

The effects of corruption in sports on the Olympic Ideals and Sponsorship programmes

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Introduction

Corruption is an issue that constantly crops up in top level sports. 2010 was yet another year blighted by corruption scandals, most notably in Cricket with a betting scandal involving three Pakistani cricketers, leading to their suspension. 2011 has opened with scandals of match fixing in sumo-wrestling and the suspension of a Premier League Footballer over drug misuse, and there will undoubtedly be more to come. The Olympic movement is one that has continually faced issues of corruption since its conception. This issue is one that Pierre de Coubertin was well aware of in establishing the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1894, and by establishing the Olympic Charter he hoped to prevent the apparent evils such as corruption from his Olympic movement.

Sport stands as an important societal institution and is considered as important in relaying ideals, norms and values on to those who participate or spectate. Indeed, the inception of the modern Olympic Games was in part an attempt to revive the games with the basis of reforming and highlighting these sporting ethics. Within its charter, the modern Olympic Movement illustrates the institutional value(s) of sport as

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a goal to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practised without discrimination or any kind, in a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play¹. This represents the most recent update of the Olympic Charter, a principle that Pierre Baron de Coubertin laid down in his founding of the IOC. The concept of 'Fair play' is mentioned here and refers to athletes competing in an honest manner, not seeking to break rules and win by unfair practice.

Businesses have sought to associate themselves with the positive images of sport knowing too that they can benefit from the ideals of the sport. Through sponsorship, a business relationship through which support is offered in return for rights and association², this can be achieved. The target for the income from sponsorship for the London 2012 Olympics is £700m, an enormous amount of money, showing the need for sponsors within sport.

This essay will examine the ways in which this principle of fair play as established by Coubertin has been affected by athletes and officials breaking of rules in the past 117 years, termed 'corruption'. The Olympics will be the focus for this study, but other sports will be examined as the birth of the IOC has had an impact on the formation of other international sporting organisations which have been founded on the principles laid out by Coubertin. It will also be in the interest of the essay to discuss the issue of the collision of commercial sponsorship and corruption and ultimately the impact on the companies who have invested money and their reputation in athletes.

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Throughout this essay, it is argued that corruption in sport takes on many forms, and not only robs sport of its essential feature of uncertainty thus forcing it into the forum of entertainment. It also has the potential to erode the fundamental foundations of sport and therefore of sporting integrity. Integrity, once lost is very difficult to retrieve. It is therefore essential to protect that integrity to ensure that sport is free from corrupt influence that may jeopardise the authenticity and unpredictability of sporting outcomes and continue to attract much needed sponsorship.

What is Corruption

'Corruption' is a term that is wide and varied in its definition. In its simplest form, corruption has been defined as 'dishonest and illegal behaviour'³ And as *'the misuse of authority for personal, subunit and/or organisational gain'*⁴. Similarly, Treisman⁵ defines it as the *"misuse of public office for private gain"*.

In investigating corruptive behaviour of sports officials and within the governance of sport, these definitions are well suited⁶. An example of this form is the bidding process for the 2002 Winter Olympics, won by Salt Lake City amidst claims of corruption of officials. However, in identifying corruption within the context of a sporting contest, Chadwick and Gorse⁷ provide the definition of corruption as involving:

"any illegal, immoral or unethical activity that attempts to deliberately distort the result of a sporting contest for the personal material gain of one or more parties involved in that activity"

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This is instantly recognisable within sport. As attempts to alter the results of a sporting contest to increase the certainty of outcome, corruption centres around match fixing or gambling; biased refereeing; and, to a similar but different degree, the use of performance enhancing drugs⁸. This definition seeks to take into account the role of athletes and officials who manipulate sporting contests, a definition that will be adopted throughout the rest of this essay.

The Historical perspective

Corruption in sport is not a new phenomenon. At the Olympic Games in 388BC, Eupolos Thessalia bribed three of his competitors in a fighting tournament, allowing him to win⁹. The modern Olympic movement has also continually fought against corruption and had to change its values in order to attempt to keep it out of the Games. Amateurism is a philosophy that the Olympic movement owes its foundation to, as Coubertin originally established the Paris Congress of June 1894 to discuss the issue of amateurism¹⁰, and only later did the revival of the Olympic Games join the discussion. The result of the meeting was a strict code of amateurism was established along this guideline for what constitutes a professional:

'Any individual who has never participated in a competition open to all comers, nor completed for a cash prize, or for a prize of any amount of

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money regarding of its source, specifically from admissions to the field-or with professionals-and who had never been, at any time in his life, a teacher or paid instructor in physical exercise¹¹.

The strict code of amateurism remained at the heart of the Olympic ideal until the 1971 when firstly Article 26 removed from the charter, then the following year broken time payments were allowed for athletes missing work in order to train. Amateurism was gradually then faded out of the Olympic movement and in 1988 professionals became allowed to compete.

Instances of amateurs not being amateurs but professionals under the amateur pretence appear throughout Olympic history and can be seen as a form of corruption. The most blatant example of this being the Soviet athletes, known by the IOC to be professionals, as there were reports that they were given awards and cash prizes for performances. Also their jobs enabled them to train as professionals, only the IOC's desire to avoid an international incident during the tense period of Cold War international relations allowed them to continue and Soviet athletes to be termed "state amateurs¹²". This instance of corruption was just one that diminished Coubertin's principles for the Olympic Games.

Nationalism, and the promotion of the nation state was behind the Soviet's desire to have their athletes at the top of the rostrum. The Olympics are a setting where nations have played out their political, social and economic struggles and attempted to gain the upper hand over their rivals. The Olympics first became a sphere for world supremacy at the

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1908 London Olympics when the host nation and the United States contested for what was described as 'The battle for world supremacy in athletics, and symbolic supremacy as the globe's most vigorous nation'¹³. This contest brought about allegations of corruption from the American team who claimed that the British tug of war team had used illegal boots to gain an advantage and that a American 400 metre runner had been disqualified simply because he had beaten the home favourite. Whether there was corruption on the part of the British officials did happen is not important, but the mere suggestion of allegations harmed Olympic ideals.

The ideals that the Olympics had been founded on continued to be damaged since 1908, and corruption has been a major contributor to the problem. Corruption has not just been limited to the Olympics and the ideals of fair play have been damaged by instances of drug taking, result fixing, bad practice by officials both on and off the field.

Drugs in sport

The use of performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) in sport is commonly referred to as 'doping'. The uses of these drugs are mostly done to improve athletic improvement and ultimately achieve top performance. Categorising doping as a form of corruption isn't a widespread view. Whilst Hughes and Coakley¹⁴ suggest that corruptive behaviour or 'positive deviance' in sport occurs when individuals want to be viewed as 'athletes' by the peers and wider society, hence the use of PEDs may be a means to achieving this. However, Maening¹⁵ fails to recognise doping as a form of corruption as he opines that corrupt activity

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is a failure to perform whereas the use of PEDs leads to super-performance as an athlete. Ultimately, it is an issue of contention to many organisations seeking to prevent the corruption of the image and heritage of sport.

Whilst many consider the biggest dishonour of sport to be the doping scandal of the 1988 Tour de France, this provided the catalyst for the formation of 'The World Anti-Doping Agency' (WADA), an independent foundation created through a collective initiative spearheaded by IOC. The actions of the sporting governing bodies to ban the use of illegal substances are a form of self-regulation necessitated by the concern that in its absence, governments may turn to statutory regulation¹⁶.

Before the inception of WADA, the use of performance-enhancing drugs had long been an issue of contention to sporting organisations and governments for a variety of reasons. Firstly, there is the issue that athletes who engage in doping are harming themselves. Numerous writers have spoken about the possible side effects of the use of one PED, anabolic steroids relating to damage to the cardiovascular, reproductive and psychological elements¹⁷. The negative effects of the use of steroids is clearly demonstrated in the case of German shot putter Heidi Krieger who unbeknownst to her was systematically doped with steroids from the age of 16. Now having to assume the identity of a man following sex reassignment surgery due to the overdevelopment of male characteristics associated with steroid use.

Secondly, considering that sport acts as a tool of socialisation for young people by conveying ideals, norms and values. It may come as no

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surprise that in a 1999 survey¹⁸ found that famous athletes are the second most admired group of people by youth coming in ahead of teachers and friends. Substance abuse including the use of PEDs and other recreational drugs, therefore, has to be regulated to portray the right image. The use of PEDs within this context is a problem largely because of the fear that such activities will percolate down to other forms of abuse among young people on and off the playing field and thus, create a much more widespread problem¹⁹

A third argument against the use of PED's is related to the weakening of the principle ethic of the Olympic Games and modern sport of fair play. In essence, the attraction of sport lies in the interest of observing contests involving the exercise of natural skills as displayed in old adage 'citius , altius, fortius'. This becomes increasingly undermined the more spectators come to believe that outcomes are driven by the technical skills of doping advisors as opposed to innate physical ability²⁰.

When athletes engage in the use of substances to enhance their performance, others who train and compete legitimately and with integrity are placed at a considerable disadvantage. For example Doping does not only diminish fair play but also creates scepticism whenever an athlete performs at a high level and surpasses past benchmarks²¹. The exceptional performances of Usain Bolt and Michael Phelps in the 2008 Olympic Games immediately drew accusations that doping must have aided their performances. Doping has the effect of escalating public mistrust towards athletes and thus further disenfranchising organisations from engaging in sponsorship activity.

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Many have written in support of the legalisation of performance enhancing drugs in sport²² for a variety of reasons ranging from humans having genetic advantages which enable them to perform better in different sports to safety in sport not being imminent due to the fact that athletes are injury prone, thus the use of drugs does not add to this. But Thomas H. Murray, a pre-eminent bioethicist sums the argument up well by stating:

"If everyone was allowed to use performance-enhancing substances, then everyone would be on a level playing field. Fairness would be accommodated, but such an allowance would detract from the meaning of sport. Sport should be about the pursuit of excellence and fairness but that pursuit should not be unlimited or unconstrained. We are, after all, human. Prohibiting the use of performance enhancing drugs is an effort to preserve the meaning of athletic competition."

Prohibiting the use of performance enhancing drugs also preserves the Olympic ideal of fair play as intended by De Coubertin. This ultimately retains the features which sponsors are seeking to associate themselves with. However, the debate over making drugs legal for use is one that will undoubtedly continue, and the moral issues of their use will always be at the forefront.

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Match fixing and gambling

The development of modern sports owes much to gambling, as the gentry that set up cricket matches in the 17th and 18th centuries used them as contests for such activities. Sport and gambling have kept close relations in the modern period and horse racing, the sport most closely linked, has endured many scandals of corruption linked to match fixing. As a consequence,, this association has long been an issue of criticism²³ and will always continue to be so.

Gambling in sport has often been the focus of media related reports on corruption involving athletes. Driven by the opportunity to financially gain, match fixing is engaged in to gain some form of gambling on the outcome. Whether it goes detected or undetected, it works so quickly to destroy the integrity of sport and diminish the ethic of fair play. This damages the sports reputation among potential competitors, spectators and sponsors alike, damaging the whole future of the sport.

Fixing the outcome of race is one example of corruption in horse racing, and poses as a real threat to spectator sports and commercial ventures that may follow. IOC President Jacque Rogge in an interview with the BBC²⁴ spoke about the dangers of match fixing and how it even supersedes that of the problem of doping:

"Doping effects one individual athlete... But the impact of match fixing effects the whole competition. It is much bigger²⁵". If matches are fixed,

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they become unattractive for spectators to attend and businesses to invest in as they can no longer be associated with a clean living, healthy image that business desires from their association with sport.

A recent example of a sport having its reputation damaged by match fixing is cricket, damaging the gentlemanly spirit which the ideals of the game are based upon. Involvement from bookmakers emerged in the 1990's but in the year 2000 it came to light that South African captain Hansie Cronje fixed elements of matches, offered money to his players in return to fix their performance in the match. In 2011, three Pakistani cricketers were given minimum five year bans for their part in a match fixing scandal, where the players bowled illegitimate deliveries in certain instances. Mehaffy²⁶ speaks about how such incidents have the effect of destroying the credibility of the game, eroding spectator support and ultimately jeopardising commercial contracts.

Cricket in the short term has not lost out through commercial interests, but the worry is that the corruption could damage potential sponsorship deals. Corruption, through match fixing has been financially harmful to Sumo Wrestling and diminished it from being a well renowned national sport to a sideshow. When a scandal broke in 2011, a major competition was cancelled not only making for a loss of income but also potentially longer term problems of disenfranchised loyal supporters and current and potential sponsors.

Other sports constantly worry about corruptive behaviour deterring potential sponsors. Snooker has struggled for major sponsorship after

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tobacco advertising was made illegal and had its image tarnished after claims of match fixing. The most recent example being world number one, John Higgins seen on video discussing fixing the outcome of a frame. In 2008 snooker legend Steve Davies spoke publicly about the dangers of this: *"I'm worried about the game's future. We are struggling for sponsors as it is. We don't want snooker tarnished by match-fixing²⁷"*. This is a real concern for the game's future as it is heavily dependent on corporate sponsorship, and television revenue for income.

Officials and referees, those with an added responsible to uphold the integrity of the games they engage in, are also prone to be involved in corrupt behaviour. In January 2005, the German Football Association exposed referee Robert Hoyzer for betting and fixing several matches that he worked, including a German Cup tie.

The 2002 Winter Olympics witnessed corruption from French judge, Marie-Reine Le Gougne, who voted for the Russian pair in the figure skating competition in order to help a French pair competing in the Ice dancing competition later on in the Games. This example shows that nationalism does not just promote athletes and associations to become corrupt, but can impact officials also. Such instances add to the diminishment of the values of the Games.

Sponsorship in Sport

Sporting activity has traditionally received considerable attention from major companies in the form of sponsorship²⁸ because of a desire to associate with the benefits sport provides to the social, cultural and

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economic character of a region and country²⁹In turn, 21st century sporting organisations are concerned by their commercial interests, a factor that impacts their financial income and the external pressures in the period of global recession. Thus sponsorship provides an opportunity of exchange of support for rights and association³⁰.

For example golfer Tiger Woods has multiple sponsors and the estimation of his 2007 deal with sports drink manufacturer Gatorade was reportedly worth over \$100m³¹. This after a poll had suggested that 78% of respondents stated that they would try this new variety of drink³². In 2010 a report claimed that 80% of David Beckham's \$40m income came from sponsorship³³ and Jamaican sprinter, Usain Bolt reportedly receives annual contract of \$1.5m from sportswear company Puma after shooting to fame at the 2008 Olympics.

When the sponsee is involved in controversial matters such as corruptive behaviour sponsors are one of the biggest losers as they are linked with the competitors that bring the sport into disrepute. Often this results in sponsors dropping them such as baseball players Barry Bonds and Jason Giambi who lost sponsorship from Mastercard and Pepsi (respectively) due to scandals involving steroids.

As such , a series of scandals involving athletes has produced a boom in 'disgrace' insurance policies bought by multinational companies fearful that their investments in association with 'clean athletes' could tarnish their reputations³⁴. However, the cost has prompted companies to question whether they should be engaging in sponsorship deals at all. Robert Barron of the insurance broker Lockton states that... *"If you start*

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buying disgrace insurance there's a cost, so people are starting to look at types of promotion that are not to do with a certain individual." This demonstrates the effect corruption in sport has on the desire of organisations to associate with sport.

Conclusion

Looking at the impact of corruption, the values of Pierre de Coubertin have undoubtedly been diminished during the past 117 years. The actions of athletes, officials, associations and national bodies have damaged the morals of sport set out in the Olympic charter.

This has happened because of the desire to win, for both nationalistic and material value. It was the growth and strength of the Olympic movement that made it impossible for corruption to be kept out. The value of winning an Olympic gold medal became such that corruption in order to win became an option despite the morals.

These morals are ones that are still crucial to athletes and to organisations and the measures that both of these groups take to keep corruption out of their sports shows the regard in which the morals of Coubertin are still held. More and more athletes come out in support of Anti-Doping organisations, such as British Olympian, Chris Hoy. Coubertin should be proud of such men and organisations.

Corruption has a major affect on those that keep professional sports functioning-spectators, television and sponsors. Corruption puts spectators off attending events, watching them on television and sponsors from giving them the money they need for competitions. However, as the

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relationship of sport sponsorship is one which is mutually beneficial, it is in the interest of multinational organisations who engage in such an activity to become more heavily involved with the likes of Jacques Rogge and the IOC in curbing the influence of corruption in sport. The 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games provides an ideal opportunity to set this in motion.

(3, 516 words)

¹ International Olympic Committee, 2007

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³ Collins English Dictionary

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