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**DRUGS IN
SPORT**

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DEBATING MATTERS
TOPIC
GUIDES

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MOTION:

**“ALLOWING THE USE
OF ENHANCEMENT
DRUGS WILL NOT
UNDERMINE THE
SPIRIT OF SPORT”**

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KEY TERMS

Amateurism

Anabolic steroids

Beta 2 blood doping

Doping

Performance enhancing drugs

Professionalism

Sportsmanship

INTRODUCTION

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Much of the build-up [Ref: [BBC News](#)] and aftermath [Ref: [BBC News](#)] to Beijing 2008 focused on drugs and how to keep them out of the Olympics. For a long time the treatment of athletes found to be using drugs has been resolute. In 1988 the sprinter Ben Johnson was stripped of his 100m gold medal after testing positive for drugs [Ref: [BBC News](#)]. The scale and complexity of the problem was made plain in 2000, when two of East Germany's most senior sports officials were charged with systematically doping over 100 young athletes throughout the 1970s and 80s [Ref: [BBC News](#)]. More recently the British sprinter Dwain Chambers was banned from athletics for two years after testing positive for the anabolic steroid tetrahydrogestrinone (THG) [Ref: [BBC News](#)]. But condemnation of Chambers and others has not been unanimous. The Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) has voiced growing concern about the intrusiveness of drug tests [Ref: [Guardian](#)] and a number of commentators have suggested that reactions to drug testing are more to do with moral posturing [Ref: [Guardian](#)] and political opportunism [Ref: [spiked](#)] than sportsmanship. Some have further argued that the use of performance enhancing drugs is entirely consistent with the desire to reach new heights of human athleticism [Ref: [Reason](#)]. But many remain vehemently anti-drugs, claiming that they undermine the spirit of sport. If drugs were allowed, the most successful athletes may not be the fastest or strongest, but those who have the best medical team. So would sport be undermined by sportsmen pumping themselves full of drugs? Or is doping in the tradition of what competitors have always done: pushing the boundaries of human endurance?



What is the 'spirit of sport'?

Opponents of enhancement drugs argue that drug taking shows bad sportsmanship and deprives athletes of the 'level playing field' so central to the idea of fair competition. Recalling Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic games' famous maxim – 'The important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part' – some claim that winning at any cost has superseded other considerations and is ultimately undermining the dignity and integrity of sport [Ref: [City Journal](#)].

But, say others, times have changed. Winning has acquired a stronger emphasis, but this is no bad thing. The shift from amateurism to professionalism in the Olympics, and in sport more widely, has improved the quality of sport and helped produce better athletes [Ref: [PBS](#)]. Another definition of the 'spirit of sport' – the Olympian motto 'Citius, Altius, Fortius' (faster, higher, stronger) – implies sport is about exploring and stretching the limits of human potential [Ref: [Reason](#)]. Its proponents suggest that the attempt to overcome natural limits is what differentiates human athletic goals from those of animals. The use of enhancement drugs, they argue, is a fundamentally human activity. But others disagree. They argue that drug intervention can reach a point where it is impossible to distinguish between the uniqueness of human achievement and technological innovation. There are innate biological limits that athletes should respect and which give meaning to sporting excellence. Allowing enhancement drugs would de-humanize sport.

What are performance enhancing drugs?

The practice of using artificial substances or methods to enhance athletic performance has a long history [Ref: [Observer](#)]. As far back as the 776 BC Olympics, athletes were using cola plants and even eating sheep's testicles in an effort to boost performance. Manipulation of the body, whether through training, diet or the use of equipment, was, and continues to be, an accepted part of athletic activity. What, ask critics, is so different about chemical enhancers, or even genetic enhancement? But strict limits are placed on the types of enhancers that can be legitimately used by athletes and there are currently eight main categories of enhancement drugs banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency [Ref: [CBC](#)]. Advancements in biotechnologies in the last four decades now mean that athletes can use a cocktail of drugs to overcome physical barriers, including anabolic steroids, Beta 2, blood doping and oxygen carriers. But whilst these drugs remain illegal in competitive sport, developments in performance enhancing technologies are growing by the day. Not only have researchers in London created a muscle building DNA [Ref: [Guardian](#)], but more recently Henning Wackerhage, a scientist and former triathlon competitor, laid out the possibility of modifying the human genome to create a superhuman runner [Ref: [Times Online](#)].

Is doping dangerous?

Anabolic steroids can cause infertility, liver abnormalities and tumours and various psychiatric disorders. Androstenedione will increase your chances of having a heart attack or stroke. Critics of enhancement drugs argue that they pose a significant health risks for athletes. But isn't trying to be the best already



THE DRUGS IN SPORT DEBATE IN CONTEXT CONTINUED...

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hard on your health [Ref: [Times Online](#)]? Exercise is known to be healthy, but the extreme exercise many athletes put themselves through can also be damaging. But critics say that the dangers posed by enhancement drugs are very different. Evidence given by the young female athletes involved in the German doping scandal revealed that forced steroids and testosterone doping had done profound physical damage, including liver dysfunction and infertility. Those that questioned the procedure were told that 'you eat the pills, or you die!' [Ref: [Gladwell](#)]. The scandal thus also raises important questions about coercion in sport. Attractive as narratives of the 'human will' and 'assertion' are, can the decision to use performance enhancing drugs ever be a wholly autonomous one?



ESSENTIAL READING

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Tainted gold

BBC Radio 4 4 January 2004

Drugs in world athletics

BBC Sport 31 July 2000

For

Baseball's salem

Sean Collins *spiked* 9 April 2008

Steroids in America: The real dope

Jack McCallum *Sports Illustrated* 11 March 2008

No drugs in sport? The hypocrisy of it!

Steve Wells *Guardian* 13 February 2008

Should we allow performance enhancing drugs in sport?

Radley Balko *Reason Magazine* 23 January 2008

Doping true to the spirit of sport

Julian Savlescu *The Sydney Sunday Morning Herald* 8 August 2007

Genetically modified athletes in Athens? Bring them on Andy

Miah

Observer 1 August 2004

Against

Tour ruined by old guys who think doping is normal

Bradley Wiggins *Observer* 29 July 2007

Athletes should stop being such dopes

Tom Knight *Daily Telegraph* 9 August 2006

Performance-enhancing drugs: Dangerous, damaging and potentially deadly

CNN 22 December 2004

Man or machine?

Charles T. Rubin *New Atlantis* 1 December 2004

A new world order in elite sports

Steven Ungerleider *New York Times* 20 June 2004

Bring back sportsmanship

Peter Reinharz and Brian C. Anderson *City Journal* 1 April 2000

In Depth

Drug testing: Drugs in sport, creating games of illusion

Jere Longman *New York Times* 18 November 2003

Beyond therapy: Biotechnology and the pursuit of happiness

President's Council on Bioethics 1 January 2003

To beat the competition, first you have to beat the drug test

Malcolm Gladwell *New Yorker* 10 September 2001

Doping and sports: Collective expert assessment

Department of Life Sciences December 1 January 1998



BACKGROUNDERS

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Female athletes not immune to lure of performance enhancing drugs

St Petersburg Times 5 April 2008

Athletes as role models in the steroid era

Fora TV 28 March 2008

Ethics, doping and the future of cycling

Fora TV 17 February 2008

There's no proof that sports drugs enhance performance

Guardian 4 August 2006

Is sport winning its war against drugs?

Guardian 2 August 2006

Drugs in sport: a brief history

Observer 2 February 2004

Doping: Banned substances

BBC Sport 31 July 2000

How performance enhancing drugs work

How Stuff Works

Drug dictionary

CBC Online Drugs and Sport

Selected writings of Pierre de Coubertin concerning the Olympics

Comite International Pierre de Coubertin

Doping in sport

BBC News

A history of the Olympics

About.com

ORGANISATIONS

100% ME

Bioethics sport

Ethics in sport via Intute

GMathletes

IAAF Anti-Doping

World Anti-Doping Agency



IN THE NEWS

Lewis calls for doping to be made illegal
BBC Sport 6 May 2009

Six-month jail sentence for Jones
BBC News 11 January 2009

Beijing re-testing plans revised
BBC News 9 December 2008

New drug test scheme is a 'step too far', says Taylor
Guardian 12 November 2008

Lewis cautious over Bolt success
BBC News 13 September 2008

Time running out for Chambers' Beijing bid
Guardian 7 May 2008

No hiding place for Beijing cheats, says WADA chief
Guardian 1 May 2008

US sports stars try to dim doping fears with 'Project Belief'
AFP 17 April 2008

Putting Scandals in the Past, Officials see Gains on Doping
New York Times 16 April 2008

Athletes abusing allowed drugs
Health 24 16 April 2008

GM athletes could break 2hr marathon
The Times 13 April 2008

UKA's moral repugnance smells like mean spirit
Guardian 12 February 2008

'96 Tour winner confesses to doping
Baltimore Sun 26 May 2007

UK's top sprinter in positive drug test
Guardian 22 October 2003

Aussie legend 'supports drug use'
BBC Sport 3 July 2002

Doping charges catch up with communist officials
BBC News 9 September 1999

Johnson stripped of Olympic gold
BBC On this Day 26 September 1988

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**“TEENAGE CITIZENS
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IAN GRANT, CEO, BRITANNICA

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