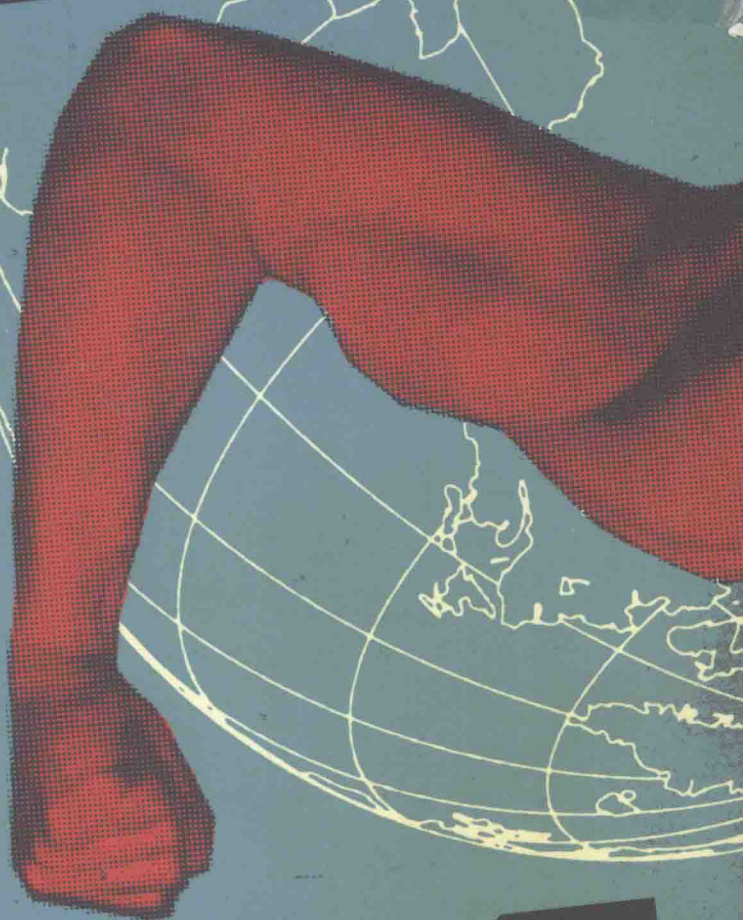


THOMAS M. HUNT  
FOREWORD BY JOHN HOBBERMAN

# STREET

# DRUG

THE INTERNATIONAL  
OLYMPIC COMMITTEE  
AND THE POLITICS OF  
DOPING, 1960-2008



# *Drug Games*

THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC  
COMMITTEE AND THE POLITICS  
OF DOPING, 1960–2008

*Thomas M. Hunt*

*Foreword by John Hoberman*



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## **DRUG GAMES**

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*This work is dedicated to my family.*

## FOREWORD

Given the sheer scope of the doping epidemic that has engulfed Olympic sport since the 1960s, it is tempting to ask whether the founder of the modern Olympic Games, the Baron Pierre de Coubertin, might have anticipated that widespread drug use would eventually infiltrate the world of high-performance sport. This may seem like a far-fetched speculation; most people, after all, regard doping as a recent development and do not associate the nascent sports world of the 1890s with the use of performance-enhancing drugs. This view is, however, mistaken; it was well known at the time that the long-distance cyclists of the 1890s were using dangerous drugs like heroin and strychnine. The difference between then and now is that this early doping was not regarded as an illicit practice; it was rather seen as an antidote to the extreme fatigue experienced by the elite athletes of that era.

De Coubertin's creation of the modern Olympics thus coincided with the early phase of sports medicine that included informal testing of less toxic substances such as milk, tea, and alcoholic beverages. While it is conceivable that de Coubertin could have read about such experimentation in the 1894 volume of the *Archives de physiologie normale et pathologique*, there is no evidence that he did. De Coubertin did, however, anticipate the consequences of the Olympic motto *citius, altius, fortius* ("faster, higher, stronger"), and he did so without the trepidations of today's anti-doping activists. De Coubertin knew that the modern sport for which he had created an international stage possessed an element of what he called "excess." "We know," he said in 1901, "that [sport] tends inevitably toward excess, and that this is its essence, its indelible mark." Nor was de Coubertin the only Olympic visionary in this respect. "Not to develop the latent possibilities of the human body," a famous Olympian wrote in 1919, "is a crime, since it certainly violates the law of nature." The author of this Promethean declaration was none other than Avery Brundage, president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) from 1952 to 1972. As Thomas M. Hunt documents in

this book, Brundage, unlike de Coubertin, eventually had no choice but to respond to the doping issue. As Prof. Hunt demonstrates, this response was ineffectual. With prescient fatalism, Brundage feared that directing public attention to doping techniques might “give ideas to . . . unscrupulous” athletes. It was left to Pope Pius XII to warn against the use of “gravely noxious substances” in the February 1956 issue of the *IOC Bulletin*.

*Drug Games* is the first and only major study of how the IOC has dealt with the doping problem as it has evolved since the 1950s. Indeed, the history of the IOC is especially important in this regard, in that its failure to address the doping crisis during the presidency of Juan Antonio Samaranch (1980–2001) contributed to the creation of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), which went into operation in January 2000. WADA was the result of a negotiation between the IOC and national governments, including the United States, making the IOC a major stakeholder in a global anti-doping campaign that faces daunting obstacles to its goal of driving doping practices out of the Olympic Games and other international competitions. WADA’s current engagement with the prospect of genetically manipulated athletes is one of many troubling signs that the current campaign against doping practices may well prove to be futile. Here, as elsewhere, Prof. Hunt offers careful and well-documented assessments of an Olympic sports culture that finds itself embedded in a modern world where performance enhancers of various kinds have triumphed over traditional ideas about the importance of self-restraint.

This triumph of the Performance Principle, as suggested above, can be derived from the Olympic ethos that mandates the linear progress of human athletic performances for as long as such performances are possible. De Coubertin himself intuited the appeal of this dynamic principle and pointedly scorned the “anti-sporting utopians” who had intuited its dangers. The modern descendants of these “utopians” are those members of WADA who actually believe they can restrain the use of doping practices in a meaningful way and who oppose any techniques they deem to be “contrary to the spirit of sport.” This is a difficult position that confronts the illicit drug use of many, many elite athletes, including many Olympians, in recent years. In February 2010, frustrations resulting from this conflict between temptation and ethical rigor led the longtime WADA-president Richard Pound to denounce doping athletes as “sociopathic cheats.” At the same time, Mr. Pound and other tenacious opponents of doping must confront the possibility that de Coubertin himself defined and determined “the spirit of sport” long before it ever occurred to the IOC that it now confronted the task of reining in the “excess” the First Olympian had declared to be good.



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Every historian confronts temporal, financial, and intellectual limitations. Throughout the course of this project, numerous individuals helped me overcome these challenges. I owe each of them my gratitude. The staff members of several institutions patiently led me through the wealth of documentation at their respective institutions. These included the International Olympic Committee Library and Archives in Lausanne, Switzerland; the United States Olympic Committee Library and Archives in Colorado Springs, Colorado; and the University of Texas at Austin's Dolph Briscoe Center for American History and H. J. Lutchter Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sport. The IOCLA also provided access to microfilm copies of the Avery Brundage Collection, the actual documents of which are held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Finally, the Foundation Board of the World Anti-Doping Agency provided an enormous gift to researchers when it decided to publish online the meeting minutes of the new agency.

At the University of Texas Press, Allison Faust, Sarah Hudgens, and Lynne Chapman patiently and skillfully guided this project through the publication process. Thanks as well to Lindsay Starr and Nancy Bryan. Sue Carter performed an editorial miracle in the final stages of this project; I will never forget her diligence and patience. Mark Dyreson, Maureen Smith, and an anonymous reviewer provided an enormous service in their thoughtful critiques of an earlier version of this manuscript. Mark and his wife JoDee also deserve special thanks for showing me on multiple occasions that parenthood does not necessarily prohibit scholarship.

I also benefited from an extraordinarily supportive group of colleagues and friends at the University of Texas at Austin. My understanding of the complicated structure of Olympic governance benefited greatly from the thoughts of Professor Carla Costa. Professor H. W. Brands took time away from his own work to offer unique insights into the writing process. Pro-

fessor John Hoberman met with me on numerous occasions to discuss the inner workings of international sport and generously provided me access to his own extensive research collection on performance enhancement in society. Kim Beckwith, Cindy Slater, Scott Jedlicka, Matt Bowers, Peter Ullman, Andy Miller, Stacy Metzler, and Geoff Schmalz provided much-appreciated support during the course of this project. Outside the university, Anthony Daywood, Eric Perlmutter, and Desiree Harguess gave friendship and advice on countless occasions.

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My mother and father, Laurie and Thomas L. Hunt, have spent the last thirty-two years encouraging my intellectual and personal development; my accomplishments reflect their dedication. A promising scholar in his own right, my brother Jonathan offered his own views whenever I needed a fresh perspective. Finally, my wife Hilary provided unfailing support throughout my research and writing even though it meant putting many of her dreams temporarily on hold.

## **DRUG GAMES**

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## INTRODUCTION

Until recently, diplomatic historians have demonstrated little enthusiasm for sophisticated, archive-based studies of sport and international relations.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, political scientists have refrained almost entirely from integrating athletics into their theories about the nature of the international political system.<sup>2</sup> Members of the microfield of sport history have with few exceptions isolated themselves from both groups.<sup>3</sup> Former National Security Council member Victor D. Cha lamented, “If the operative question is how sport ‘fits’ into our understanding of world politics, then the bottom line is that the existing literature offers no clear or consistent answers.”<sup>4</sup>

Reflecting this general underdevelopment, the few works of scholarly note on performance enhancement in sport have generally been limited in their temporal coverage, attention to political processes, and employment of archival evidence.<sup>5</sup> Even so, the absence in the existing historiography of a comprehensive, archival source-based history on the evolution of Olympic doping policy seemed remarkable.<sup>6</sup> After all, the International Olympic Committee instituted the first major anti-doping program in competitive athletics, exerting a profound impact on the world’s leading sports organizations.

With these considerations in mind, I initiated a research strategy that took me to documentary collections in both the United States and Switzerland. As I worked through the records held by these institutions, my interest in global politics led me away from questions pertaining to the philosophical nature of performance enhancement in athletics—currently a leading interpretive paradigm through which scholars discuss the subject.<sup>7</sup> This work instead attempts to connect the history of Olympic doping policy to larger global developments.

Human actors play a significant role in history, of course. Every attempt is nevertheless made to link individuals to political forces originating both

within and outside the Olympic governance structure. Greatly reducing the difficulty of this analytical endeavor, the persons involved were often themselves quite conscious of these connections. In a noteworthy manifestation of this awareness, Olympic administrators throughout the period under examination repeatedly expressed the belief that they were charged to lead a sporting movement operating virtuously above an unforgiving landscape of international politics. Ultimately, this principle of regulatory independence became partially realized.

Though still subjected to the influences of nation-states, Olympic administrators developed their own administrative structures, legislative codes, and enforcement procedures. Astonishingly, national governments for the most part recognized this autonomous governance system as legitimate. From 1960 until the late 1980s, private Olympic administrators maintained substantial authority over the anti-doping policies employed at their competitions.<sup>8</sup>

In doing so, these officials arrogated a number of powers historically wielded only by governmental authorities. Just as national legislatures throughout the world enacted drug legislation for their respective citizens, so the IOC began in the mid-1960s to promulgate its own list of prohibited substances. At the enforcement level, Olympic officials mirrored procedures employed by law enforcement officers, conducting scientific analyses of body fluid specimens collected from potential wrongdoers. With few exceptions, governmental bodies conceded that doping disputes fell outside their legal jurisdictions; athletes competing at an Olympic competition thus carried only limited rights to public judicial review.

From the perspective of the global political system, these developments at first glance appeared to represent an erosion of state power in an area traditionally dominated by states. Such an interpretation, however, fails to appreciate the profound policy influence exerted by state governmental units. As continued to be the case in nearly every aspect of global affairs, nation-states time and again proved to be the primary actors affecting the evolution of Olympic doping policy.<sup>9</sup>

Engaged during the Cold War in a struggle to win the hearts and minds of the world, the United States and the Soviet Union came to view elite international athletics as part of a larger scientific rivalry. National participation in international competition offered a way to instill in their respective citizens a sense of patriotism—a task deemed requisite to success in the conflict.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, both superpowers conceptualized power in sport as a means of impressing allies in their respective spheres of influence. Leaders in Moscow remained especially sensitive to the possibility that sport offered

the satellite nations of Eastern Europe a potential means of undermining Soviet prestige both within and outside the Eastern bloc.<sup>11</sup>

The idea that Olympic success was indicative of national power motivated nations on both sides of the Iron Curtain to allow regulatory jurisdiction over performance enhancement to remain in the hands of private sports authorities. Far from wishing to restrict doping in international sport, Soviet-bloc officials often actively sponsored the employment of performance-enhancing substances. Though political leaders in the United States refrained from such direct involvement, they worried over the seemingly dominant Eastern-bloc sports teams. Finding themselves in a sort of “prisoner’s dilemma,” they exerted little pressure on national sport organizations to confront the issue.<sup>12</sup> The net result was that actions taken by Olympic officials were less likely to produce tangible progress.

At first, state units played little role in the design and implementation of Olympic doping policies. After classifying doping as a major policy issue in 1960, Olympic officials found themselves negatively affected by four interrelated problems: (1) indifference to the subject among some of their colleagues, (2) scientific difficulties pertaining to the detection of certain chemicals in the human body, (3) ethical and scientific ambiguity as to the definition of “doping,” and (4) political difficulties resulting from the fragmented nature of the international sport system.

International sports leaders govern through a diffuse network of independent organizations, all of which possess different interests, jurisdictions, and powers. It is easy to mistake Olympic officials as working within a hierarchical structure featuring the IOC at its apex; their governance activities actually occur through a confederation of competing institutions. Until recently, administrators at all levels of this organizational system tended to formulate doping policies with the idea of minimizing public controversy. Meaningful reforms were deferred while a series of scandals continued to plague the Olympic movement.

At one time or another, members of nearly every organization in the international sports network were rumored to have participated in doping cover-ups. As a result, the use of potentially dangerous ergogenic aids continued to spread while the IOC focused on addressing such comparatively innocuous practices as training at high altitude.<sup>13</sup> By the end of the 1960s, the failures in Olympic doping policy had given rise to an environment in which, as stated by *Sports Illustrated* journalist Bil Gilbert, “The doctor and the chemist [would] soon be as important to an athlete as a coach.”<sup>14</sup>

During the 1970s, nationalism accelerated as a causal factor in the proliferation of performance-enhancing drugs among Olympic competitors. The

German Democratic Republic's infamous Stasi secret police organization, for example, instituted a state-sponsored doping regime that administered dangerous pharmacological agents to some 10,000 athletes. Notwithstanding the adoption of several progressive steps during the decade—including the institution of anabolic steroid testing at the 1976 Montreal Summer Games—Olympic officials were unable to neutralize this type of state involvement. Thus, efforts at reform within the elite sports establishment remained relatively ineffective. Compared to the resources held by national governmental units, those available to Olympic policymakers simply remained too limited to produce meaningful reform.

The influence exerted by the international political system in aligning states against anti-doping efforts gave way during the concluding stages of the Cold War. Measured throughout the course of the superpower conflict principally in terms of raw geopolitical power, status in the emerging world order now derived to a greater extent from one's reputation for fairness and responsibility. National authorities began to take an increasingly direct role in combating performance-enhancing substances in international sport.<sup>15</sup>

Governmental authorities usually enact major policy changes only after the occurrence of what political scientists call a "focusing event."<sup>16</sup> Catalyzing the fervor for doping reform on the part of national units, such a focusing event occurred when Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson failed a test for anabolic steroids after setting a new world record in the 100-meter sprint at the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. In light of a subsequent investigation of the episode by the Canadian national government, Olympic leaders worried that their movement might be subjected to unwanted political intrusions unless meaningful steps were taken to address the problem of doping. In response to the tangible threat that governmental units might take complete regulatory control over the issue, momentum finally built over the course of the next decade for the creation of a quasi-independent agency to oversee international doping policy.<sup>17</sup>

With its funding and management split between national political units and the global sporting community, the World Anti-Doping Agency went into operation in November 1999 under a mandate to implement a universal drug regulation strategy.<sup>18</sup> In order to maintain its autonomy from the IOC and the other components of the Olympic community, the new agency underwent a difficult process of consolidating power over performance enhancement in international sport for most of the next decade. The partnership between national political units and private sports organizations in this regulatory framework represented a critical shift in the politics



of doping. Thus, systemic changes in world affairs led to a more unified policy environment for anti-doping initiatives.

The anti-doping effort of the Olympic movement developed within a dynamic, multilayered framework. International Olympic Committee leaders have varied in their commitment to anti-doping. From the beginning, the governance structure of the Olympic movement was too fragmented to allow for an effective, centralized approach to anti-doping. Complicating that governance structure has been the interface between IOC anti-doping practices and other national and international sport institutions—as well as national governments. Each of these points of interface have provided fertile ground for conflicting spheres of jurisdiction. Far above this amalgamation of competing institutional interests, global geopolitical forces have set the stage for how doping—and the athlete who participates in such practices—is to be perceived: patriot, or cheat? Finally, the array of doping substances and activities has continued to expand, forever stretching the capacity of scientists to construct means of testing. As we look to the future, toward heretofore unimagined scenarios of genetically altered athletes, the early history of doping in the Olympics offers some insights into the forces behind the progress—and stagnation—of anti-doping policy in sport.