



## CHEATING OF OLYMPIC PROPORTIONS: THE GENEALOGY OF SAMARANCH'S DEPLOYMENT OF "CHEATING"

Abstract – The issue of doping has been a staple concern of the Olympic Movement since the 1950s. During that time, the notions of what doping was, and the social importance of it evolved over time. This study looks at the official news and opinion venue of the International Olympic Committee (The Olympic Review) to trace the genealogy of the concepts of doping and cheating over time to see how historical and social contingencies have affected the 'drug-free Olympics' discourse.

Keywords: Ethics; Cheating; Olympics; Samaranch; Genealogy.

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Resumo - A questão do doping tem sido uma preocupação básica do Movimento Olímpico desde os anos 50. Durante esse período, as noções sobre o que era o doping e a sua importância social evoluíram com o tempo. Este estudo analisa o local oficial de notícias e opiniões do Comitê Olímpico Internacional (The Olympic Review) para rastrear a genealogia dos conceitos de doping e trapaça ao longo do tempo para ver como as contingências históricas e sociais afetaram o discurso das 'Olimpíadas sem drogas'.

Palavras-chave: Ética; Trapaça; Olímpico; Samaranch; Genealogia.

## FRAUDE DE PROPORCIÓN OLÍMPICA: LA GENEALOGÍA DE LA IMPLEMENTACIÓN DA "TRAMPA" DE SAMARANCH

Resumen - El tema del dopaje ha sido una preocupación básica del Movimiento Olímpico desde la década de 1950. Durante este período, las nociones sobre lo que fue el dopaje y su importancia social han evolucionado con el tiempo. Este estudio analiza el sitio oficial de noticias y opiniones del Comité Olímpico Internacional (The Olympic Review) para rastrear la genealogía de los conceptos de dopaje y trampa en el tiempo para ver cómo las contingencias históricas y sociales han afectado el discurso de los 'Juegos Olímpicos libres de drogas'.

Palabras-clave: Ética; Trampa; Olímpico; Samaranch; Genealogía.

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## Introduction

The experiences of cheating, or being cheated, are phenomena that share common elements over the millennia. The noted Greek historian of antiquity, Androclides, disparaged the moral force of oaths when he said, "[...] cheat boys with dice, and men with oaths (n.p)"<sup>1</sup>. In this, he captures a meaning very similar to the formal use of the term in the present day. In the present day, we use the term colloquially to describe any incident in which we feel wrongly deprived of some entitlement. In more formal usages, we identify cheating as an advantage-seeking action wherein a person violates some level of obligation to others in a cooperative venture. The term enjoys the effect of strong moral condemnation when deployed towards others as an accusation and can have significant ramifications on the outcomes of many social undertakings, such as sport or education.

While the terminology of cheating has been in use since antiquity, the 20th century has witnessed a concerted effort by philosophers to solidify its conceptual parameters. If we look to an operational definition of a cheater fashioned from a philosophical consensus, we can state that cheating is the intentional and self-regarding violation of a liberty-limiting rule or agreement which regulates or constitutes the participation in cooperative activities<sup>2-4</sup>. While this definition seeks to satisfy the necessary and sufficient conditions of a concept to create a level of objective meaning, what should be noted is that even in rigorous attention to conceptual and definitional detail, an essence of cheating is that it is fundamentally social. The rules by which participants are bound do not descend from Mount Sinai nor do they claim distance from the social setting in which they are crafted. Sport does not occur in nature, and therefore does not have naturalistic claims to moral fact. Sport is a social creation and as such is subject to all of the various social inscriptions imposed on it by time and place. Thus, there can never be a universal objective understanding of cheating, as it is inexplicably tied to its context.

Given the fundamentally social aspect of cheating, it is relevant to consider tracing the use of the term within a specific context to see how the use of the word speaks to the formative and reformatory social forces at work on it.

Since determinations of cheating are – in part – products of time and place, they bear examination as terms of deployment by social structures, in the case of this paper –

the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Through examination of the primary media organ of the IOC – *The Olympic Review*\* – I intend to analyze the content to determine the use of the terms doping and 'cheating' as they relate within the Olympic context during Samaranch's leadership:

### **Olympic Review, the IOC presidents, and editorial direction**

The assumption of power by Juan-Antonio Samaranch sees the return of the IOC President to a leadership position in the *Olympic Review*'s depiction of official IOC ideology. After Brundage, successor IOC President Lord Killanin was not prominently featured in the *Olympic Review* in the role of speaking directly on matters of interest or concern to the Olympic community. Whereas Brundage's term saw a wide variety of direct messaging to the readership on matters of great importance, Killanin was minimally present in the *Olympic Review* during his tenure (1972-1980), and much of the leadership on what would become key issues, such as doping, is left to commentators from outside the IOC.

Samaranch changes the approach of Killanin's IOC Presidency and becomes a prominent and frequent contributor to *Olympic Review* and takes the lead in formulating public perception on key Olympic issues, such as commercial viability and to a graduating degree over the decade – doping. This does not preclude constituent participation on the topics of cheating and doping, and to this end, a number of athletes are put forth to articulate the anti-doping campaign as a grassroots movement, rather than a strictly bureaucratic whim.

### **Anti-doping as constituent demand: The athletes think doping is cheating**

In the first half of the 1980s, we see a broad array of perspectives on the issue of doping, primarily from the non-IOC contributors. On September 28th, 1981, as the first group of athletes to ever be heard in an Olympic Congress, British runner Sebastian Coe addresses the assembly and noted that the priorities of the athletes included a harsher stance on doping. Coe<sup>5</sup> reported that the athletes agreed that, "On 'doping' we consider this to be the most shameful abuse of the Olympic Idea. We call for the Life Ban of offending athletes! We call for the Life Ban of coaches and the so-called doctors who

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\* Prior to 1970, *Olympic Review* is known as the *Bulletin du Comité International Olympique*.

administer this evil! (p. 617)". Athlete contributions to the Olympic Review point to the insufficiency or incompetence of existing IOC measures to overcome cheating in all its manifestations. David Moorcroft<sup>5</sup> speaks to the nature of the dilemma facing athletes because beating the drug tests was easy to do and, "[...] the risk of being caught is not that great [...] (p. 635)"<sup>6</sup>. He goes on to advocate for the role of virtue and trust within sport as features under threat and worth saving.

One particularly interesting take on the 'if you can't beat 'em', join 'em' argument emerges from African writer Dr. A.L. Thiam<sup>7</sup> who proposes that western nations are

[...] mass producing athletes in the laboratory. Consequently, Europe and America are endeavoring to manufacture supermen who will reign supreme in the stadium and on the sports field. The rapid progress made by countries like the USA and the GDR only emphasize this point of view. It is becoming vital therefore for Africa too, in spite of its limited resources, to reap the benefits of the Euro-American medico-sports policy (p. 170).

The parallels between this sports-medical arms race and the existing ideological combat played out in the Olympic Games was precisely the kind of material that was rankling the IOC membership throughout the 1970s<sup>8</sup>. The idea that a continuation of the 'better athletes through chemistry' competition that dominated the Games to include developing nations as part of that doping problem clearly was not part of the Olympic Ideal and the kind of opinion on the matter that would gradually disappear from the pages of the Olympic Review in the second half of the 1980s. In 1982, Dr. Kaarlo Hartiala examined the virtues of three differing approaches to the doping problem as it was at the time: to embrace a total deregulation of doping, to medically supervise doping, or to continue on in the fight<sup>9</sup>. His is a thoughtful examination of the issues, which abruptly ends with the statement that doping could be a symptom of an eventual collapse of the modern Games, analogous to the ancient Games. This represents the first, albeit passing, mention in Olympic Review that doping was the phenomenon that posed a lethal threat to the very existence of the Games.

### **Doping is unnecessary for athletic excellence**

Another theme which emerges in this time is a number of contributions from people outside of the IOC who don't see professionalism as necessitating doping. One example is an examination of the arguments 'for and against' doping by athletes by former Tour de France medical director Dr. Jean- Pierre de Mondenard, who describes the conditions of high-level sport (particularly cycling) that would encourage drug use (modern training regimens, longer competitive seasons, the insufficiency – the "absence" – of anti-doping education)<sup>10</sup>. He follows this with a normative claim against doping in sport on the basis that there is no logical reason why professional sport must include such forms of cheating. Notably absent from Dr. de Mondenard's analysis is the potential capital accumulation that was such a feature of professional sports in the 1980s and often pointed to as a key motivation for widespread doping<sup>11</sup>.

### **The many voices of Samaranch**

Characterizing Samaranch's messaging throughout the decade on the issue of cheating and doping (which are synonymous), one detects a few trends in the content and delivery of Samaranch's message. Initially, Samaranch<sup>12</sup> is following the pleas of the athletes. Doping control policy is driven by what these virtuous athletes want

Personally, I shall be unable to forget for a long time their [athletes'] plea to struggle, with renewed energy, against the scourge of our society, the resorting to deception, and first and foremost, doping. This acute conscience on the part of the athletes of the danger with which sport is presently faced, of seeing the foundation on which it is built crumble i.e. loyalty, the truth of man face-to-face with himself, the taste for effort freely given, is more than encouraging (p. 620).

A second feature is the progressive insinuation that the IOC was the pioneer in anti-doping<sup>†</sup> and with their leadership position came with the responsibility of vigilance in defending athletes and 'Olympism' from doping<sup>13</sup>,

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<sup>†</sup> It should be mentioned that the IOC was years behind some of the International Federations in initiating a doping-control policy. See Houlihan B. *Dying to Win*. Strasbourg, Germany: Council of Europe Publishing; 2002.

The fight against doping which the IOC was the first to initiate nearly twenty years ago, has tremendously evolved over the past years. I am happy to report that whilst the IOC is still leading the fight. We have now started a new policy based on "Education". We are confident that this will help all NOCs and athletes to better achieve one of the first principles of the Olympic movement: to promote the development of those physical and moral qualities which are the basis of sport (p. 193).

Samaranch<sup>14</sup> continues this theme of ownership in the wake of the 1983 Pan-Am Games drug scandal,

The position of the IOC is clear. We were the first sports organism to struggle against this problem. We agree with the Organising Committee of the Pan-American Games, and more than that, we are pleased with them for the severity of the controls and hope that at Los Angeles, there will be as many (p. 667).

By the mid-to-late 1980s, Samaranch<sup>15</sup> is no longer acting under the direction of athletes, nor is he acting paternalistically, but rather he is acting from the mandate of 'Olympism' and suggesting that athletes take part in the IOC's initiatives

I am addressing you, the athletes of the world [...] who demonstrate the power of heart and mind over matter", declared the President inviting them to join with the IOC and the International Federations in rejecting "these attempts to cheat which endanger the very lives of those involved (p. 81).

The deployment of Olympism as the official ideology of the Games originates with de Coubertin but sees its maximal deployment under Samaranch who uses it in the place where Brundage used a more dogmatic sense of following de Coubertin's dream. Under Samaranch, Olympism is less about de Coubertin's vision and more about the perception of uniqueness the Olympics enjoyed in the sports-entertainment marketplace. To that end, Samaranch deploys it frequently. In the history of the Review and its

precursor the *Bulletin du Comité International Olympique*, there are 2,257 total mentions of the word "Olympism" between the years 1901 to 2001. Eight of these mentions are found from 1901 to 1930, and 1,550 of them occur during Samaranch's reign (1980-2001)<sup>16</sup>. It is evident that Samaranch found some value in the term that informed his frequent deployment of it. Whatever the specific contents of the concept of Olympism might be, it had great value ideologically for Samaranch and the IOC throughout the 1980s and 1990s. It is to this ideology that many variations in doping policy are referenced.

Interestingly, we do see some recourse back to a more sympathetic paternalism in 1988 and throughout 1989, much of which takes place after the Ben Johnson scandal at Seoul, wherein Samaranch and the IOC return to ownership of anti-doping moral agency and protectors of athletes, and the adversarial language recedes<sup>17</sup>

Let me state solemnly, in the name of the whole Olympic Movement, on behalf of the many hundreds of millions of those who freely accept our principles and share our ideals, that we utterly and absolutely reject these attempts to cheat which endanger the very lives of those involved. Doping is alien to our philosophy, to our rules of conduct. We shall never tolerate it (p. 83).

And also<sup>18</sup>,

We [the IOC] must, however, go further in our fight by seeking out the truly guilty parties, the entourage and all those who have contact with the athletes and force them to dope themselves often against their will (p. 453).

The third feature of Samaranch's<sup>19</sup> discourse is the hyperbole over the issue of doping. In the earliest years of his Presidency, doping represented a major concern worthy of mention but in a relatively bland manner. After the 1983 Pan-Am Games debacle, the diction becomes more sensational.

Yes, doping equals death. Physiological death [...] And then death of the spirit and intellect by the acceptance of cheating by disguising one's potential, in recognizing one's inadequacy or unwillingness to be satisfied with oneself or transcend one's limits. And finally, moral death, by placing oneself de facto outside the rule of conduct demanded by any human society (p. 872).

Samaranch's<sup>20</sup> discourse doesn't proceed in a tidy linear acceleration down the path of hyperbole. On the contrary, after the Seoul Games of 1988, Samaranch seems to retreat into questioning the exact nature of doping, while maintaining that the drugs he intends when he speaks of 'doping' are still of significant moral and medical importance,

[...] we must find a true definition of doping, a definition which does not yet exist. At the moment we say that there is a list of banned products, and those who use these products are guilty of doping. I am convinced of the need to define the boundary between the use of banned drugs and treatment which is purely medical. In the coming years, medical research must be stepped up in order to know for sure what doping is and what its serious medical consequences are (p. 453).

## Conclusion

The narratives offered within the Olympic Review represent the volatility of the perceptions about doping and how they change given the temporal position of various doping scandals. The Olympic Review reflects a rather disjointed and dynamic view about doping which is profoundly contingent on non-moral influences and offers little coherence in terms of reasoning.

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