

Sports Ethics: The Impact of Pharmaceuticals on Performance in Sports

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Abstract: The main aim of the study was to find out the impact of pharmaceuticals on the performance in sports and how sporting fraternity is upholding ethics in the competitions. The International Olympic Committee and the International sports movement have laid down certain principles, rules, regulations and norms with respect to doping but we still find a lot of athletes being banned for using pharmaceuticals throwing a challenge to the very existence of sports. Taking into these aspects an insight has been discussed on some major issues the sports realm is facing today with the following headings. 1) Elite sports performances are not merely private but they are also considered with public, cultural and social connotation. 2) For the existence of Sport and Olympic movement the negation of the practice of inducing performance with pharmaceuticals and manipulating the athlete should be discarded as it violates the very basic principle of sport. 3) Challenges should be amongst individuals and not between nations. 4) Not everything which is banned in sports should be controlled. Concluding remarks have been projected exactly how the trends should be followed for the future.

Keywords: Ethics, Pharmaceuticals, Performance

1. INTRODUCTION

After the conclusion of every Olympic Games the foremost question in every one's mind and the global discussion is centered with regard to the influence of pharmaceuticals on the performance of athletes or the manipulation of sports performance. This is the most emphatic problem which has stirred the passions of everyone involved in the preparation of the sports persons and has never seized to die down. In the beginning the treatment of medical aspects dominated. Nonetheless, very soon it became clear that the debate touched medical facts only in part and that it also covered the expanses of sports pedagogy, sports psychology and sports ethics. Doubts and questions were raised about the very existence of high level competitive sports with regard to the norms and basic principles. It is pertinent to note that the Olympic committee has very clearly demarcated those athletes who had violated the doping guidelines be excluded from international competitions depending on the severity of the violation. This apart, the ban is to be extended to the coaches, trainers, and physicians.

It is not too challenging to find a solution to the existing problem. In fact the International Olympic Committee and the International sports movement have laid down certain principles, rules, regulations and norms with respect to doping. The war against the use of Pharmaceuticals dates back from 1924 but was seriously administered from 1966 due to the non-availability of testing procedures. If the total sporting fraternity takes the principals and rules framed earnestly, one has to very sturdily discard any kind of impelling and manipulating of performance of an athlete with Pharmaceuticals. A glance on a few codes will throw light on some of the major issues the sports realm is facing today.

2. ELITE SPORTS PERFORMANCES ARE NOT MERELY PRIVATE BUT THEY ARE ALSO CONSIDERED WITH PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CONNOTATION

The above statement stresses the fact that performance is an integral part of the phenomenon of sport and that top achievements

are to be considered as the basis and the prerequisite of international competitions and the Olympic Games. This statement is important in two ways: In the first place because during the last few years the public has increasingly doubted the desirability of top performances in sports and as a result doubted the legitimation of supporting such activities; in the second place because independently of those rather ideological doubts-critics have posed the precarious question, after being confronted with the increasing use of pharmaceuticals, of whether top performances deserve recognition and approval at all if it is not clear anymore which means helped them to achieve it. This means that those organizations and associations which allow opaque and dubious ways of achieving top performances violate their duties and responsibilities with respect to the contents and spirit of their own rules and regulations; at the same time the statement mentioned above implies these organizations must reject all attempts at influencing performance in sports with pharmaceuticals and manipulating the athlete with the aim of increasing his capacity, since such actions contradict basic principle of sports as well as Olympic regulations and those national and international federations. They also interfere with the athlete's rights and dignity and may additionally threaten the athlete's health. It is not in good taste to continue the discussion on this topic as it has many ramifications. If the application of pharmaceuticals and other technical manipulations whose aim is to increase the capacities of the athletes aren't permissible, any further discussion about the effectiveness of a pharmaceutical product is quite irrelevant. Nevertheless, a few more ideas shall be added to have clarity on this issue.

3. FOR THE EXISTENCE OF SPORT AND OLYMPIC MOVEMENT THE NEGATION OF THE PRACTICE OF INDUCING PERFORMANCE WITH PHARMACEUTICS AND MANIPULATING THE ATHLETE SHOULD BE DISCARDED AS IT VIOLATES THE VERY BASIC PRINCIPLE OF SPORT

Theoretically there are three various points which can be taken into consideration with regard to the use of pharmaceuticals. The first position would advocate an unconditional 'Yes' to the use of pharmaceuticals, the second position a 'Yes' with certain restrictions and the third position a clear 'No'. The first position isn't seriously backed by anybody; the second position however has a few supporters who have to be taken seriously. On the basis of the

principals of equality of opportunity, of athlete's self-determination and responsibility, they maintain that it should be permissible to hand out pharmaceuticals, provided that extensive information had been made available; they argue, for example, that top athletes should have the same rights as non-athletes. Furthermore, this way a better medical supervision of the pharmaceuticals taken would be assured. And, after all, the harmfulness of pharmaceuticals hasn't been proven.

The advocates of the third position reject any means of technical manipulation and application of pharmaceuticals with the aim of increasing the athlete's capacities. This position is backed by majority of all involved. Several arguments are stated in support of this position.

According to the ethics of the medical profession pharmaceutical products may not be handed out to athletes in good health. Such a step is only justified in the case of illness.

On the basis of sport ethics one also has to reject the use of pharmaceutical products; equality of opportunity is one of the basic principles of sports. National and International high level sports depends on competitions under equal conditions. However, since these conditions can't be controlled all the time a certain degree of mutual trust and reliance becomes an integral part of all competitions, without which competitive sports would lose its most essential foundation. All the enormous achievements in the men's and women's sports arouse the suspicion of having been achieved in an illegitimate way; thus they are questioned and lose their proper status. The athletes and the spectators and the sponsors of sports events must have the right to expect that the principles and rules of sports be respected and adhered to, even if they can't be controlled all the time.

A further argument is psychological: An important part of the motivation for achievement is to be seen in the fact that success in sports is attributed to one's own responsibility, ability and effort. If this central incentive is taken away, the athletes' motivation and personal satisfaction springing from the self-attribution of their achievement is influenced negatively. Any interference from outside will ruin this experience and will make them insecure with respect to a proper evaluation of their physical capacities; Achievements attributed to one's own ability and efforts will help in the long run to build up self-confidence and self-assurance; they will

also promote the pedagogical aims of the Olympic movement, which can be summarized in idea of striving for and self-perfection through top performances in sports.

A very important argument comes from the field of education; the sports movement and especially the Olympic movement always had the aim of incorporating the pedagogical dimension. Many parents send their children to physical education organizations and clubs because they consider them institutions for educational experiences. For that reason parents who feel that responsibility and who have to make decisions for their children are in the hand of organizations which fulfill their expectations with respect to pedagogical supervision.

4. CHALLENGES SHOULD BE AMONGST INDIVIDUALS AND NOT BETWEEN NATIONS

A central principle of the Olympic idea is the belief that contests should be competitions among individuals and not among nations and their respective political and ideological systems. This belief is based upon the conviction that achievements in sports always represent a value per se which has to be respected and that these achievements have to be attributed above all to the athletes, to their striving and succeeding. Although national and international competitions are quite frequently misinterpreted by the public, it is not permissible to justify the use of pharmaceutical products, even for so called higher motives like national prestige. Nevertheless, in the past motives like the one just mentioned have served as justification for the use of pharmaceuticals; it was assumed that this way one could compete better also on the level of international sports-with other ideological systems. But this may not be the ultimate goal of sports and is an explicit contradiction of the spirit of Olympic idea. However, it cannot be avoided that high level sport are sometimes uses as a vehicle for political (and quite often for economic) interests. But this cannot serve as a justification for the use of pharmaceuticals or other manipulative means and thus for the violation of sport-ethical principles. In this context some critics have maintained that various countries would no longer be able to compete with other countries and thus could not take part in international competitions in the field of high level sports if one relinquished the opportunity of use pharmaceuticals to increase the capacities of an athlete. The answer to this is the following: Nobody has ever become a top athlete only by pharmaceuticals. So far only a few sports have been affected by the use of

pharmaceuticals, further more it still remains unclear whether the improvements achieved are wholly or only in part the result of pharmaceutical manipulation. It is very easy to point out that top performers spring from other sources than the one just mentioned. Adequate support, competent psychological and pedagogical guidance, and extensive application of findings in the field of exercise physiology and biomechanics will induce further increases of physical capacities in the future. There is no sound reason to assume that progress in high level sports can only be brought about by the use of pharmaceuticals; despite the current use of pharmaceuticals some records of former times still remain unbroken.

5. NOT EVERYTHING WHICH IS BANNED IN SPORTS SHOULD BE CONTROLLED

With regard to the ban of pharmaceuticals which increase physical capacities in sports, some people have maintained that only those products which can be detected in tests should be barred. For our problem this means that a general ban would not be feasible, since not everything can, will or should be controlled. However, a certain number of tests and controls is necessary; but it would violate the basic idea of sports if we sought total control. But this exempt athletes from random tests and continuous supervision. These procedures are after all for the benefit of those athletes who respect and live by the existing regulations and principles. Sanctions have to be included in the range of steps to be taken against violations, too. There can be no doubt that a certain number of athletes and trainers will behave in violation of the explicit regulations as well as against the spirit of these principles and will seek to gain an advantage over their competitors. This is one facet of human nature; and we have to live with it. But this does not mean that we approve of such behavior. However, the creation of a medical task force would be evidence of a process which we consider understandable for high level competitive sports.

6. TRENDS FOR THE FUTURE

The enforcement of sports ethical principles is always a difficult task. It will only succeed if these principles are respected and adhered to by all or most of the national and international associations, all the officials, coaches, trainers, physicians and athletes. In future we will certainly be confronted with individual athletes who unknowingly or intentionally experiment with pharmaceuticals, with physicians who violate

the regulations of their national associations, with coaches who want immediate success, with politicians who support the sports movement because they secretly view it as a means of national representation, with journalists who have been and always will be covering winners only, with officials who attribute the achievement of “their” athletes to their own efforts and aspirations. These facts cannot be denied; therefore it is our task to furnish proper and necessary information so that all persons involved become conscious of what they are doing and what consequences their actions will eventually have for themselves and for others.

The pharmaceuticals industry will not cease to develop new products which shall-each in its own way- make us more relaxed, stronger, better looking and more preserving. Thus we are faced not only with a problem in high-level sport but with a dilemma that affects all of us. What we can do is to determine the rules which should govern our interactions in sports. We have to make them very clear to everybody, and we have to make it possible and attractive to live by these rules. It is unnecessary to formulate new aims and values; rather we have to remember and reconfirm the basic values of sports and of the Olympic movement.

The future will show whether these principles stand the test of time and whether they are feasible or not. But one thing is certain that the achievement, accomplishment and failure are not the sole standard of sport ethics and sports morals; rather there is more to the meaning of sports and Olympic movement than mere achievement and record breaking.

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