DOPING AND THE IDEAL SPORTS PERFORMER
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One of the most common ideas about sport is that can build character. The traditional notion of a sportsman suggests a combination of strong ambition and high moral standards. Even before Pierre de Coubertin reinvented the Olympic Games, sport was promoted as an educational enterprise. Recent events however have increasingly undermined this benign image of sport. Revelations of the extent of doping, for instance, have disturbed the public image of sport as an essentially positive character-building activity. There is a growing realisation that this was nothing more than a myth. This new awareness has ushered in a cynicism that threatens commercialisation and public funding. Sponsors may withdraw their financial support, and states reconsider their commitment. Who can be seen to profit from or fund a morally bankrupt enterprise like modern sport?

The worldwide anti-doping campaign assumes that athlete’s use of performance enhancing means and methods makes sport look immoral. It might look like a place where character is being corrupted rather than positively ‘built’. Other indications of this panic are the new initiatives from global sports organisations that embed moral codes in policies. We can see this in WADA’s presentation of the spirit of sport, the International Cycling Union’s ethical code, and similar codes produced by major Danish elite sports organisations.

This paper suggests three main analytical points emerging from these changes. Firstly, that the tendency to promote ethics in sports appears to be produced with aesthetic purposes; meaning that performing an ethical image is a priority over real ethical acting. Secondly, that the good will, which is exhibited by the mobilisation of ethics unintentionally transforms into an immoral practice. This for instance showed up in relation to the Spanish Operacion Puerto, where riders were prohibited to race without any charges only because their names turned up in the investigation. The riders were left defenseless and it was later revealed that some of those were excluded erroneously. This and comparable instances indicate that sports organisations’ moral codes are spurious constructions. Finally, that the sports organisations’ abuse of ethics mirrors the methods of abuse in sports, which the ethical codes were meant to counter. This leads to the bizarre but apparently inescapable conclusion that only hypocrites can be hailed as ideal sports performers by sports organisations so long as their current obsession with morality holds.

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