



Editorial

Doping in sport: Whose problem is it?



A B S T R A C T

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In the last few years there has been a significant increase in the number and scope of social science research into doping in sport. However, despite this apparent progress, the field remains a disparate body of work and lacks both direction and leadership. Whilst sport management is a discipline that is well suited to provide such leadership, scholarly research into this controversial topic has not been published widely in sport management journals. This special issue redresses this gap by bringing together a range of scholarly articles that represent a variety of perspectives by authors from North America, Europe and Australia. The issues and challenges covered are varied, but each paper brings a common theme: the implications for the management of doping in sport. The six papers in this Special Issue of Sport Management Review are a significant addition to the slowly growing body of sport management scholarly work on doping in sport. It is hoped that future research will be prompted with this Special Issue and the discipline of sport management will recognize and respond to the challenges presented by doping.

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1. Introduction

In recent times doping scandals have tarnished a number of sports. These incidents pose threats to the integrity of sport, both nationally and on a global scale. In response, sporting organizations and governments have introduced legislation and accompanying sanctions to deter the use of both performance enhancing and other illicit (non-performance enhancing) drugs. However, it could be argued that effective strategies for combating doping in sport are hindered by a lack of organizational commitment, varying opinions on how the problem should be managed and a lack of reliable information and empirical data to formulate and implement appropriate doping policy.

According to the World Anti-Doping Code (WADA, 2015), a substance or method to improve performance will be deemed an anti-doping rule violation if it meets any two of three specified criteria. These are broadly categorized as (1) a potential to enhance performance; (2) a threat to health; and, (3) a violation of the “spirit of sport” (WADA, 2015, p. 14).

The issue of whether a substance is performance enhancing or a threat to health clearly places the rationale for anti-doping within a medical framework (for historical accounts of the development of the WADA Code, see Hunt, 2011; Hunt, Dimeo, & Jedlicka, 2012; Rosen, 2008). The spirit of sport component of the Code’s definition of doping (WADA, 2015, p. 14) is less easily compartmentalized, taking in philosophy (“ethics, fair play and honesty”), psychology (“dedication and commitment”), sociology (“community and solidarity”), and law (“respect for rules and law”). Not surprisingly, then, the phrase has become the single most controversial aspect of the Code. Many authors (e.g., Henne, Koh, & McDermott, 2013; Smith & Stewart, 2008; Stewart & Smith, 2014; Waddington, Christiansen, Gleaves, Hoberman, & Møller, 2013) have highlighted the lack of clarity, absence of logic and other severe problems with the spirit of sport as a criterion for defining doping. The ambiguity of the term has perhaps contributed to a difference of opinion about how doping should be managed and the fragmented direction of the social science research into doping.

In the last few years there has been a significant increase in the amount and scope of social science research into anti-doping. However, despite this apparent progress, the field remains a disparate body of work and lacks both direction and

leadership. One academic discipline arguably best suited to provide such leadership is sport management. Sport management provides a contextual lens to address the management of sport and its associated practices. Through this lens it can facilitate constructive debate, provide insight into complex phenomena and identify possible solutions to the challenging problems confronting sport. Its ability to apply a range of management theories and its symbiotic relationship with sport suggests that the discipline is well positioned to better understand the complex drivers of doping practices and significantly contribute to the debate on appropriate preventative strategies and deterrence mechanisms. However, the discipline of sport management has had a somewhat chequered history with regard to its relationship to what is colloquially referred to as the “dark side” of sport (Wood, McInnes, & Norton, 2011).

2. ‘Dark side’ research

As a relatively new discipline, sport management researchers have at various times taken stock of the field, to highlight both shortcomings and opportunities. Some of these stock-takings have been personal (e.g., Boucher, 1998; Zeigler, 2007), whilst others have used bibliometric analysis (e.g., Ciomaga, 2013; Shilbury, 2011). Ciomaga (2013) suggests that the modern discipline of sport management is largely focused on themes that resonate with a commercial logic, rather than the social responsibilities of sport, which reflects the management backgrounds of many researchers. Zeigler (2007) cautions that the special status of sport as a force that positively impacts both individual development and societal cohesion is challenged by the logic of profit:

... competitive sport is structured by the nature of the society in which it occurs. This would appear to mean that overcommercialization, taking drugs, cheating, officials taking bribes, violence, and so on at all levels of sport are simply reflections of the culture in which we live. Where does that leave us today as we consider sport’s presumed relationship with moral character development? (Zeigler, 2007, p. 303)

Thus, one commercial marketing application of sport management becomes developing strategies that increase attendances at sporting events. In such a context, a problem such as doping by athletes represents both a threat and an opportunity: a threat in that doping might deter attendances (Engelberg, Moston, & Skinner, 2012) or threaten sponsorship (Solberg, Hanstad, & Thøring, 2010); an opportunity in that it might encourage even greater attendances through athletes who run ever faster, hit and throw ever further (Cashmore, 2012). In this latter case, the main purpose of athletic sport becomes the bettering of previous performances, with top athletes only truly achieving success if they can establish new records.

3. Taking stock of doping research (in sport management journals)

To set the scene for this special issue, we conducted a systematic search of seven of the leading sport management journals for publications on doping-related topics or themes. The initial selection of journals was based on prior empirical analysis of sport management citation data (e.g., Ciomaga, 2013; Shilbury, 2011; Zeigler, 2007). This delimited the analysis, since some relevant contributions by sport management academics may have been published in journals offered by other disciplines or topic areas (such as ‘social issues’ or ‘sport policy’). Despite this restriction, the resulting data are objectively verifiable and form a solid basis for commentary on the application of sport management to the ongoing threat of doping.

All seven journals were systematically searched for articles on doping appearing in the last decade (2005–2014 publications only). A total of 16 relevant articles on doping were identified. This included seven articles in *Sport Management Review* (Engelberg, Moston, & Skinner, 2015; Houlihan, 2014; Mazanov, Hemphill, Connor, Quirk, & Backhouse, 2015; Petrócz & Haugen, 2012; Smith et al., 2010; Stewart, Adair, & Smith, 2011; Wagner, Pedersen, & Møller, 2014). There were five articles in *European Sport Management Quarterly* (Hanstad, 2008; Probert & Leberman, 2009; Tainsky & Winfree, 2008; Wagner, 2010, 2011). There were two articles in each of the *Journal of Sport Management* (Huybers & Mazanov, 2012; Woolf, Rimal, & Sripad, 2014) and the *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing* (Christiansen, 2010; Denham, 2007). No articles were identified in the *International Journal of Sport Management*, *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, nor *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*.

Half (eight) of the articles used primary data; one of these articles (Hanstad, 2008) also employed secondary data, including document and media analysis. Of the eight primary data articles, six featured athletes or athletic populations. There were wide variations in the type of athlete studied (e.g., cyclists only, bodybuilders only, youth male athletes, university athletes, doping athletes only); the other two articles sampled support staff (one article) and former and current administrators, managers, and directors (one article). Primary data-driven articles used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, although there was only one survey (Woolf et al., 2014) and one experimental study (Huybers & Mazanov, 2012). One article (Petrócz & Haugen, 2012) presented a theoretical game-modelling design to illustrate self-response patterns.

For secondary data articles, the most favoured methodology was document analysis (eight articles). This included case studies that featured analysis of policy documents, media releases, and other documents from governing bodies of sport (such as the World Anti-doping Agency [WADA], the International Ski Federation [FISA], the Federation internationale de Football Associations [FIFA], the International Athletics Federation [IAAF]). Other research methods such as media analysis, and attendance data were only reported once, respectively.

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