

Certainly not Annie Birchgrove.

What he had been afraid of, became clear.

~~It ~~was~~ dawned on him.~~ Annie Birchgrove had been murdered.

Who could have done it. Most men would have called the police. But as the athletics meet was at Card Howe Island, assistance wouldn't be coming for a while. Doyle had to solve this one himself. The prime suspect had to be her closest rival in the race, the ~~most~~ recently naturalized Turk, Irena Ulhak.



"Irena, I was wondering if I could ask you a couple of questions" said Doyle once he had found Irena.

"Sure" she replied, "but make it quick, the race is quite soon."

"Annie Birchgrove was murdered last night"

"That's terrible news" she said aghast. "Do you know who did it?"

"I was hoping you might be able to help me with that problem actually."

"You don't think I had anything to do with it?"

"I have to consider all possibilities" replied Doyle. "Where were you at 6pm last night?"

"~~Went to~~ I was on a walk to relieve back tension"

"Did anyone see you?"

"Not that I can remember" she replied.

"Actually" she continued "I remember

Seeing Annie's coach, Ronald ~~is~~ on my travels! But you have to believe me, I might be competitive on the track, but competitive enough to kill?" No way."

"Alright" said Doyle "I may ask you some questions later."

Doyle left her because he had a new suspect.

Ronald Richmond saw Doyle approaching from a distance. "I've heard the news, I saw Irene, I'm pretty cut at the moment, so could we keep this short?"

"Certainly," Doyle replied. "Where were you at 6pm last night?"

"I was watching Basic Instinct with my wife ~~is~~ on TV between 5pm and 8pm."

"And she can confirm that?" said a puzzled Dr Doyle.



"She certainly can. Look, I'm not a murderer and it would be a mistake to think so. ~~I'm leaving~~ ^{this island. It is too distressing.}"
That ended their conversation.

Sitting down Doyle ~~at~~ chewed on the facts. Annie was dead at 6pm. Mrs Richmond had confirmed Ronald was with her at the stated time. He could not have been the murderer. ~~By~~ It could be Irena, but she ~~is~~ was a lovely girl. He put that idea on the backburner as well.

Then it hit him.

He rushed to the airport. After ^a conversation with a security officer, a run across the tarmac, and the entry of a plane, the murderer of Annie Birchgrove had been caught.



A week later Doyle was thinking about the events that had ~~transpired~~ transpired. Since EPO was taken orally ~~Annie~~ and there was no sign of struggle, Annie must have taken it ~~unwittingly~~ unknowingly. Doyle had assumed as it turned out to be correct, that the EPO was in the food. Ron had given her the food. Ronald had used her trust in him as a coach to fool her ~~and murder her~~ into killing herself.

He never had a motive.

He had taken her on trust.