

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The use of drugs in sport is a result of decisions made by individual athletes and their advisers. These decisions are made in the context of prevailing community attitudes and perceptions on a wide range of issues which, in turn, are affected by many factors. Not the least of these are the role played by sport in the national ethos and the complex interrelationships that exist between politics, sport and national prestige. The purpose of this introduction is to provide an historical perspective on some of these issues and to identify the major social and political factors that have helped lead to the development of what is a major problem in sport today.

SPORT IN ANCIENT GREEK SOCIETY

1.2 Athletes selected to participate in the Olympic Games represent an elite among those engaging in sporting activities. They both mirror and internalise the attitudes towards sport current in the society of which they are part.

1.3 Athletes successfully participating in the ancient Greek Olympics were seen by their society as harbingers of good fortune. Their victories were signs of favour from the capricious gods. They not only gained personal prestige, having their names and deeds inscribed in the temples of the polis that sponsored them and having statues made in their image, they also got more negotiable rewards. Large jars of olive oil, cattle, hard coin or even a pension for life provided at municipal expense, were awarded victorious athletes. Like modern footballers they were

often recruited by city-states which were rich but without an acknowledged cultural heritage. To procure winners, towns built luxurious training facilities and provided baths and all-meat diets for their trainees. Sponsors offered huge cash bonuses and bribed judges. Towns holding athletic contests vied for the money tourists spent.¹

1.4 Even in ancient times elite athletes were given strong economic incentives to succeed. Their trainers developed their own special workouts and diets and athletes ingested substances they believed would augment their physical capabilities. Charmis, the winner of the 200m sprint in the Olympic Games of 668 BC, was said to have had a special diet of dried figs. In Ancient Egypt the rear hooves of an Abyssinian ass, ground up, boiled in oil and flavoured with rose petals and rose hips was the prescription recommended to improve performance.²

SPORT IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY EUROPE

1.5 The notion that the Olympic Games would be the venue where the natural athletes of the world would compete peacefully on the playing field rather than meeting violently on the battle-ground, reflected an attitude towards sport which was current in some circles in the late nineteenth century. Baron de Coubertin, who revived the Olympic Games in 1896 after a gap of nearly 1,500 years, was impressed by the integration of sports into the curriculums of English upper-class preparatory schools. He believed that Anglo-Saxon education produced a balance between educating the body and the mind. Thus he imported into thinking about the Olympic Games the aristocratic perception of the gifted amateur athlete. The most vivid representation of this notion for modern audiences was that conveyed in the recent film Chariots of Fire.

1.6 Baron De Coubertin was also influenced by late nineteenth century liberal internationalism. This movement saw world peace and disarmament as being attainable by rational negotiation between nations in international forums, and gave rise to the Hague Court and eventually the League of Nations. It was responsible for the development of international law and the proliferation of peace societies throughout Europe, Australia and parts of Asia in the period before the 1914-18 war. The modern Olympic Games were conceived as a tool for international relations.³

SPORT AND TWENTIETH CENTURY NATIONALISM

1.7 The Olympic Games, however, mirrored the international politics of the twentieth century which were dominated more by the fierce rivalries of nation-states than by harmonious international co-operation envisaged by liberal internationalists. Modern athletes are seen as representatives of their country rather than individual achievers, and their national flag is flown and their national anthem is played as they receive their medals. Hitler's 1936 Berlin Olympics was perhaps the most blatant example of the use of the Olympics to demonstrate nationalist aspirations.⁴

1.8 Today, as in Ancient Greece, the elite athlete is given strong economic incentives to succeed. In giving evidence before this Committee on 21 November 1988, Mr J D Coates, Vice-President of the Australian Olympic Federation, strongly resisted the notion that the Olympic Federation was seeking natural athletes:

We are way past amateurism. The word does not exist and it has not been in the Olympic charter since 1972. The Olympic Games is all about the high performance athlete, and we are all about providing as much assistance to achieve high performance as possible, which is a long way from just letting someone go out there and run on his natural ability.⁵

1.9 The intense pressure placed on athletes as professional representatives of their nation, combined with the development of medical and pharmaceutical knowledge throughout the twentieth century, led some athletes to experiment with drugs which were perceived to enhance their performance. In the 1904 Olympic marathon at St Louis, Mr Thomas Hicks was helped to victory the use use of brandy and possibly strychnine. Similarly, Mr Dorando Pietri was also suspected of taking strychnine in the 1908 Olympic Marathon in London. Heroin, cocaine and caffeine were widely used, sometimes with fatal effects, and were uncontrolled until the first Dangerous Drugs Act in Britain in 1920 required that drugs such as opium and cocaine be supplied only on prescription. While this reduced the availability of many drugs, many more such as laudanum were available 'over the counter'. The production of amphetamine-like stimulants in the thirties heralded a new era of doping in sport. The development of stimulants flourished during the second world war.⁶ The Germans were said to have injected testosterone to improve the aggression of special troops.⁷

SPORT AND THE 'COLD WAR'

1.10 In the 1950s two new elements were introduced into international sport, one political, the other medical. The participation of the Soviet Union in the 1952 Helsinki Games after an absence of forty years, introduced the question of 'state amateurism'. Differences in national socio-economic systems are reflected in the Olympic Games. In the Soviet Union and the nation-states of Eastern Europe, the pattern of social and economic relations is carried out by and for the state; thus the state is the financier. Among nations where the market mechanism prevails, such as the United States, state financing is held to a minimum. In each case the pattern of Olympic financing is handled in a similar fashion. In 1952 these two systems confronted each other at the Olympic Games at the height of cold

war tensions. Many in the west felt that the Soviet and East European athletes were not true amateurs because they were completely supported by their governments. The Soviet Union and East European governments objected to this interpretation, stating that their athletes were employed in other pursuits, military or academic, and in any case received no remuneration for their sport competition and victories. Mr Avery Brundage, the American president of the International Olympic Committee from 1952 - 1972, scoffed at the American objections, and pointed out that most American athletes were actually supported by universities solely for their athletic ability, a system that, according to Mr Brundage, was essentially no different from state support.⁸

1.11 Despite this defence, Mr Brundage's presence as President for the next twenty years reflected the changed power structure in the world, as did the inclusion of the Soviet Union on the Olympic Committee and in the Games. This great-power rivalry remained a factor in the Olympic Games system.⁹

1.12 The question of state amateurism remained. The most common argument for paying athletes for time spent preparing for the Games was that the athlete was 'like a soldier defending his country's athletic reputation'.¹⁰ Even Mr Brundage could not resist some nationalistic sentiment. After the strong Soviet showing in the 1956 Winter Games he warned the United States that if it hoped to meet the Russian challenge it must alter its concept of amateur sports. 'It is against the Olympic idea to throw one nation against another', he argued, 'but we cannot ignore the fact that Russia is putting tremendous emphasis on the development of its athletes'.¹¹

1.13 The American response to this challenge was the development of anabolic steroids. While in Vienna in 1956 Dr John Zeigler discovered from the Soviet team's physician that Soviet athletes were using male hormones to increase their weight and

power. In conjunction with the Ciba Pharmaceutical Company, Zeigler developed anabolic steroids for use by weightlifters.¹² Athletes who use steroids do so because they expect to increase their muscle mass and strength.

1.14 The use of drugs in sport increased through the 1950s. In 1958 the American Medical Association surveyed over 400 trainers and coaches and found that over a third had personal experience of stimulants and only 7 per cent knew nothing about them. The death of Danish cyclist Mr Knud Jensen at the 1960 Rome Olympics after he had taken amphetamine and nicotinyl tartrate increased pressure on the International Olympic Committee, particularly from the International Federation of Sports Medicine, to take immediate action to ban the use of drugs in sport.¹³

1.15 It was not until after the death of cyclist Mr Tommy Simpson during the 1967 Tour de France, the first doping death to be televised, that the International Olympic Committee took action. The following year they set up a medical commission, introduced anti-doping legislation and random doping tests for all competitions at the 1968 Winter and Summer Olympics. To avoid detection athletes turned to a much wider range of drugs.

1.16 Steroids were not among the drugs banned in 1968. The technology to test for them had not been developed until the Commonwealth Games held in Christchurch, New Zealand, in January 1974. They were then added to the banned list by the International Olympic Federation.¹⁴

AUSTRALIA AND INTERNATIONAL SPORT: THE MONTREAL OLYMPICS, 1976

1.17 The full implications of Australia's lack of financial support for international sport were not fully brought home to the Australian public until the 1976 Montreal Olympics. The Melbourne Herald of 22 July 1976 contrasted the meagre funding

and facilities available to Australian athletes with those provided to athletes representing other countries. It reported Australian water polo coach Tom Hoad as saying:

... you won't find many from Australia there in future Olympics without an acceptance that the Olympics are now professional.

We can join the system and compete on something closer to equal footing. Or we can stay amateur and forget about medals ... Everybody is putting 10 times as much money into winning as Australia.

1.18 The defeat of swimmer Mr Stephen Holland, who gained third place in the 1500 metres freestyle on 21 July, prompted the Australian to predict that it would be 'certain to trigger a series of bitter recriminations against the Australian sporting establishment'. Experienced Australian athletes, it reported, complained that the establishment was 'isolated from the mainstream of world sports, ... parsimonious restrictive and obsolete'. It quoted Mr John Coates, the then manager of the rowing team as saying: 'If we do win through to a gold medal then will be almost in spite of the Olympic Federation'. Referring to the use of steroids and red blood cell transfusions by East German athletes the Australian said:

Australian athletes want no part of this system, but when this Olympiad is over they will speak out on the need for more imaginative sporting associations, and a totally recast Olympic Federation that is aware of the intense training methods used abroad.

They want the sporting establishment to arrange training camps, to be more aggressive in using money to fund overseas competition trips.¹⁵

1.19 Mr Syd Grange, then Vice-President of the Australian Olympic Federation and secretary of the Australian Swimming Union, laid the blame on the lack of large-scale funding either

from governments or sponsors.¹⁶ Federal Cabinet Ministers had taken time off to watch Mr Stephen Holland's race on television, reported the Sun Herald on 25 July, in the vain hope that his win would take the heat out of 'the growing public disquiet at the dramatic decline in Australia's Olympic performances'. On 20 May, it pointed out, the Treasurer had foreshadowed the establishment of a sports review Committee to investigate ways of Government support for Australian sport, and the then Minister for the Environment, Housing and Community Affairs, Mr Newman, had recently revealed that his Government was studying ways of injecting more money into sport and looking at plans to sponsor a national sports institute. Only 20 of the 250 Australian contingent appeared at a meeting with then Australian Prime Minister, Mr Malcolm Fraser, when he appeared in Montreal, and the reception 'turned into a debate with the Prime Minister arguing against regimentation and an over-emphasis on winning', reported the Australian on 26 July 1976.

1.20 The Federal Government announced that it would hold an official inquiry into Australia's performance at the Montreal Olympics and would require the Australian Olympic Federation and the Australian Sports Council (the body responsible for advising the Minister for Tourism and Recreation on sporting matters) to supply extensive reports on what went wrong, reported the Australian on 27 July 1976. The Duke of Edinburgh, speaking on a Canadian radio station, criticised this decision by the Australian Government as 'deplorable' and 'pathetic'.¹⁷ The proposed inquiry was abandoned in favour of a broader inquiry into welfare services and community-based programs in health, welfare and community development.¹⁸

1.21 A foundation comprising representatives of 26 Australian sports organisations represented at the Montreal Olympics was established at a meeting in Sydney on 8 September 1976. Its aim was to secure funding for better training facilities for future Olympic Games teams.¹⁹ The following month the establishment of a

sports medicine clinic in Adelaide was announced. It was modelled on the Lewisham Hospital Sports Medicine Clinic, opened in Sydney in 1972.²⁰

1.22 While all the newspapers commenting on the Australian presence at the Montreal Olympics over the period from late April to late September 1976 expressed disappointment and even alarm at the team's poor medal tally, they all blamed the structure and funding of sporting activities in Australia. As Mr Terry Vine, a Courier Mail journalist covering the Games in Montreal concluded:

... change is coming. Revolution is on the way, a quiet revolution that has an ominous message for the government. The three million sports people in Australia are gradually banding together ... They are paying something like \$35 million a year in sales tax on sporting goods in this country and they are now thinking in terms of getting some of that back ... But government aid is only part of the problem. The Federal Government could pour \$100 million a year into sport for the next four years and apart from providing excellent facilities, which we sorely need, it would achieve very little.

The other part of this problem is the administration of the sports themselves. That, too, must be revised on professional lines. The truly amateur days are gone forever. The quicker we realise that, the better.²¹

SPORT AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: THE MOSCOW OLYMPICS, 1980

1.23 The inappropriateness of Baron De Coubertin's liberal internationalist vision of the Olympic Games in the second half of the twentieth century was forcefully brought home to the Australian public by the 1980 Moscow Olympics. The intense public debate engendered by the Australian government's attempt to involve Australian athletes and sporting organisations in a US-led boycott in protest against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, demonstrated clearly the extent to which the modern

Olympic Games had become a part of international politics in general, and of great-power rivalry in particular.

1.24 On 23 May 1980 the Australian Olympic Federation voted 6-5 in favour of attending the Games, although it told individual competitors that they could withdraw if they wished. Several leading athletes and a number of major sponsors did boycott the Games, but eventually 127 athletes and approximately 46 officials attended.²² Australians won two gold, two silver and five bronze medals, despite the tensions and uncertainty which preceded their departure for the Games.²³

1.25 Although testing of athletes at the Games revealed no incidents of drug taking, the chairman of the medical commission told a press conference that the technical impossibility of testing for testosterone cast doubt on these findings. He admitted that many athletes may have temporarily discontinued the use of anabolic steroids during the Games.²⁴ The Bulletin of 5 August 1980 described the 1980 Games as 'the Junkie Olympics' Mr Robert Darroch commented:

There is hardly a medal-winner at the Moscow Games, certainly not a gold-medal winner, who is not on one sort of drug or another: usually several kinds. The Moscow Games might as well have been called the Chemists' Games, for in many events it will not be the athlete who is naturally the strongest or fastest who wins, but the athlete with the best bag of drugs. ... The Moscow Olympics have brought the scandal of drug-cheating out of the locker rooms and into the open, or at least into the shadows of the daylight.

THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF SPORT

1.26 The poor performance of Australian athletes at the Edmonton Commonwealth Games in 1978, at least as measured by the medal tally, had given additional impetus to political pressure to improve funding and facilities for elite athletes. The

establishment of a sports training institute was the solution most favoured. This goal was finally realised when the establishment of a National Sports Training Institute in Canberra, was announced by the then Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Bob Ellicott, on 25 January 1980.²⁵

1.27 The Australian Institute of Sport commenced operations in Canberra in January 1981 with eight sports - soccer, basketball, gymnastics, netball, swimming, tennis, track and field and weightlifting - involving some 155 athletes, 12 coaches and seven administrators. Funding in 1980/81 was approximately \$1 million. Mr Don Talbot was appointed as the first Executive Director and he took up the position in October 1980.

1.28 The establishment of the Institute was intended to place Australian athletes in a position to compete successfully in international events. Involvement in international competition, however, meant that they had to reach performance levels set internationally. It appeared to many athletes and coaches that such levels, particularly in power events, were being attained only by the use of drugs. The onus was on the Institute to assist their athletes to achieve these standards by other methods.

DRUG CONTROL

1.29 Mr John Coates, Vice President of the Australian Olympic Federation, told the Committee on 21 November 1988 that it would be futile to expect countries to abandon doping unilaterally. An analogy was drawn with international disarmament. He believed random testing for drug use was necessary both at the time of international events and in the period leading up to them. Constitutional guarantees of civil rights in countries like the USA have the potential to make the enforcement of random testing by the International Olympic Committee extremely difficult.²⁶ A decision by a Californian court in 1988, for example, found that the Californian Constitution's provision of 'an inalienable

right' to privacy prevented the National Collegiate Athletic Association from enforcing its drug testing program on athletes at Stanford University. If confirmed in the Californian Supreme Court this decision, while not setting a precedent in other states, would certainly be referred to in appeals in other states.²⁷ In Australia this problem is handled by having athletes selected to compete sign an agreement permitting the tests to be carried out and the results to be communicated to the sporting Federation.

1.30 Just as was the case with Olympic athletes of Ancient times, modern elite athletes are admired and emulated by the society which has produced and assisted them. The Olympic Federation is acutely aware of the social impact of drug-taking among its national heroes. As Mr Coates told the Committee:

Our athletes that we take to the Olympics are the role model for young children in sport and I think it would be very wrong for us to give any imprimatur to the use of drug taking in sport when every little kid was glued to the television for 18 hours a day and might choose to take up sport because of what they had seen Duncan Armstrong achieve and if they believed that Duncan Armstrong achieved that with the use of drugs, then they might willy-nilly follow suit. We have got a great responsibility in that area.²⁸

1.31 Elite athletes, however, are not just leaders of public opinion, they also mirror it. Thus in any society which values winning at any cost, and in which the use of drugs for recreational and other non-medical purposes is widespread, the pressures on individual athletes to improve their performance by any means available will remain intense.

1.32 The dilemma confronting modern athletes was clearly stated by Mr Charlie Francis, coach of banned Canadian sprinter Mr Ben Johnson. Speaking before a Canadian inquiry established after Mr Johnson had tested positive for steroids following his

gold-medal win at the Seoul Olympics in September 1988, Mr Francis said that he believed all the world's athletes, even those who had used drugs, would like to see sport free from them:

They didn't do it by choice, they did it under pressure because it's clear steroid use is extremely widespread and athletes can't achieve top performances without taking steroids. All the athletes of the world would like a level playing field.

1.33 Drawing an analogy between great-power confrontation and sport he added:

The United States and the Soviet Union cannot have disarmament talks if they both deny they have any nuclear weapons. Somehow it has to come out on the table and people have to recognise what's going on out there ... admit that the levels of performance that are going on are not possible without performance-enhancing substances, and get on with the process of trying to make some changes.

1.34 Verification for 'drug disarmament' was a great problem as testing after competitions is currently inefficient and ineffective, Mr Francis believed. For Canada to institute random testing on its own athletes while other nations continued cheating would invite 'the athletic equivalent of being nuked. You don't remove your nuclear weapons and hope that everyone else will follow suit', he told the inquiry.²⁹

1.35 Any solution to the problem of drugs in sport must look beyond the small group of elite athletes and attempt to deal with current attitudes towards sport, and towards the use of drugs to solve problems and achieve goals, in society as a whole. In particular it must take note of the role that the media, politicians and sports administrators play in articulating and giving effect to these attitudes, not only in Australia but in all countries involved in top-level international competition.

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3. Richard D Mandell, op. cit., pp. 201-2
4. Richard Espy, The Politics of the Olympic Games, University of California Press, Berkley, 1979, p. ix and 163
5. Evidence p. 356
6. Tom Donohoe, Neil Johnson, op. cit., pp. 3-5
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