



PREVENTING AND FIGHTING DOPING IN SPORTS

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Abstract

The problem of using illegal substances for boosting sports performance is one of the major concerns of factors that must reduce the tendency of athletes of considering winning the primal goal above fair-play and fairness.

Doping is a very fast developing issue that has constantly been on the minds of specialists, as medicine, biochemistry, law, sports training and psychology sciences have evolved. In consequence, specialists must have the skills that allow them to pass on helpful information to sportsman.

An active involvement in sports life demands everyone who is involved in training athletes to constantly participate to each campaign success and actions aimed at enforcing the right attitude towards doping.

Keywords: *doping, preventing, doping control, fighting doping.*

JEL classification: I25, I18, I26

Introduction

“Etymology shows that doping derives from the Dutch word “doop”, as described in 16th century dictionaries. Attempts to enhance and stimulate power, strength and will for winning date back to the Roman Empire who held contests between gladiators and winners tried everything in order to win. Records demonstrate that in horse and carriage races the drivers would take a special potion (wine + honey) which gave them a certain raised level of power and aggression.” (Dragan, 2002, p. 321)

Modern day doping phenomena begins in the early 20th century. Between 1900 and 1936 in Japan sportsman would use blood flow enhancing substances and coronary boosters. During the Second World War, amphetamines were used to artificially keep soldiers mentally well-toned. German pilots who had the task of performing nocturnal air strikes received these substances before missions to increase their vigilance and aggression. From here to sports, using performance enhancing substances was just a formality. After the wars, when sports retook a normal course, doping really took off: amphetamines, anti-depressive medication, simpatico mimetic drugs and cardio-respiratory painkillers – all used by athletes out of their own will or by following field assistants’ advice (trainers, coaches, medics, masseurs, etc.)

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In that period of time, anti-doping rules were inexistent and the lack of specialized detection and study laboratories from around the world favored the use of substances in a risky way.

“Olympic check-ups were introduced in 1972 at Munchen and were applied to conventional substances; first official check-up for anabolic steroids was introduced in 1976 in Montreal when a number of gold winners (mostly heavy lifting contest winners) lose their prizes a month after the games are over all this leading to numerous debates and an IOC specification that all doping test results to be made public within the competition environment, except for tests run in the past 2 days.” (Vâjâială, 2002, p.243)

This event marked the beginning of an open campaign. On one side there are those who through great material resources find new substances which are not already on the official watch list and on the other side the official entities that find about these new chemicals and put them on the list for future testing. It is obvious that between these operations a 4 to 6 years period exists (see testosterone, diuretics tests), a long enough period for those who are willing and determined to cheat on events. The introduction of non-competition doping tests marks a new milestone in the general anti-doping campaign, worldwide. (1989)

Factors that lead to the use of forbidden substances

This tendency to take drugs and cheat, deceive, trick and lie fellow athletes, officials, spectators is deeply rooted in human beings' lack of control and morality as well as in the cultural, social and economic environments.

A first aspect regards a sportsman personality; tendency to cheat and reasons for doing this vary widely both in origins and as behavioral learning.

A second aspect involves characteristics tied to modern day sports, which are professional, commercially-orientated and focused on performance and spectacle and not the human component, this last part being an easy target for owners, sponsors, mass-media and fans.

A third aspect is the society itself, with its modern traits in which the run for a podium finish creates false myths and heroes in which unusual performance are propagated and in which the human condition itself becomes a merchandise (sportsmen are properties of sport club owners).

Finally, the emotional environment in which an athlete lives combined with his / her sport ambience and socio-cultural is also an important factor. To individual tendencies to show his/ her skills, performance and prestige this tremendous pressure adds to create a desperate and intense need for performance above everything else mostly because high performance means spectacle which draws in



numerous crowds where commercials on different products are displayed by the use of athlete gear or in front of the TV where commercially intended materials are shown not only during breaks but also during the event itself, disturbing its normal flow.

Factors that lead to the use of forbidden substances

The process of preventing and fighting doping involves a series of factors deeply connected to sportsmen training and education. Of all these factors, the coach, psychologist and medics as members of the interdisciplinary team as well as sports organizations are the most important.

The coach is the person who has the most important roles in high performance sport. Training, education as well as exercising, leadership and counseling are the most important.

Coaching is the most difficult job in relation to preparing other people. This is due to multiple causes: first and foremost is the requirement of interdisciplinary skills (effort dosage knowledge, biochemistry, psychology, teaching science, sociology, sport technique and tactics, medical, recuperation and sometimes even psychological guidance), a coach working with the minds, bodies and spirits of athletes in a high performance quest that never ends.

A model coach is theoretical only, a perfect image of the most efficient person in this role. In reality, each and every one aims to be as best as possible at what he does, according to sportsmen skills and management environment and especially according to their personality which must have a healthy love for their jobs and sports in general, a success orientation, social intelligence, an ability to treat each and every group / individual respectfully, a good capacity to communicate, self/control and a wish for progress. Coach performance thirst can vary from one individual to another. We, as coaches, focus on teenager and children training. Performance, in their case means a higher level of health, harmonious physical development, a good learning of sport tactics and techniques, an increased level of movement skills adapted to each sport they practice, a right behavior when in the company of colleagues, a good school performance, discipline, fairness and will to excel.

What about the will to win to reach the top to obtain medals and awards? Can all aspects listed and described above help anyone achieve these? The answer is YES. The problem is if we continue that YES with an "IF" or "But..." which is hard not to do as some opponents don't play fair and some coaches and managers make use of unsporting motivation and psychological stimulus for their students. Whoever uses this "IF" risks going beyond the limit of fair-play because thinking like that lead to a search of victory at all costs, regardless the means and with a false belief



the final result is earned. That price is too high and it breaks the rules of common sense and ethics.

The **sports psychologist** assists a coach in providing the mental support over the entire course of training. A sportsman must be aware that by cheating he is subject to fraud and deceit for his / her colleagues, officials and even family. This fault will have lasting repercussions and his / her image will be seriously damaged.

Doping not only impacts physical health but also affects the psychological state. The confirmed negative mental effect of doping is described in some documents regarding the use of forbidden substances in sport issued by the Sport Psychology and Body Activity European Federation (SPBAEF):

1. Some substances (steroids) increase aggression tendencies;
2. Attributing success to outside sources (drugs) reduces motivation and can have long term negative consequences as lack of self-trust and confidence;
3. Attributing success by the use of drugs leads to a diminished self-esteem;
4. The athlete lives with a constant fear of being discovered, which increases stress;
5. Once discovered as an illegal substance user, a sportsman will have to endure a social stigma which can in turn wreak havoc on his / her morale. The effects are more obvious in high performance sport where this disgrace is underlined by the media;
6. A sportsman resorting to illegal substances is aware he / she breaks the rules of fair-play and can experience guilt which leads to more anxiety and stress;
7. A sportsman who uses drugs lives with guilt and is a bad example for youngsters;
8. Illegal substances use has a negative effect on social relations.

To the above we can add guilt felt by coaches, medics or close people to athletes who administer or just advise them to take in the substances. A special situation occurs when sportsman are being treated by coaches or unfair close people who lack the sense of responsibility without even knowing.

A psychologist's duty is to discuss with all athletes both individually as well as in groups, with coaches and medical staff the fact that temptation to use drugs as performance enhancers is hardened by regular check-up evasions. All sportspeople will be advised not to take chances thinking that control evasion is very probable.

Knowing athlete personality traits can tell a psychologist who is more inclined to disobey fair-play. An interview and some psychological tests are very effective in these cases. He will use suggestive and persuasive methods by presenting real life high performance sport negative examples and will recommend techniques for gaining self-regulating skills.



Even though sportspeople know there are situations in which certain substances cannot be traced, they must resist the temptation.

When a psychologist discovers a sportsman deviation, even though it has not been officially confirmed, he enters a counselor role and is obliged to help the user to radically change his / her attitude, to eliminate the guilt and to promise and believe he / she must not recur in this action. In this role, a psychologist will utilize the help of other sportsmen and of those in the inner circles of athletes. All of them must be supportive but also critic about the unfair gesture.

The medic. With the help of this staff member, athletes get informed about all substances on the forbidden list, their effects and about the fact that some drugs used to treat common illnesses like headaches or a common cold contain components that are on the list. The entire technical team must track sportsmen health even considering the high physical and mental stresses. The medic must collaborate with athletes to reduce the tendency to consider winning the ultimate goal, indifferent of the means.

The educational activity in preventing and fighting doping

Educational activities in this area have the main purpose of forming the right attitudes towards doping. These refer to:

- rejection of the idea of artificially boosting performance by use of illegal drugs or way of use;
- rejection of certain propositions made by those in close proximity;
- getting involved in the process of preventing other athletes to use the forbidden chemicals.

Theoretically speaking is simple but in reality, training sportsman who are fully aware of these aspects needs demanding rational efforts from a whole range of social and educational factors.

At the base of forming the right attitude is the level of understanding of the phenomenon. This depends on theoretical sportsmen training which must have the following knowledge about doping:

- name of illegal substances and methods;
- consequences over health;
- morale consequences;
- penalties for those who resort to such means.

Conclusions

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