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Editorial

Doping in sport: Whose problem is it?

ABSTRACT

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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

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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; Petróczi & 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 (Petróczi & 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.

Overall, we found no dominant conceptual or theoretical frameworks. Two articles were primarily psychological, or were premised on psychological and social psychological theories (Engelberg et al., 2015; Woolf et al., 2014). Other theoretical frameworks included social ecology theory (Smith et al., 2010); Bourdieu's (Bourdieu, 1993) conceptual framework of social field, capital and habitus (Stewart et al., 2011); figurational sociology and game models (Hanstad, 2008); and phenomenology (Probert & Leberman, 2009). While acknowledging the quality and contribution of this work it clearly indicates the limited breadth and depth of sport management research into doping.

One of the most striking aspects of the aforementioned analysis is the limited number of academic articles in leading sport management journals on the topic of doping. Given the apparent threat posed by doping and the special features of sport (Smith & Stewart, 2010) that separate it from other institutionalized practices, a greater contribution from sport management might have been expected.

The sport management discipline and sport managers can make significant contributions to the doping debate and how doping should be managed. For example, sport managers can influence and shape the anti-doping policies that regulate the workplace environment of athletes and achieve desirable policy objectives (Skinner, Engelberg, & Moston, in press). Similarly, creating organizational systems and practices that facilitate high levels of trust can assist in facilitating belief in the integrity of the drug testing system. The corollary is that institutional distrust can fracture the relationship between a governing body and its athletes (Wilson, Gilbert, & Edwards, 2004). This need for greater managerial input is perhaps exacerbated by recent high profile doping scandals involving individuals (e.g., Lance Armstrong), teams (e.g., Essendon Football Club) and organizations (e.g., International Association of Athletics Federations: IAAF). Furthermore, just as able-bodied Olympians have been implicated in doping use, so too have Paralympic athletes (e.g., Plum, 2008). Dr. Peter Van de Vliet, the IPC Medical and Scientific Director, commented that historically, there has indeed been drug-taking in the Paralympics (Gentleman, 2012). We are also seeing a rise in performance and image enhancing drug use by adolescents (Calfee & Fadale, 2006), and an increase in doping occurring outside of elite sport in non-elite environments (Hutchinson, Moston, & Engelberg, 2015).

4. Papers in the issue

This Special Issue addresses the disciplinary imbalance by providing a range of papers by scholars from Denmark, Greece, Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia. These papers distinctively focus on the implications of doping for the management of sport and sport managers.

Overbye's (2016) research uses the WADA Code to outline the mutual responsibilities of national and international sports federations and national governments for joint efforts against prohibited substances and methods in elite sport worldwide. Identifying that a major challenge currently undermining anti-doping efforts is a lack of commitment among a number of important governments and international federations. She suggests that the perceptions of athletes about the functioning of the testing system in their sport, as well as their trust in and support of the anti-doping system as a whole, has the potential to create a new kind of inequity, and a feeling of unfairness among athletes who believe they are being subjected to a stricter testing regime than their competitors. Based on a quantitative survey of 645 Danish elite athletes, Overbye found two thirds of the athletes were satisfied with the national testing regime; however, a majority believed that in certain countries, doping control was sometimes downgraded in order to win medals, a finding of particular concern.

Building trust, however, requires sport managers to maintain high levels of personal morality, executive integrity, and professional ethics. Indeed, the use of performance enhancing substances to increase athletic performance and the greater possibility of victory has ethical and moral issues attached to it. Here, Copeland and Potwarka (2016) explore the principle of ethics through a teaching case study of the University of Waterloo Warriors 2010 varsity football team. This was the most significant doping scandal in Canadian university sports history, with a total of nine anti-doping rule violations asserted through a review completed by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. This first-hand account, along with the findings of the review, provides important insights into ethical decision making processes and leadership structures in a team sports environment.

Key to preventing future occurrences similar to the Waterloo Warriors varsity case could lay in the investigation of doping attitudes and practices amongst development athletes and young people in general (Moston, Engelberg, & Skinner, 2015). Ultimately, this can inform the development of education programmes for school athletes. This is an area of growing research interest and is the focus of the research completed by Barkoukis, Kartali, Lazuras, and Tsobatzoudis (2016). This study, included in this special issue, investigated the effectiveness of a school-based intervention in promoting an anti-doping culture in adolescents. Two hundred and eighteen high school students from a Greek secondary school completed a questionnaire looking at attitudes towards nutritional supplements and doping use, social norms and norm salience, and the values of sport. While the intervention was partially successful, it failed to produce a change in attitudes towards doping, and the study highlights the difficulties of establishing whether an anti-doping intervention can ever be said to have worked. The authors suggest that sport managers can utilize the findings to develop their own initiatives to promote an anti-doping culture among young athletes.

Following the anti-doping education theme, Patterson, Backhouse, and Duffy (2016) highlight the practical difficulty of anti-doping education. They suggest that anti-doping education for coaches is minimal and a cause for concern as coaches have an important role to play in deterrence. Patterson et al. (2016) point out that very little is known about current coach education provision in the anti-doping domain across countries and sports. Their findings indicate that policy expectations

regarding anti-doping education for coaches are not being fully operationalized and this situation is unlikely to change. They suggest that until anti-doping education is shown to be a key priority for decision makers within sport organizations, it is unlikely to become a key priority for coaches.

Although education programmes have the potential to contribute significantly to managing contemporary problems associated with doping, an understanding of these problems and how they are dealt with in a sporting environment is necessary. Gowthorp, Greenhow, and O'Brien (2016) show how existing theory offers insight into contemporary problems through an investigation of the allegations of drug use within the Australian Football League (AFL). Specifically, they examined the alleged use of performance enhancing drugs by a number of players and support personnel of the Essendon Football Club (EFC). Their work questions the legitimacy of the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority's (ASADA) power in its management of the allegations. Using content analysis of legal documents and Bourdieu's (Bourdieu, 1985, 1990) conceptual framework, their work aimed to determine the legitimate regulatory authority of key actors involved in the EFC investigation. The findings suggest that symbolic capital sometimes emerges as a proxy for legitimate authority and regulation within social fields; the case highlights some of the damaging outcomes for sport from this "misrecognition" of legitimacy.

The final paper, by Thai, Birt, Turner, and Fenech (2016), also focuses on the EFC, as well as the Cronulla Sharks Rugby League Club. This teaching case study is based on actual events surrounding the 2011–2012 banned performance enhancing drugs scandal involving these two high profile Australian sporting clubs. This case investigates whether drug use is directly related to the moral hazard issue. It questions if internal controls broke down, leading to individuals or a small team of people running ambiguous programmes involving the use of performance enhancing drugs. The question provides the opportunity for students to debate if this breakdown of internal controls is a symptom of poor corporate governance, where the building blocks of corporate governance (leadership, planning, and organizational performance) are not well established and linked.

What the above papers highlight is that when addressing banned performance enhancing drug use, the discipline of sport management has a key role to play. Of central concern to sport managers is their ability to develop and implement sound anti-doping management practices. Sport management academics must continue to contribute to this debate as this contribution may assist in shaping how doping in sport should be managed now and in the future. This Special Issue provides a platform for this contribution.

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