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Performance Sports: An Excuse for Doping?

An honors thesis presented to the
Department of Business
University at Albany, State University of New York
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in Business Administration
and
graduation from The Honors College.

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to determine what characteristics in high performance athletes are likely to create a desire to use a doping substance. After reviewing the works of notable scholars addressing similar concerns, research has helped to identify some of the prominent factors liable for this manifesto. This paper focuses on psychological determinants within highly competitive individuals, specifically those who have a predisposed desire for achievement, which correspond with a higher propensity to use performance-enhancing drugs. In order to effectively assess the findings for this hypothesis, its application is strictly devoted to performance sports.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Sports are aimed to show the physical qualities of young people who are devoted to the evolution of performance. To strengthen relations between the cities of Greece, the first Olympic Games was held in Olympia in 776 BC. Technology has drastically changed our way of life and for over 2,000 years these sports have developed from archaic religious pastimes into worldwide competitions. Over the last hundred years, nations from all over the globe met every four years to compete against one another in order to prove that the youth from their territories were the most talented, successful, athletic, and honorable individuals, despite fiscal or political circumstances. Countries such as Russia, the United States, and China have transformed the Olympic Games into a spectacle watched across the world by challenging the status-quo, pushing the bar, and breaking traditional records.

The competition grows stronger every year. Olympic records are on the brink of being broken by the next leading contestant, who seems to be progressively younger than the predecessor. As countries become adamant about recognition, integrity is often exchanged for dominance (Reardon and Creado). What originally stemmed from consolidation, respect, and honesty is now the most overseen, regulated, and scrutinized event due to the growing lack of purity within the tournament. Every athlete is now prescreened for augmenting substances, performance-enhancing elements, and doping agents prior to entering the competition. Medical improvements are paralleled only by technological advancements, but it appears that the unregulated medicinal market's exponential growth is overpowering the commissioners who are trying to govern it (ibid.).

The World Anti-Doping Agency has made tremendous strides in regulating both the Olympics as well as international sporting events. The agency has spent millions of dollars on research which identifies substances that are a threat to an athlete's health as well as to "the spirit of [the] sport" ("Who We Are"). Working closely with laboratories, law enforcement, and athletes, the Agency has become the world's governing body in sports substance compliance. In 2004 the World Anti-Doping Code classified doping agents, natural, scientifically modified, and laboratory generated, based on certain determinants, and named a large list of banned items for all athletes to abide by (ibid.). Substances such as anabolic steroids, growth hormones, beta-2 agonists, stimulants, hormone modulators, and narcotics, as well as natural substances including "natural (e.g. cannabis, hashish, marijuana) or synthetic delta 9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)" in all forms were listed as strictly prohibited "at all times" ("Ban on the Use..." 24). Any trace of these substances, almost all of which are known to mutate gene structure, in an athlete's blood or urine, calls for automatic penalization (World Anti-Doping Code).

Top athletes are willing to pay a heavy price in time and effort in order to achieve competitive success. Many sacrifices are made, ranging from sleep deprivation in softball players to malnutrition and rapid weight loss in wrestlers (Highlen and Bennett). In a heightened state of self-actualization, highly competitive athletes find ways to enhance their performance in order to achieve excellence in their programs. These athletes combat anxiety in different ways and find success in various forms: individuals with a high need for achievement tend to talk to themselves when conditions are uncertain, whereas highly competitive individuals often visualize themselves being favored as the winner. Both types of athletes are labeled as having incredibly high levels of self-efficaciousness and almost an aura of complete self-control. However, individuals possessing both qualities also tend to overestimate the rewards following

competitive events and begin to second-guess respective skillsets when attempting to achieve recognition (Simon). In the hopes of exceeding predetermined personal goals and separating themselves from the escalating numbers of competitors, these idiosyncratic athletes choose to rely on other measures of performance enhancement and frequently end up using illegal substances along the way.

Literature Review & Theory Development

Cultural habits and processes have changed drastically throughout the last century. The contemporary fitness culture is dynamically different today than it has been in the last thirty years. Athletes are competing for global popularity in the digitally connected world we live in and expect to achieve it at irrational speeds. With social media, advertising, and financial success surrounding the American youth, kids are quickly becoming exposed to international superstars, athletes, and actors. As information continues to diffuse to the younger generation and as sport prodigies in the Olympics and X-Games get younger every single competition, athletic triumph is assumed to be achieved promptly.

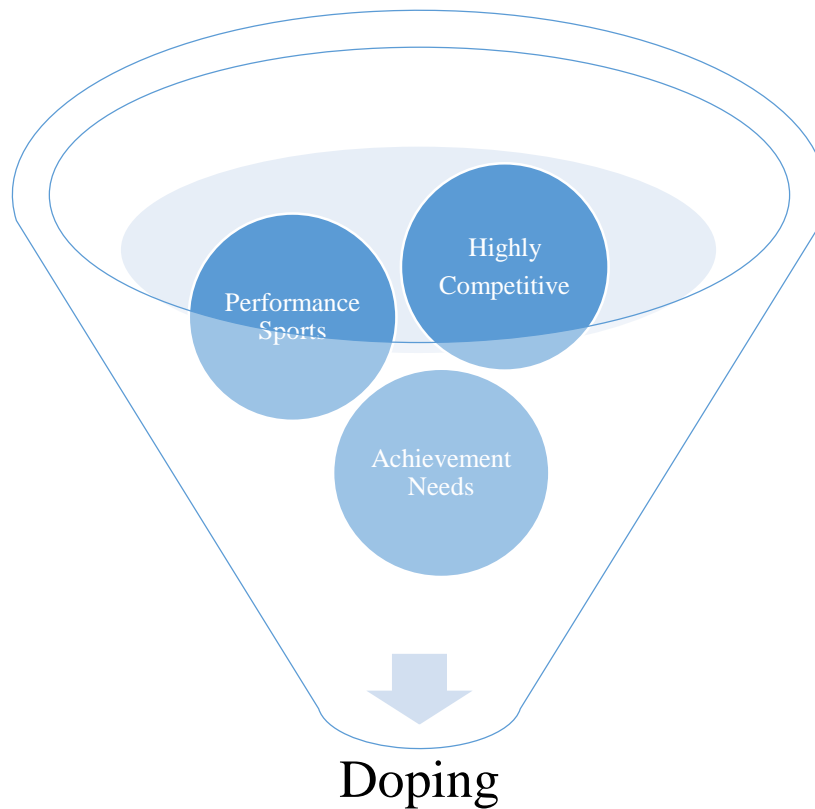
In today's day and age, the hard, sculpted body "symbolizes success and hard work" and is considered a goal among both men and women (Andreasson and Johansson 278). Stereotypes are commercialized and aspirations quickly become framed in terms of health. The fitness center is becoming a hub of knowledge, as both genders share personal expertise and exercise routines in the hopes of continuing the reverence society has developed over the years for a sexualized vision of the human body. It appears that recently there has been a convergence of both "bulky, massive" bodies and "thin, fragile" ones in gyms across the nation, and as people become

accustomed to defining every detail of their physique, “multiple visions” of the ultimate transformation have been established (ibid. 278). Not only are today’s athletes presented with distorted concepts of athletic success, but the inspirational role models most often associated with said success misguide their followers with false pretenses. By cheating, manipulating, and deceiving the system, notable athletes have been awarded not only large amounts of financial compensation but international fame, something which is very hard to strip even after alleged rumors are uncovered as the truth.

People become obsessed with developing a “muscular, supple, and well-trained” appearance as those that they see in the media (Andreasson and Johansson 278). Although primarily influenced by our digital culture, dedicated athletes with strong achievement needs cultivate individualistic visions of successful appearance based on personal perceptions of established “human role models” (ibid.). Some athletes are driven to achieve success in their favorite sport by financial profits, while others are simply motivated by honorable mentions. If both of these characteristics are compounded with a highly competitive background in an athlete engaged in high performance sports, an extraordinary ambition is likely to be fostered. These aspiring athletes are some of the most profoundly dedicated, energetic, and ambitious humans to walk this Earth, and are typically committed to achieving their goals through any means necessary. Highly competitive and overly-zealous athletes embodying these traits are usually found to be self-conscious, self-centered, and self-efficacious. With little regard for their team or the sport, these individuals are more likely to engage in deliberate actions in order to improve personal performance. In certain cases, athletes with cold-blooded intentions have been noted to participate in illegal activities, such as doping, without any shame in the activity, and, despite worsening their health and reputation, would admittedly do it again.

Theory

There is evidence that individuals who participate in high performance sports while possessing two personal characteristics are likely to engage in doping. The two characteristics are (1) being highly competitive and (2) having strong achievement needs.



1. Highly Competitive Characteristics

Universal technological improvements have united individuals from various countries and consolidated sporting events across the globe. Athletes are now facing unfamiliar circumstances and must find ways to compensate for the unknown. Global competition is growing and rivalries are blossoming. A rivalry is defined in *Action Characteristics as Predictors of Competitive Responses*, as “the exchange of competitive moves” between competitors in the same field (Chen, Smith, and Grimm 439). The study finds that “responses are influenced by the characteristics of the actions that evoked them,” and that “the total number of competitors affected by [these] action and the importance [of the action] to the competitors... under attack by the action **increase** the number of competitive responses” (ibid.). In other words, if an athlete is allegedly doping before a competition and his/her rivals assume his/her actions to be personally combative, and if the tournament is of great importance to the rivals, then the rivals will take a competitive response to the doping and mimic the athlete’s actions.

Cultural differences among athletes also influence competitive attitudes, values, and norms. Geert Hofstede studied the contrast between individualism and collectivism among varying developed nations and published his findings in 1980. His cross-cultural studies showed that northern and western Europeans and North Americans tended to be “individualists,” while Asians, Latinas and Africans tended to be predominantly “collectivists” (Cox, Lobel and McLeod 828). Collectivist cultures value “the role of the family...cooperation, mutual assistance, and altruism” over individual performance and achievement (ibid.). The values manifested in Latin and Asian countries tend to emphasize collaboration and unity, cooperative approaches, bargaining, and mediation as strategies for successful conflict resolution. On the other hand, individualists accentuate the need for competition and articulate the rewards resulting

from accomplishing an independent task (ibid. 829). Individualists are less risk averse and tend to make self-centered decisions to prove their credibility among the competition. Individuals from these cultures are not afraid of doing the wrong thing and take criticism much more favorably than their collectivist counterparts. Individualists would much rather prefer recognition over collective rewards and typically search for opportunities where they can exploit their competitive advantage (ibid. 831).

In 2002, Daniel Gould, Kristen Dieffenbach, and Aaron Moffett examined psychological characteristics of ten U.S. Olympic champions whose achievements amassed thirty-two gold medals. Each Olympic athlete was interviewed, as were one of their coaches, a parent, guardian, or significant other. The champions were characterized by their responses and research found that all ten athletes displayed deepened senses of “adaptive perfectionism [and] dispositional hope,” as well as “high levels of optimism,” which clearly led to peak performance (ibid. 172). The study assumed that these feelings of perfectionism were related to a personal sentiment of *individual* performance. Based primarily on previous achievements, each champion had an overwhelming notion that the next competition would be in his or her favor. The highly competitive spirit of an American athlete further exemplifies how having certain inalienable traits, such as an astounding sense of confidence in personal achievement, directly links to a dynamic performance as well as a personal goal to become the best (ibid.).

Several years ago Diane Gould and David Dzewaltowski compared the importance of competitiveness, goal-orientation, and mastery between non-athletes and intercollegiate athletes from a Division I program. Prior to this study, several sport psychologists suggested that males are much more concerned with winning than their female counterparts, and that athletes are much more likely to be goal-oriented than non-athletic students from the same university (ibid.).

It was noted from this investigation that both of those assumptions held true. Upon further examination, both researchers came across results which ascertained another assumption which laid claim to male athletes being more competitive than female athletes involved in the same sports program (ibid. 216). The results further validate the claim that people with highly competitive attributes aspire to win, are centered on winning, and adore the expectation of additional competition wherein he or she can further demonstrate individual competencies.

2. Achievement Needs

There are certain desirable qualities within a highly competitive person that are often aligned with a high need for recognition and achievement. Individuals with a high degree of self-confidence are usually characterized as “egocentric” and are often considered “ambitious... competitive,” and self-efficacious (Langevoort 969). These individuals are described as optimists, a trait characteristic directly associated with “persistence and risk-taking” (ibid. 969). These individuals have an inflated sense of ability to control themselves, their emotions, their environment, and their destiny. Regardless of their level of loyalty to the team, Donald C. Langevoort believes that such people are “not necessarily realists” and often make “autonomous” decisions simply because “loyalty is somewhat easy to fake” (ibid.). With little regard for negative consequence, athletes with strong achievement standards take actions to improve their own performance, as if “there [was] some survivorship bias in terms of the personality characteristics of those who win in these highly competitive settings” (ibid. 970). Competitive conditions radically change every year and dictate the actions of high-performing athletes despite the conscientiousness they may have displayed in the past.

Jennifer Cumming and Craig Hall examined the use of deliberate imagery practice among 159 athletes in order to understand the relevance between imagery and athletic performance in 2002. The sample consisted of people from three “different competitive standards”- recreational athletes, provincial athletes and national professionals (ibid. 137). The researchers characterized their results and assessed the framework for each of these standards in order to properly validate the conclusion. Differences in independent factors, including “sex and the type of sport” were of little significance to the study, however, dependent factors, primarily “the estimated time spent imaging the different imagery activities in a current typical week and the accumulated hours of imagery practice across an athlete’s career” made up the bulk of the questionnaire’s analysis (ibid. 140). The data shows that athletes’ “perceptions of the relevance of imagery” were significantly related to competitive performance (ibid.). The data also shows a relationship between the relevance of implementing imagery practices with the athlete’s competitive standard: athletes in the national standard were noted to have applied imagery practices more frequently than those in the recreational category. Additionally, athletes who claimed to find relativity between imagery and performance, and who used these imagery practices often, identified an improvement in individual performance when utilizing said activities and were found to have an increased sense of confidence and excitement upon competition (ibid. 141-142). Most importantly, the tests found that achievement-oriented individuals such as these appear to spend long periods of time structuring crucial strategies, utilizing fundamental skills, and visualizing pivotal goals in order to harness and mobilize their motivationally-specific goals (ibid.).

Furthermore, a study of forty elite wrestlers, in 1977, identified additional psychological characteristics amounting to an overwhelming desire for achievement. The sample comprised of

males from 18 to 32 in age and held “the top 10% of all Canadian wrestlers” at the time (Highlen and Bennet 124). The study consisted of seventeen questionnaire factors related to poor and outstanding performance. The data indicated that, among the major factors related to role performance, three tactics were used by wrestlers in order to combat anxiety and the lack of preparation. It was noted that wrestlers who specified that “being the favorite” was their most important goal were more likely to experience an “ease in controlling mental images” (ibid. 127). These mental images ranged from being able to visualize a take-down, to controlling the opponent, and included “getting the image to do what [the wrestler] want[ed] it to do” (ibid. 126). The data was analyzed and it confirmed that the most prominent wrestlers were better equipped to handle anxiety and utilized self-talk “both 1-week... and 1 day... prior” to the event, which increased self-confidence and improved the likelihood that individual achievement needs were met in the competition (ibid. 128).

Notable Cases

There are several notable individuals who combined a highly competitive mindset with a strong need for achievement while participating in performance sports. These individuals include:

Aaron Rodriguez: A distinguished New York Yankee and a record dooper, “A-Rod’s” career is quite certainly among the most popular and notable in the league. During his time with the Texas Rangers in 2000-2003, A-Rod admitted to taking steroids obtained through his cousin (Waldstein B11). After testing positive for performance enhancing drugs in 2003 and in 2013, having had both hips surgically repaired, and missing much of 2013 and all of the 2014 campaign, A-Rod somehow continues to play baseball for the Yankees. In fact, on May 2 of this

year (2015), A-Rod hit his 660th career home run, tying Willie Mays for fourth place in major league baseball's all-time list of players (Hoch). Surprising as this may sound, and as loyal as he may appear to be to the team, his loyalty to the sport and his multi-million dollar contract are now being questioned. Who knows how long A-Rod will remain marketable or if he'll ever give up the steroids (Waldstein).

Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson: The Rock is a former World Wrestling Entertainment heavyweight champion, a former defensive tackle in high school in Pennsylvania, and a former defensive lineman for the Miami Hurricanes (Ditzian). He has transformed the world of entertainment and has become an international movie star who has more than eight million followers on Twitter, more than forty-eight million likes on Facebook, and over ten million views on a YouTube video that Spike Entertainment posted earlier this month, his following continues to grow stronger with each passing day. His appearances on Lip Sync Battle and World Wrestling Entertainment become trending topics on social media within seconds, and his epic journey from an impoverished youth to a millionaire remains a worldwide phenomenon. Unfortunately, “The Rock” is not as impeccable as he may appear, and about five years ago had admitted to using steroids with his buddies while playing a dominant role on the 1991 Hurricanes National Championship team (ibid.). The idolized star embraced his irresponsibility without any hesitation and recognized that in this day and age “we have to institute stronger penalties” for this kind of negligence (ibid.) It is assumed that Mr. Johnson is currently off of steroids and has been for some time.

Arnold Schwarzenegger: The seven-time Mr. Olympia winner has *no* regrets about his steroid use. During an interview with ABC News over ten years ago, the former governor of California, professional bodybuilder and movie star admitted to using performance-enhancing drugs during

his early bodybuilding career (ABC News). The Austrian prodigy simply embodied the “strong man” persona that Hollywood was missing in the 1970s, and after making several appearances in international competitions and clearly dominating his opponents, his physique and chiseled appearance impressed movie producers throughout the United States. By the time anabolic steroids were banned in the country, Arnold’s popularity was enormous. His retirement from bodybuilding was only several months after the Controlled Substances Act classified steroids as a Schedule III Drug (DEA / Drug Scheduling). Even after the testimony, Arnold’s face can still be found on Whey protein and pre-workout supplements today. Arnold’s legacy is legendary, his achievements are unparalleled, and his success as a businessman is unrivaled. Mr. Schwarzenegger is among few admirable individuals who have openly admitted to using steroids without any remorse. Even after “knowing what he knows now about the performance-enhancing drugs” he claims that he would still have used them today (ABC News).

Lance Armstrong: Not to be confused with Neil Armstrong (the first man to walk on the Moon), Lance Armstrong was a cycling prodigy. Not only did Lance utilize his testicular cancer to gain support for his “Livestrong” brand, which raised millions of dollars for cancer research, he often publicized it to distinguish himself from the other competitors in order to become the most renowned cyclist in the world. He won bronze at the 2000 Sydney Olympics and took the Tour de France by storm, winning the tournament seven times from 1999 to 2005 (Macuer). Lance, however, was stripped of all seven titles and the bronze medal in 2012, when the International Cycling Union refused to appeal the United States Anti-Doping Agency’s ruling banning the cyclist from Olympic sports for life, due to his vehement use of performance-enhancing drugs. The superstar unceremoniously fell from grace, lost nearly all of his sponsors, and stepped down as the chairman of Livestrong within two weeks of the ruling (ibid.). At this

time, Mr. Armstrong is facing innumerable legal problems, many of which include claims of perjury and deceit, and is being forced to repay over \$12 million to a Dallas-based insurance company for his inexcusable behavior. The Livestrong brand is currently under fire as well, as are his teammates and coach (Armour).

Sammy Sosa: A gifted Chicago Cub, Sosa was among several legends to have reached peak performance during the new millennia. Sammy pursued Roger Maris' single season home run record, but was beaten by four hits in 1998, when St. Louis's Mark McGwire scored seventy runs during the same season (Justice C1). After testifying at a public hearing in front of Congress, in 2005, and claiming to have "never taken illegal performance-enhancing drugs," Sammy tested positive for anabolic steroids during the 2003 season (Schmidt, "Sosa Is Said to Have Tested Positive in 2003" B11). Sammy's reputation was quickly tarnished by legal troubles when the Justice Department began to investigate his case for signs of perjury and fraud. Even though his MLB record stands after the drug tests were validated, Sammy Sosa's misconduct lost him fame, fortune, and the opportunity to be inducted into baseball's Hall of Fame (ibid.).

Mark McGwire: Among the most celebrated baseball players of all time, Mark McGwire's legacy began in 1998. The most memorable parts of the steroid era of baseball began when McGwire decided to chase Roger Maris' single season home run record. Set in 1961, Maris' incredible feat is still recognized as a "true" record among baseball fans around the nation. On September 8, 1998, McGwire captivated the nation by hitting sixty-two home runs in a single season and on the same night was presented with the first "Commissioner's Historic Achievement Award... a '62 Corvette... [and] the ball he hit" out of the park (Justice C1). After crying on camera, receiving a bid of \$1 million for the baseball, and leaving a legacy of seventy

home runs in a single season, McGwire finally came clean about his steroid use almost twelve years after shattering the record. Despite retiring in 2001, at the age of 38, McGwire truly believed he had a gift for hitting the ball and claimed to have taken the steroids for “health purposes” rather than performance enhancement (Weinbaum). Instead of being punished, Mark was supported for his confession and was quickly forgiven in spite of his disappointing actions. His legacy, untarnished, still stands today.

Barry Bonds: In 2001, Barry Bonds beat Mark McGwire’s single-season home run record just three years after Mark set it. That year Bonds hit seventy-three home runs and, prior to leaving the sport in 2007, broke Hank Aaron’s career home run record of 762 on August 7, 2007 (Schmidt, “Sosa Is Said to Have Tested Positive in 2003”). His appearance on the 2013 Hall of Fame ballot was almost destined, but several charges issued against him in 2009 ultimately denied him the privilege. Having lied to a federal grand jury about using performance-enhancing drugs in 2003 and suppressed the “24 drug tests from 2000-06; more than two dozen drug calendars... [and the] witness descriptions” of his characteristics, Bonds was accustomed to falsifying the truth (ESPN). His luck ran out after several lawsuits found him guilty of using *three* different kinds of steroids from 2000-2003, for which he was financially punished (FOX News). Many consider his apologies to be just as bogus as the major league baseball’s decision to uphold his legacy (ESPN).

Roger Clemens: Prior to significant steroid scandals, specifically those involving Sammy Sosa, Barry Bonds, and Alex Rodriguez, using performance-enhancing drugs was a negligible activity. Player’s unions refused to allow drug testing of major league players up until 2003, when the collective bargaining efforts finally came to an agreement about how the MLB will conduct these tests. Initially, testing positive for performance-enhancing drugs would result in trivial penalties

for first-time offenders, often leading to ten-day suspensions or insignificant fees. Roger Clemens, on the other hand, was an exception to this rule. Having played twenty-four combined seasons for the Red Sox, Blue Jays, Yankees, and Astros, respectively, Clemens was accused of using steroids late in his career in the Mitchell Report released in 2007, the same year he chose to retire (Schmidt, "Clemens Lied About Doping, Indictment Charges"). After facing several counts of false statements, perjury, and obstruction of justice, following a televised Congressional hearing in 2008, Mr. Clemens was found not guilty and was acquitted mid-June in 2012 (Macur). In the end, "the trial became Mr. Clemens's word against that of Mr. McNamee," and his words, to this day, ring on like church bells of freedom (ibid. A1). Clemens remains silent about his actions and is still considered a major player of his time.

Conclusion

Individuals such as these have become idolized by children, teens, adults, and other sports figures nationwide. Without proper guidance and support, many are terrified that the upcoming generations of athletes will neglect rules and regulations, just as their heroes have for so many years. With hundreds of admirable sports figures retaining ownership of the records they have set, it appears that national agencies are lacking authority in accurately penalizing competitive athletes for using performance-enhancing drugs. Somehow, reputations remain untainted and several athletes have even been rewarded for their unprecedented honesty regarding doping agents. To this day, athletes and superstars continue to make millions of dollars at the expense of their teammates, coaches, and fans, and as their notoriety soars, so does the likelihood that this phenomenon will continue to spread further.

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