

MAY 2015

**DOPING IN
SPORT**

ADAM RAWCLIFFE



DEBATING MATTERS
**TOPIC
GUIDES**

MOTION:

**“WE SHOULD
PERMIT THE USE
OF PERFORMANCE
ENHANCING DRUGS
IN SPORT”**

ABOUT DEBATING MATTERS

Debating Matters because ideas matter. This is the premise of the Institute of Ideas Debating Matters Competition for sixth form students which emphasises substance, not just style, and the importance of taking ideas seriously. Debating Matters presents schools with an innovative and engaging approach to debating, where the real-world debates and a challenging format, including panel judges who engage with the students, appeal to students from a wide range of backgrounds, including schools with a long tradition of debating and those with none.

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KEY TERMS

[Anabolic Steroid](#)

[Doping](#)

[Erythropoietin \(EPO\)](#)

[Gene doping](#)

[Performance Enhancement](#)

INTRODUCTION

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In May 2015 doping in sport hit the headlines again when the entire American 4 by 100 metre relay team were stripped of their silver medals three years after the 2012 London Olympics, due to star sprinter Tyson Gay's drugs ban [Ref: [Telegraph](#)]. This follows former seven-time winner of the Tour de France Lance Armstrong admitting the consistent use of performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) throughout his career, and being the ringleader of what has been described as "the most sophisticated, professionalised and successful doping program that sport had ever seen" [Ref: [BBC Sport](#)]. In 2013 'the blackest day in Australian sport' followed a report from the Australian Crime Commission which reported widespread use of performance enhancing drugs in Australia, particularly in the Australian Football League [Ref: [Sydney Morning Herald](#)]. And evidence suggests that of 21 podium finishers in the Tour de France 1999-2005, 20 are suspected or proven to have used banned substances [Ref: [Practical Ethics Blog](#)]. Despite publicising itself as 'the toughest Olympics ever' on drug cheats, 107 athletes tested positive to doping prior to London 2012, and numerous athletes who passed tests throughout the games have since tested positive - including the Russian swimmer Yulia Efimova, and Jamaican sprinters Asafa Powell and Sherone Simpson [Ref: [aeon](#)]. This has led many commentators to question the ability of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) to control the use of illegal aids in sport [Ref: [Huffington Post](#)], and has prompted debate about whether doping in sport is even ethically wrong.



DOPING IN SPORT:

"We should permit the use of performance enhancing drugs in sport"



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THE DOPING IN SPORT DEBATE IN CONTEXT

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What are Performance enhancing drugs, and are they safe?

The use of artificial substances or methods to enhance athletic performance dates back as far as the 776 BC Olympics, according to some commentators, where athletes would use cola plants and even eat sheep's testicles in an effort to increase performance [Ref: [Observer](#)]. Manipulation of the body, through training, diet and the use of equipment, has always been an accepted part of athletic activity. The World Anti Doping Agency (WADA), in its 2015 Code, places strict restrictions upon substances that meet two of the following criteria: (1) they are a danger to health; (2) they lead to performance enhancement; or (3) their use is contrary to the spirit of sport [Ref: [WADA](#)]. Those opposed to doping point to the health risks associated with performance enhancing drugs, noting that anabolic steroids can cause infertility, liver abnormalities, tumours and numerous psychiatric disorders [Ref: [USADA](#)]. For example the hormone erythropoietin (EPO) thickens the blood, increasing the risk of clotting, strokes and heart failure; and some users stop being able to produce red blood cells and can become dependent on it [Ref: [Telegraph](#)]. After a Cycling Independent Reform Commission report found that "doping in amateur cycling is becoming endemic", many now fear that amateur athletes, following the example set by professionals, will fall victim to the same health problems [Ref: [BBC Sport](#)]. There are even suggestions that child athletes in Russia are being encouraged to take performance enhancing drugs [Ref: [Guardian](#)].

Is performance enhancement a bad thing?

According to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), and anti-doping commentators, performance enhancing drugs devalue athletic achievement which they define as "the pursuit of human excellence through the dedicated perfection of each person's natural talents" [Ref: [WADA](#)]. However, enhancement can take many forms; biological, technological and chemical, many of which are permitted in sport – baseball players are permitted to have laser eye surgery to improve their eyesight, as well as ligament transplants to aid pitching speed and reduce injury [Ref: [New Yorker](#)], and enhancements like wearable technology only serve to distance us further from our natural limits [Ref: [Law in Sport](#)]. For some, such as writer Radley Balko, the concept of enhancement is fundamental to the pursuit of excellence in sport: "Ingenuity, innovation, nutrition, and knowledge about what makes us faster and stronger, has always been a part of the game" [Ref: [Huffington Post](#)]. After all, sports people train, alter their diets and take supplements so as to turn the athlete "into an improved version of his natural self" [Ref: [New Yorker](#)]. If this is the case, then why do we object to sports people using performance enhancing drugs to do this? Are performance enhancing drugs a victim of "an accident of language" which gives them a false connection with drugs like crack cocaine and heroin [Ref: [CNN](#)]? For those opposed to performance enhancing drugs the distinction isn't a technical one, but ethical in nature - as one commentator points out, "the moral offence lies in the diminishing of the very idea of sport as a contest of merit and fair play" [Ref: [CS Monitor](#)]. But perhaps more profoundly, some suggest whilst lamenting the decline of sportsmanship, that if we were to permit the use of performance enhancing drugs, the



THE DOPING IN SPORT DEBATE IN CONTEXT CONTINUED...

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effect would be corrosive for us more broadly, because: “Sports have always been the repository of a culture’s values, mirroring and shaping society” [Ref: [City Journal](#)].

The ethics of doping – would it undermine the ‘spirit of sport’?

Those critical of the use of performance enhancing drugs worry that the ‘all or nothing’ culture pervasive in professional sport, in which: “Second place is first loser” [Ref: [Telegraph](#)] drives the need for sportsmen to continually seek ways of coming out on top. They argue that doping undermines sportsmanship more generally, and deprives athletes of a level playing field if some choose to take drugs and others do not [Ref: [Huffington Post](#)].

An unforeseen consequence of this, they suggest, could be that permitting the use of performance enhancing drugs would only advantage rich countries who would be able to fund more advanced doping programs – further entrenching unfairness [Ref: [Outside Online](#)]. However, it is worth noting that some performance enhancing drugs are relatively cheap - a cyclist can buy enough EPO to last a season for just £1,000 when a set of carbon fibre wheels costs £2,000 or more [Ref: [BBC Sport](#)].

Writer and author Malcolm Gladwell notes that some individuals “carry genes that put them far ahead of ordinary athletes”, and concludes that, “elite sport then, is a contest amongst wildly disparate groups of people, who approach the starting line with an uneven set of genetic endowments and natural advantages” [Ref: [New Yorker](#)]. Some people, for example, are blessed with far higher haemoglobin levels in their blood than normal, allowing them to excel at endurance sports [Ref: [New Yorker](#)] - so how should we view these individuals? Do their natural advantages

render competition unfair? Opponents counter that sport is the embodiment of the human will to achieve superhuman accomplishments through dedication and the sharpening of our natural talents [Ref: [aeon](#)]. Drug intervention, they argue, could reach a point where it is impossible to distinguish between the uniqueness of human achievement, and technological innovation - therefore, de-humanizing sport: “A race at 43km/h is not necessarily any more interesting than one at 39km/h but the amazement vanishes if the riders become computer game characters with infinite lives and endless energy re-ups” [Ref: [Inner Ring](#)]. How then should we view performance enhancing drugs in sport? Do they denigrate the spirit of fair competition, and dehumanise the sporting spectacle? Or is the will to overcome our natural limits what makes us human? As Professor Julian Savulescu states: “Doping expresses the spirit of sport. To be human is to be better. Humans are not like racehorses, flogged by the whip of the jockey: they are their own masters” [Ref: [aeon](#)].



ESSENTIAL READING

[World anti doping code 2015](#)

WADA 1 January 2015

FOR

[A doping Manifesto](#)

Julian Savulescu *Aeon* 11 June 2014

[Man and Superman](#)

Malcolm Gladwell *New Yorker* 9 September 2013

[Its time to allow doping in sport](#)

Ellis Cashmore *CNN* 24 October 2012

[Why sports would be better with doping](#)

Ian Steadman *Wired* 9 October 2012

AGAINST

[Should performance enhancing drugs be legalised?](#)

Inner Ring 20 February 2013

[Why doping is banned in sport](#)

Tom Murray *Pittsburgh Gazette* 2 December 2012

[Should we allow doping in the Tour de France? Or all sports?](#)

Chris Cooper *New Republic* 29 June 2012

[Why athletes dope](#)

Michael Shermer *Huffington Post* 25 May 2012

IN DEPTH

[The human race](#)

Steven Poole *Aeon* 7 November 2012

[Out of thin air](#)

David Edmunds *Prospect Magazine* 16 November 2011

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BACKGROUNDEERS

[How bad is distance running's doping problem?](#)

Peter Vigneron *Outside Online* 19 April 2015

[Wearable tech in sport: the legal implication for data collection](#)

Jonny Madill *Law in Sport* 9 April 2015

[How doping stole my innocence](#)

Joe Rafferty *Inside the games* 8 April 2015

[Essendon Drugs saga: The blackest day in Australian sport has the greyest outcome](#)

Mark Kenny *Sydney Morning Herald* 1 April 2015

[Genetic doping is the next frontier of cheating in sports](#)

Joe DeLessio *New York Magazine* 31 March 2015

[Death or glory myth fuels EPO boom](#)

Jonathan Liew *Telegraph* 11 March 2015

[Performance enhancing drugs and cheating in mixed martial arts](#)

James McDonald *Bleacher Report* 20 February 2015

[Why the Russian runner scandal matters](#)

Peter Vigneron *Outside Online* 15 December 2014

[Sports medicine experts debate: should doping be allowed?](#)

Scott Douglas *Runnersworld* 25 October 2013

[Drugs in sport part 1](#)

Marek Doyle *Huffington Post* 29 January 2013

[Lance Armstrong confession: in any sport, drugs are drugs](#)

Christian Science Monitor 17 January 2013

[Doping in sport isn't cheating, it's a natural progression](#)

Radley Balko *Huffington Post* 15 January 2013

[Armstrong case provides a window into our collective morality](#)

Dr Phil Skiba *Velo News* 2 November 2012

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[Stop persecuting Armstrong: time for a doping amnesty in cycling](#)

Julian Savulescu & Bennett Foddy *University of Oxford* 6 July 2012

[Why we shouldn't allow performance enhancing drugs in sport](#)

Kjetil K. Haugen *Academia.edu* 1 April 2011

[Who's afraid of drugs in sport?](#)

Dan Travis *spiked* 25 June 2008

[Drugs in sport: a brief history](#)

Observer 8 February 2004

[Bring back sportsmanship](#)

Brian C. Anderson & Peter Reinharz *City Journal* 2000

[Effects of performance enhancing drugs](#)

USADA.org

ORGANISATIONS

[United Kingdom Anti Doping](#)

[United States Anti Doping Agency](#)

[World Anti Doping Agency](#)



IN THE NEWS

[All athletes to undergo doping tests before Singapore Sea Games](#)

Malaysian Insider 19 May 2015

[Doping in sport: why are amateurs emulating the pros](#)

BBC Sport 15 May 2015

[Craig Chalmers says doping is very common in rugby in wake of son's ban](#)

Guardian 15 May 2015

[Justin Gatlin will not win people over](#)

BBC Sport 14 May 2015

[USA men's relay team stripped of London 2012 medals](#)

Telegraph 13 May 2015

[Joe Namath says PED's are much worse than deflategate](#)

New York Daily News 12 May 2015

[WADA slams French TV micro dosing doping experiment](#)

Cycling Weekly 5 May 2015

[Doping not improving athletes performance, study finds](#)

ABC News 4 May 2015

[Essendon drugs saga refuses to die as focus finally turns back to the field](#)

Guardian 2 April 2015

[Russian child athletes are doping at school says sports minister](#)

Guardian 3 February 2015

[Badminton's world number one fails drugs test](#)

Guardian 8 November 2014

[Armstrong says that he would still lie and cheat despite charges](#)

International Business Times 20 August 2014

[USADA label Armstrong a 'serial cheat'](#)

BBC Sport 11 October 2012

[London 2012 Olympics: Q&A on drugs testing](#)

BBC News 31 July 2012

[London 2012 Olympics: athletes to face most advanced anti doping tests](#)

Telegraph 19 January 2012

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AUDIO/VISUAL

[Out loud, the case for doping](#)

New Yorker 1 September 2013

[Lance Armstrong finally admits doping on Oprah](#)

Rolling Stone 18 January 2013



ADVICE FOR DEBATING MATTERS

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www.debatingmatters.com

FOR STUDENTS

READ EVERYTHING

In the Topic Guide and in the news - not just your side of the argument either.

STATISTICS ARE GOOD BUT.....

Your opponents will have their own too. They'll support your points but they aren't a substitute for them.

BE BOLD

Get straight to the point but don't rush into things: make sure you aren't falling back on earlier assertions because interpreting a debate too narrowly might show a lack of understanding or confidence.

DON'T BACK DOWN

Try to take your case to its logical conclusion before trying to seem 'balanced' - your ability to challenge fundamental principles will be rewarded - even if you personally disagree with your arguments.

DON'T PANIC

Never assume you've lost because every question is an opportunity to explain what you know. Don't try to answer every question but don't avoid the tough ones either.

FOR TEACHERS

Hoping to start a debating club? Looking for ways to give your debaters more experience? Debating Matters have a wide range of resources to help develop a culture of debate in your school and many more Topic Guides like this one to bring out the best in your students. For these and details of how to enter a team for the Debating Matters Competition visit our website, www.debatingmatters.com

FOR JUDGES

Judges are asked to consider whether students have been brave enough to address the difficult questions asked of them. Clever semantics might demonstrate an acrobatic mind but are also likely to hinder a serious discussion by changing the terms and parameters of the debate itself.

Whilst a team might demonstrate considerable knowledge and familiarity with the topic, evading difficult issues and failing to address the main substance of the debate misses the point of the competition. Judges are therefore encouraged to consider how far students have gone in defending their side of the motion, to what extent students have taken up the more challenging parts of the debate and how far the teams were able to respond to and challenge their opponents.

As one judge remarked *'These are not debates won simply by the rather technical rules of schools competitive debating. The challenge is to dig in to the real issues.'* This assessment seems to grasp the point and is worth bearing in mind when sitting on a judging panel.



**“A COMPLEX
WORLD REQUIRES
THE CAPACITY
TO MARSHALL
CHALLENGING IDEAS
AND ARGUMENTS”**

**LORD BOATENG, FORMER BRITISH HIGH
COMMISSIONER TO SOUTH AFRICA**