“Never Give In, Never”  
Richard Pound

The flood of recent doping cases in sport offers hard evidence that the fight against doping has not been won. In the past week, we’ve learned of Canadian sprinter Venolyn Clarke’s positive test for the steroid stanozolol at the world athletics championships in Edmonton, and the positive test of a Russian, Olga Yegorova, for the banned endurance-boosting hormone EPO.

Many wonder if ground is not being lost. Some suggest that sports authorities should just give up and allow athletes to take whatever they want. At least that way, they reason, there will no longer be any cheating and the playing field will have been levelled—assuming, of course, that all athletes will be able to afford the same drugs.

It probably comes as no great surprise to learn that I am unequivocally opposed to such a “solution” to the drug problem in sport. Some will conclude that as the president of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), this conviction should be part of my job description. That much is true, but the order is reversed. I only agreed to take on this responsibility because I believe doping is antithetical to the very foundations of ethical sport. Any medal won, any result achieved by doping is anathema to everything for which sport should stand.

Doping tarnishes the achievement. It destroys the accomplishment. It generates shame and the need for clandestine behaviour, the need to hide from those who have competed fairly. It generates the rot that attaches to the drug-assisted result. What begins as an honourable quest—to see how far one’s talents and skills can be developed in accordance with freely agreed-upon rules of play—dissolves into conduct that must be hidden, that brings public shame if exposed, and a lifetime of private guilt even if it is not exposed.

What should be a matter of pride becomes akin to Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where the reality of the individual, who purports to be pure, must be concealed from public view.

But there is another reason for rules against doping, namely a justifiable concern for the health of the athletes who do it voluntarily or who are subjected to it (stanozolol, for example, has been linked to liver damage,
hypertension and heart disease). Almost every prohibited substance is actually or potentially damaging to the health of the athletes involved. Whether or not this may sound paternalistic, the athletes need protection from themselves or their entourages.

And what should we think of those who counsel athletes to use doping? Or who condone the use of drugs? Or who help make the drugs available to athletes in the full knowledge of the use to which they will be put? Of medical practitioners who ignore the ethical dictates of a learned profession that has a particular social responsibility? What kind of people are they who would expose young people to the risks of health and moral turpitude that come from such usage?

Where are their personal and professional responsibilities? How can parents and society allow them to have such formative influence on the youth of their communities?

I put it to you that there is no coach or team doctor or trainer worthy of the description who cannot be unaware of doping by an athlete under his or her charge. I put it to you as well that there should be a special onus on these professionals to stop such conduct and that any doping infraction affecting an athlete under their charge should be equally ascribed to them. Unfortunately, all too often, it is the athlete (who may bear only part of the responsibility) who bears the full penalty, while those more responsible escape all sanction.

But the fight against doping cannot be won by the sports world alone. There are many issues, such as the harmonization of legal penalties against doping and the trafficking of these drugs, that can only be resolved by the co-operative intervention of the world’s governments.

This is why the World Anti-Doping Agency was created, to bring together the governments and the sporting world—including athletes—at the same time, at the same table, with the same objectives.

We understand the fight against doping in sport will not be won simply by developing better methods for detecting drugs and imposing sanctions. In the long run, it will be a matter of education, creating a common understanding that doping is not only ethically wrong, but also dangerous to the health of athletes.

It took a long time for people to accept the use of seat belts or to accept the folly of drinking and driving. Ultimately, it was not the legal penalties imposed for infractions, but the realization that the whole attitudinal approach to those issues had to be changed. The same will be true for doping in sport.
But more needs to be done. More work has to go into identifying the alleged links between poorly-labelled nutritional products that contain prohibited substances, such as the strength-building steroid nandrolone. The reasons the world’s best athletes consume such large quantities of prescription medication during competition must be studied, as well as the reasons why athletes are prepared to risk health, penalties and disgrace to use drugs in sport.

Unless we understand the genesis of the conduct, it will be difficult to find the cure. We need to fund research to develop reliable detection methods for human growth factors such as HgH, oxygen-carrying agents similar to EPO, and techniques, such as genetic manipulation, which sound like science fiction today but tomorrow may be a frightening reality. (This September WADA is organizing a conference of international genetics experts to study the implications of this new field on sport.)

This is a battle that we simply have to win. As Winston Churchill said, “Never give in, never give in, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense.”

NOTES AND DEFINITIONS

Oscar Wilde’s famous novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) tells the story of a man who lives a riotous life but remains young looking. Instead, his portrait changes and the man in the picture looks old and debauched. (para. 5)

Winston Churchill was prime minister of England in the mid-20th century. His stirring speeches during World War II were especially famous. This quote comes from a speech made to the students of Harrow School in 1941. (para. 16)

STRUCTURE AND TECHNIQUE

One attention-getting technique in writing is to use a recognizable quote from a famous personality, celebrity, or expert. For example, Pound quotes Sir Winston Churchill’s words in the title of the article and in the conclusion. There are several advantages. The writer draws a relationship between
Churchill’s determination that England would never surrender to the Nazis and Pound’s that the war on drugs in sports must not falter. Moreover, he creates interest and appeals to the reader’s intellect with an emotive, heartfelt quotation. His cause is just and right. Finally, the words “never give in, never” not only draw attention but are also apt for his argument. Pound then extends the Churchill passage to round out his conclusion.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING

1. When athletes use drugs, who is mostly to blame—the athlete, the coach, the government, the fans, or the system?
2. Is there too much pressure on athletes to “win at any cost”?
3. Can sports ever be completely fair—with a truly level playing field? Discuss the advantages some athletes have.
4. Consider what Olympic athletes (and their parents) go through—the sacrifices, the financial cost, the time spent, and the physical cost. Is it worth it?
5. Discuss the quote from Churchill’s speech. Do you find it inspiring?
6. Define cheating and dishonest behaviour. Where do you draw the line? Consider such acts as copying essays from the Internet, downloading movies and music, and stretching tax rules on income tax returns.