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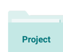

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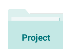

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"We are not sportsmen, we are professionals": professionalism, doping and deviance in elite sport

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Abstract: As a part of its legacy of being the first genuine modern sport, cycling has a proactive attitude to pharmacological developments. This attitude, however, is in conflict with the norms and values of both the wider society in general and the *International Olympic Committee's* (IOC) historical emphasis on the amateur ideal in particular. As such, riders who use banned substances are considered deviants or pariahs. Using Danish elite cycling as a case study, the paper will explore how these contradictory norms are reflected in today's professional and amateur riders' attitudes to doping. The paper concludes by illustrating how the entrepreneurial attitudes of the athletes have developed in different directions: While amateurs came to regard the professionals' attitude to sports as normative, the professionals had to submit to the norms of the amateurs in order to be allowed to compete in important competitions.

Keywords: elite sport; cycling; doping; modernity; amateurism; professionalism; deviance; moral entrepreneurship; the Olympics.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Cycling, modernity and entrepreneurship

Contrary to many other sports, such as tennis, football or track and field, cycling is not characterised by premodern traditions. Because cycling was born with the invention of a machine, it is the first genuine modern sport (Møller, 2005). Although the first *velocipedes* were produced in the 1860s, it was not until the safety bike with chain drive (which was invented in 1884) began to be mass produced by the end of the 19th century that the distribution of the bike became widespread. As a result of the fierce competition between manufacturers, the price of the bike dropped drastically over a ten-year period, and by the beginning of the new century it could be bought for a worker's weekly salary (Rabenstein, 1991, p.50). This changed the bike's characteristics from prestigious toy for the wealthy children of the bourgeoisie, to an effective means of transportation for the masses. With the cheaper and safe 'modern' bike, the common individual had a new possibility to increase his/her mobility. With his/her own power, a person could now be transported three to four times faster than by foot. This expanded people's life radius considerably and provided yet another confirmation of early modern optimism (Møller, 2005, p.85).

From the 1890s cycling gained a foothold as a spectator sport. This was a result of the manufacturers' and the press' interest in arranging races, which could increase their sales of bikes and newspapers respectively (Holt, 1981). The arranged races were often long and strenuous and the first Tour de France in 1903 spanned 2428 km over six stages.

The point is that cycle sport, from the beginning, was surrounded with an aura of entrepreneurship, as it was linked to and rose from early modernity. This is so not only because of the fact that bike riders from the beginning collaborated with physicians and physiologists (Hoberman, 1992, p.80), but also because cycle sport from its birth was commercialised and ruled by market forces. Parallel to this the bike, as a machine, became a symbol of the new era's dreams of expansion and progress. And even though the bike, fundamentally, has kept its original form, it has constantly been improved and made more effective. The bike has thus integrated a proactive technological development in the same way as the riders pushing it forward permanently have made use of the technological and medical progress that could improve their performance. With this entrepreneurial attitude, riders are exploiting the resources available in modern society. This has been the case from the very outset. "With this attitude cycle sport reflects its heritage in modernity" (Møller, 2005, p.90).

However, as regards the use of drugs, cycling's modern and entrepreneurial attitude is in conflict with that of the surrounding society. Whereas cycling still seems to be founded on the values of modernity, the rest of society has to some degree moved away from these. The general societal tendency thus shows signs of an increasing reservation towards parts of the scientific progress, which for instance is expressed in an ambivalent attitude to medical developments. On the one hand, the public's use of medicine is still increasing (Hoberman, 2005). On the other, a pronounced scepticism regarding the side effects of pharmacological innovations and the fundamental positivistic attitude of the medical establishment has emerged. Innovations that with one perspective are regarded positively as progress are from another perspective regarded as a backward step. Cycling, on the other hand, continues to have an offensive approach to medical and technological developments.

Contemporary society’s ambivalent attitude to medicine surfaces in the common aversion to the connection between medicine and sport, which finds its clearest expression in the intensified campaign against doping. This campaign stems from the international sporting bodies, but is followed and intensified by the media. This quandary is the main focus of this article. I will consider why professional athletes who have either used, or are suspected of using, drugs are being labelled deviants. I will attempt to throw light on why these athletes’ offences are regarded so severely, and how their actions were regarded when there was a clear distinction between professional and amateur athletes. In addition, the athletes’ own attitudes to these matters will be discussed, with particular reference to the evident change in their outlook on doping as they climb the ladder of international hierarchy.

2 The case of Bo Hamburger

Since the establishment of the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA) in 1999, the campaign against drug use amongst athletes has intensified. Also in the last decade, athletes’ use of banned substances has come under scrutiny in the media. Consequently, athletes caught using drugs are, to an increasing degree, exposed as deviant outsiders in the world of sport. In addition to the official penalty which is imposed on them on account of their offence, they are labelled as athletes of poor morals, who are spoiling the game for everyone else. Although the athletes usually claim that they have always competed drug free and that a mistake must have been made, this hardly ever supports their case. Even if they are later acquitted due to contradictory B-sample test results or legal quibbling, they are already labelled.

Examples of this can be found in many sports, one typical instance being the case of Danish cyclist Bo Hamburger. Hamburger tested positive for erythropoietin (EPO) the morning after the semiclassic Flèche Wallone in the spring of 2001. Due to irregularities with the B-sample he was later fully exonerated by the doping committee of the Sports Confederation of Denmark as well as at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne, Switzerland. However, the Danish Cycling Federation (DCU) found that Hamburger was so morally incriminated by the case that they chose to ban him from the Danish national team for life. The then president of the DCU, Peder Pedersen, told Danish newspaper *Ekstra Bladet* (2001):

> “There is a legal as well as an ethical definition to this case. DCU has got certain ethical standards and these will not be stretched. We do not wish to persecute Bo Hamburger. But if a rider makes mistakes or acts in a way that is in discrepancy with our code of conduct, that is the end.”

Even though he was among the best Danish riders, Hamburger was declared *persona non grata* in the national team, and was perceived by the DCU president as an unreliable deviant who could not act as a role model: “We are fully entitled to look beyond the sporting issue. After all, the riders must represent our country and act as role models for the youth” (*Jyllands-Posten*, 2001). Despite the fact that Bo Hamburger was never convicted of drug use, the accusations and the labelling of him as deviant did irreparable damage to his career.

3 Proper conduct in sport

When athletes are excluded as outsiders due to their (presumed) use of drugs, it may be explained by the mechanism accounted for by 'labelling theory'. One of the founders of this theory, Becker (1973), writes:

> "[D]eviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender'. The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label." (p.9)

Care is needed, however, when applying this theory. In line with social constructivist thinking, it assumes that there is no act or behaviour that is deviant in itself. When behaviour is labelled deviant, it is only as a consequence of the discourse surrounding it: 'deviant behavior is behavior that people so label'. This theory fits very well with cases such as smoking marijuana or being homosexual (both of which have been used as examples in discussions of labelling theory). But to say that genocide or high-school massacres are only deviant behaviour because we label them so is not only contra-intuitive but also dangerous. It assumes that if we chose to do so, another discourse could surround these 'activities', and they would consequently not be deviant any longer. It is therefore necessary to stress that the public perception of some of the acts we call deviant is not only socially constructed, but also dependent upon the nature of the act(s).

Having expressed this reservation, labelling theory can be useful when trying to understand today's typical response to doping in sport. When someone accused of doping is labelled as deviant by sporting authorities, the press and society, it is, as Becker argues, due to the fact that we have adopted the popular basic question – and answer – in the area of social deviance: "What kind of person would break such an important rule?" And the answer is given: "One who is different from the rest of us, who cannot or will not act as a moral human being" (Becker, 1973, p.34). This extrajudicial judgement of the athlete accused of doping thus reflects the common view that some people become deviant because their motives and values deviate from what is 'normal'. The definition of 'normal' is concerned with norms, and norms indicate the type of behaviour that is accepted within certain social and cultural contexts.

But the definition of 'normal' in the world of sports is not as unambiguous as one might think. This is because the norms that sport is *said* to have are not the same as the norms regulating the sporting hierarchies. There is, in other words, a discrepancy between the sporting behaviour praised in speeches, which sport educators and politicians assert that sport should promote, and the behaviour that is expressed by virtue of the athletes' will to victory. On the one hand, there is a will to regulate sport normatively through *the spirit of sport*, which adheres to ideals such as fair play and sportsmanship – ideals associated with the traditional image of the English gentleman as a 'good sport'. These ideals are often promoted by politicians and top executives in sport who claim that sport *ought to* serve a higher societal purpose. Thus, *the spirit of sport* manifests itself as a pedagogical ideal. On the other hand, there is *the essence of sport*; this is constituted by the internal driving force of sport, and is best described by the Olympic motto – 'faster, higher, stronger'. As the practical reality of sport, *the essence of sport* is expressed

through the ambitious athlete’s entrepreneurial and uncompromising attitude to his/her training, restitution and diet, as is the unruly will to victory, which is the driving force behind his/her strict diet and training regime (Møller, 2008).

In reality, sport proves to be anything but moderation. It is excess and transgression rather than restraint and modesty. In sport the focus is not on what is morally good but on the best performance. He/She who wants to perform in sport must be governed by an entrepreneurial attitude to his/her practice that the founder of modern Olympism, Coubertin, described via five characteristics essential for the sportsman: “initiative, perseverance, intensity, search for perfection, and scorn for potential danger” (Coubertin, 2000, p.565). Sport, Coubertin (2000) added, is the place where there is “freedom of excess. That is its essence, its reason for being, the secret of its moral value” (p.556).[1]

Thus, when athletes caught doping subsequently are exposed as immoral outsiders, this is not because they have offended against the imperative of sport concerning improvement of performance, which constitutes *the essence of sport*. Neither is it because they have broken a certain rule specific to their sport. These are broken all the time and when it happens, the athlete is normally punished with a caution or, in serious cases, a short ban. But there is no public condemnation or labelling of the athlete in question as deviant. The reason is that the doping users have offended against some apparently basic norms guiding what sport *ought* to be; they have offended against something fundamental for *the spirit of sport*. Nonetheless, the use of doping is best understood as a *possible* consequence of *the essence of sport* and its imperative of performance. The values attributed to the athlete labelled as a doping sinner are therefore produced *post festum*, against the background of – and are therefore not the explanation for – the fact that he is labelled as deviant. Basically, doping is not associated with deviant subjects but with the essence of sport.

4 Clean amateurs and doped professionals

A central reason for labelling athletes using doping as deviant is that the potential conflict between the regulating norms of the spirit of sport and of the essence of sport is not taken into account. Previously, when there was a clear distinction between amateurs and professionals, the difference between these two sets of norms was clearer. But as the distinction between amateurism and professionalism as two fundamentally different ways of approaching sport has become less clear, so has the difference between these norms. This is probably an important reason why athletes using banned performance-enhancing drugs are currently labelled as deviant outsiders.

Although the current media attention given to doping among athletes and the condemnation of this behaviour suggest that the issue has a long history in the sporting community, it is in fact only relatively recently that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has started to regard doping as a distinct problem. The organisation did not start testing until 1968, and up until the end of the 1970s, doping continued to be described as a problem concerning the question of eligibility. The IOC was an organisation for amateur sport, and doping was regarded as something associated with professional sport. In fact, the first organisation to ban doping was The English Jockey Club in 1903, and this was not because it was regarded as unnatural, unhealthy, or unfair, but because

doping caused problems for those who arranged the betting and those who gambled on the horses (Hoberman, 1992). For the IOC professional sport was a degenerate type of sport, in sharp contrast to the ideal amateur sport where the purpose was "the betterment of the human race" (IOC. The Olympic Charter, 2007).

The issue of doping was not even on the IOC's agenda until the 1930s. At the Olympic Games in Los Angeles in 1932, a number of athletes had made use of injections, oxygen inhalation and exposure to ultraviolet light. This led to discussions in the IOC on the ethics of sport, which in 1938 resulted in the decision that "The use of drugs or artificial stimulants of any kind must be condemned most strongly, and everyone who accepts or offers dope, no matter in what form, should not be allowed to participate in amateur meetings or in the Olympic Games" (Dimeo, 2007, p.50).

Thirty years would pass, however, before the IOC introduced legally enforceable rules and sanctions against the use of particular substances at the games in Grenoble and Mexico City in 1968. And when that happened, it was grounded more in concern for the athletes' health than because doping was regarded as being in conflict with the fundamental principle of Olympism (Pound, 2004, pp.55–56). Thus, until the beginning of the 1980s, the IOC considered doping as a matter belonging to the ban against professionalism. When IOC president Killanin in 1976 very briefly mentioned the issue of doping in his and Rodda's review of the events in the Olympic movement, it is in connection with his account of the 80-year-long IOC discussion on 'eligibility and amateurism' (the so-called Rule 26) (Killanin and Rodda, 1976, pp.143, 152). In light of these circumstances, the sports historian John Hoberman points out that all the way up to and including the 1950s, there existed a "cultural apartheid [that] separated drug-free amateurs from professional athletes, whose right to use drugs was taken for granted". And he continues: "Revelations about amateur athletes' use of amphetamines therefore provoked real consternation" (Hoberman, 2005, p.183).

This clear distinction between amateurs and professionals can be identified in the IOC's early discussions about doping. For the IOC the distinction between an amateur and a professional was not only based on whether the athletes made money from their sport or not; more importantly, it also had fundamental moral implications. Amateurism was the moral norm for practising sport, professionalism the deviation from this. Significant for this understanding is the use of the word 'contamination' for cases where amateurs mixed and competed with professionals. The danger of contamination was regarded so seriously that, if communication between amateurs and professionals was revealed, the amateurs in question risked losing their amateur status. For amateurs who did not adhere to the rules – by accepting prize money or other forms of payment – the name 'Shamateur', or false amateur, was invented. Professional athletes were despised, which is why it was possible to claim that only amateurs truly practised sport (Killanin and Rodda, 1976, pp.145–149).[2] If the athlete made money on his performances, it was considered work, and then other norms applied.

That even the athletes themselves were well aware of this distinction is evident from the comments of the professional German cyclist Rudi Altig when he won the World Championships in 1966. Along with the other top-six finishers – including such prominent names as Jacques Anquetil, Raymond Poulidor and Jean Stablinski – he subsequently refused to be tested for doping. When journalists later asked how he could defend a gold medal won on doping, he replied, "We are not sportsmen, we are professionals" (Fotheringham, 2002, pp.166, 170). Such a statement seems almost unintelligible today, because there is no longer any distinction between the two sides in

Altig's proclamation. On the contrary, it is a commonly held view today that real sportsmen are professionals. Even in sports where only the absolute world elite makes money – such as in swimming and rowing for instance – the athletes speak about having a professional attitude to their sport. Accordingly, it is offensive to label serious athletes as amateurish, even though the IOC officially maintained that the Olympic Games were for amateurs up until 1991.[3]

Along with the gradual approval to compete at the Olympic Games, the professionals had to submit to the rules that originally applied to the amateurs. They had to acquire the spirit of amateurs, and the moral distinction that had existed between amateurs and professionals began to fade away. So, we have the situation today where athletes claim that they are following the rules and not doping, for instance. Meanwhile, public statements about autonomous, professional athletes' right to look after themselves, like the ones made by Altig and Anquetil in the 1960s, have become fewer. This, however, does not mean the problem of doping has decreased. In fact, after the doping control was institutionalised at the end of the 1960s, international sport continued to become more professional and commercial, and there is nothing to suggest that the use of doping among professional athletes has declined significantly over the last 35 years. Nevertheless, there still seems to be a difference in opinion about doping among athletes depending on whether they consider themselves to be professionals or amateurs. This can be illustrated by a study of Danish elite cycling.

5 Doping and Danish cycling

For the purposes of this study I identified three distinct groups of Danish elite riders.[4] One group of aspiring young talents, a second group of amateur riders and a third group of professional riders. I will briefly outline below the typical points of view and attitudes to doping within these three groups, since they illustrate the differences that continue to exist with respect to doping, according to the athletes' level of competition.

5.1 Talents

The attitude to doping is consistent among the majority of the talented young Danish cyclists. From an early stage they have learned to disapprove of it. None of those interviewed expressed any experience with banned drugs or methods. They generally utter great uncertainty and have little knowledge of what one might use and which drugs actually do have a performance-enhancing effect. They have heard about EPO and, to a limited extent, they know how the drug worked. But they remain largely ignorant of the three other potent drugs (amphetamine, anabolic steroids and growth hormone). Similarly, none of these riders admit to having been offered drugs by teammates, trainers or others, and they only have a vague idea of where they should go if they were interested in procuring drugs. Mike, who then rode for the under-23 national team, exemplifies this position:

> "One may suspect that some people are trying to do something. But I have to admit that I've never come across anyone who's offered me anything. So I find it hard to believe that it's so widespread, because I think I've been

> quite close to the top of Danish cycling, and I've never ever been offered anything or seen anybody do anything. So it seems a bit strange to me that it should be so widespread."
>
> *But let's imagine that you wanted something, would you know where to go then?*
>
> "No, I actually wouldn't. Apart from the fact that you can go to your local gym and get something there if you want bigger muscles. But that's not of much use to me."

Anabolic steroids, which Mike expects to be able to find at his local gym, have been and are still being used by some cyclists. His statement that bigger muscles are of no use to him demonstrates the kind of ignorance about drugs which is characteristic of the interviewed talented riders in general. They all belong to the absolute elite of Danish youth riders. During their development they have mainly experienced progress and good results and have continually had their skills and talent confirmed. They have achieved their results by virtue of this talent, through intensive training and a disciplined way of life, but most likely without the use of banned drugs. Hence, it is no wonder that they also expect in the future to be able to assert themselves in the sport without doping. For some riders, however, this perception will eventually change.

5.2 Amateurs

This group of riders is identical with what could be called the Danish national elite. They do not have lucrative contracts, but they may have a small income mainly based on prize money in addition to their gear and travel expenses, which are paid by their team sponsor. Also in this group, the use of doping seems limited. In general, these riders have brought with them the attitudes against doping they developed as young riders into the senior league. They too have only limited knowledge of the effects of drugs and where to get them, which is reflected in their view of the drugs as alien and exotic. Some riders, such as Simon, talk about them with certain awe:

> "I have no knowledge of doping within cycling. Maybe some people use something, but I know nothing about what drugs to take to get better. I've heard about EPO, of course, but if you don't know how to use it, you're no better off. Or you'll probably drop dead."

However, the lack of knowledge and fear of the drugs' effects are not the only significant aspects of these riders' view of doping. Although they share the opinion that doping is wrong and should be fought, it does not mean that there is a clear-cut condemning attitude to riders who have tested positive. Jim, a rider who has had minor contracts with Danish teams, demonstrates an understanding of the complexity of the doping question. He states that he has never used doping himself and stresses further that it is "absolutely possible to ride professionally without taking EPO and hormones and amphetamines and all that". He dissociates himself from the use of doping, but introduces a more nuanced view of drug users by comparing their offences with drink driving and infidelity:

> "I can't accept doping, like I can't accept drink-driving. But if one of my really good mates was caught drink-driving I wouldn't drop him for that. Neither would I if he told me that he had slept with some other girl. I can't accept it, but it's damn hard. It's definitely cheating, and it's like knowing a workman who goes moonlighting. But somehow that's almost accepted in today's society. I don't say that doping is accepted, but there's so much cheating. For instance,

> when it was publicised that two of my friends had taken doping – and you distance yourself from it and don’t do it yourself – then it’s hard just to say: ‘I won’t talk to you anymore, because you’re bloody fools!’”

Jim cannot blindly condemn those of his friends and colleagues who have used doping. For him, and the majority of the other amateurs, it seems that as young riders they were clearly opposed to doping, but their views on professional riders’ use of drugs gets more nuanced as they get older. The gradual change in opinion forms alongside a considerable increase in the consumption of vitamins and diet supplements as these athletes grow older. Thus, one does not find a one-sided condemnation of the use of drugs in sport among the best Danish amateur riders.

5.3 Professionals

It comes as no surprise that the majority of the interviewees in this group claim never to have used banned performance-enhancing drugs. But even the riders who admit to have doped believe that it would be better if everybody raced ‘clean’. The fact that they have not adhered to this ideal themselves is either due to being in situations where they were so exhausted physically that they felt they had to take drastic action in order to recuperate, or their ambitions have forced them to play by the same rules as they believe their rivals to play by. However, the situation today among the best Danish riders is quite likely different from the doping heydays in international cycling in the 1990s (Voet, 2001). When asked whether he has ever used doping drugs, Martin, who has raced as a support rider in several professional teams, answers:

> “No. I know many people claim that it’s impossible to race professionally without doping. But you can, without doubt, race without doping. I know so many riders who do. But I’m also sure that many riders have, in fact, used something.”

However, his reason for not using doping hitherto was not high moral standards, but rather that he was scared of getting caught and that he did not think his level of performance justified such use. But he nuances his view on this by adding: “If the right time came, I would also take some stuff. It’s not like I’ve said: ‘I will never touch it!’ I’ve never felt that strong about it.”

For Martin doping is not so much a moral question, but rather a question of finding yourself in a position where you can use drugs without getting caught by the controls. And that is much more difficult for support riders than it is for the stars, because they do not have total control over when they will be in a race. In other words, Martin is aware that some professional riders schedule their doping in accordance with their season planning, so they can avoid the risk of a positive test in connection with a race.

However, there are some professional riders who have chosen not to dope not only because of the risk of getting caught, but also because it violates their ethical standards. When asked whether he has ever felt tempted to dope in order to enhance his performances, Steven answers:

> “No, never. You need to make up your own mind about that and decide what you want. It is, after all, only cycling. You need to stick with what you think and say that it’s bloody unnecessary. That’s all there is to it.”

By saying that “it is, after all, only cycling”, Steven shows that, even though he is a committed professional leading a disciplined life that involves intensive training, cycling is not essential to his life. His ambition is not to win any of the great races but to maintain his position in the bottom half of the hierarchy of his team.

However, David’s attitude demonstrates that not everybody takes this view:

> “I’ve wanted to be a professional rider since I was a boy, and now I’ve been given the chance. And if this means that I have to use drugs, this will not stop me from following my dream. I haven’t spent all these years cycling only to stop now that I’ve reached a point where I can fulfil my dream.”

Cycling is more than a hobby to David. It is where he might fulfil his potential and his talent. The sport is essential to making his life meaningful, so it is far too important for him to give up just because he might have to use drugs. To reach the very top in sport, it is paramount to have an ambitious and uncompromising will to victory, as David does, and perhaps even to view sport as the most important thing in life. On the other hand, such an ambitious attitude means that doping becomes a factor comparable to diet, training, equipment and other matters that are important for optimal performances. The rider may not necessarily choose to practise doping, but he will have to consider it carefully. Such considerations are not just brought about by the individual athlete’s moral standards, but are in fact a logical consequence of *the essence of sport*. Sport has always stimulated an intense ambition to win and to make progress in the sporting hierarchy. At the elite level, sport requires an uncompromising commitment and an entrepreneurial orientation that manifests itself in a willingness to optimise performance on all parameters susceptible to influence. This is an attitude that does not correspond with the after-dinner speeches about how participating is more important than winning. In light of this, it is hardly surprising that ambitious riders, such as David, have an open mind towards drugs.

The Danish riders’ attitudes show us that there is still a difference between the amateurs and the professionals as regards doping, which shares features with the situation in the 1960s described in Section 4. Rudi Altig and Jacques Anquetil considered doping to be necessary in the professional peloton. David’s attitude seems to be in line with this. Yet, among the amateurs as well as the professionals, it is still assumed that amateurs ought to ride clean. According to one of the riders interviewed, there is even an old saying in cycling: *a clean amateur makes a good professional.* The point is that, if the rider does not have sufficient talent to attain a professional contract without the use of doping, he will never make it in the professional peloton anyway. As the former Danish top rider Holm (2002) said, “You cannot turn a donkey into a racehorse” (p.107). If a rider wants to achieve something, it is no good that he competes to his absolute maximum as an amateur with every available means, because then there are no extra options to bring into play to give him that extra momentum when he begins racing against the best riders in the world.

If the statements above can be relied upon, the primary change in the attitude towards doping and professionalism between the 1960s and today does not relate to whether the use of doping is acceptable or not, but to the doping user’s relation to the surrounding society. Where Altig and Anquetil took the position that they as professionals did not have to hide their use of drugs and therefore were straight about it, the attitude today is that it is part of the professional’s task to *prevent* the public from becoming aware of the use of doping. Thus, to be a professional today is also about administering one’s use of

drugs in such a way that a positive test is avoided in the doping controls. If riders take drugs in connection with a race and get caught in the doping controls, they are characterised as ‘unprofessional’ by their colleagues. It is these riders who give the sport a bad name, the professional rider Christian explains:

> “I know there have been some mistakes over the years, and that’s really bad publicity. Like last year where two riders suddenly tested positive for NESP, because they’d acted as idiots and taken it three days before the race started.”

Christian’s condemnation of the two riders is obviously not due to the fact that they had taken NESP,[5] but that they lacked the judgement to decide when to stop taking it. For Christian, being a professional implies that you make sure that the concentration of drugs in your urine is not above the allowed thresholds. About the periods where he himself uses drugs from the prohibited list, he says:

> “Obviously I don’t race in that period. That is for sure. That is one example of where professionalism appears; the real pros don’t take any chances. […] After all, it’s hardly ever the superstars that are tested positive. It’s those further down in the hierarchy, who have to take chances to stay in business.”

For a professional rider like Christian, doping is obviously more of a practical than a moral problem. With his understanding of the use of doping in cycling, he points to the two conflicting sets of norms the riders must live up to. On the one hand, he maintains that it is sometimes necessary to use doping in order to assert himself in the competitions. That is how everybody thinks, he says: “At the end of the day, you expect everyone to do something. That everyone takes some sort of drugs.” Yet, on the other hand, he also acknowledges that doping violates the public’s norms for sport and its expectations of how the athletes should behave. Doping is contravening the fundamental expectations of the spirit of sport. In honour of sponsors, spectators, organisations and public authorities, he therefore takes part in the charade of ‘clean sport’ along with the other riders who use doping.

6 Conclusion

When athletes who are caught doping are labelled as immoral deviants, it is, among other things, because the distinction that previously existed between professional and amateur athletes has been suspended and forgotten. According to Hoberman (2005), in the 1950s:

> “[w]ell-informed people understood that a significant number of professional athletes […] were using drugs to boost their performances, but they also assumed that professional athletes enjoyed a tacit exemption from the ethical standards that applied to amateurs.” (p.183)

The paradox is that, while the *de facto* professional athletes from the middle of the 20th century participated in ever larger numbers at international competitions, it continued to be the ideals of the IOC and hence the amateurs that guided behavioural norms. The tacit exemption from the amateurs’ ethical standards previously enjoyed by professional athletes was suspended, at the same time as the amateurs to a still higher degree assimilated the way of life and attitude to sports of the professionals. Even though they (officially) did not make money, they too had ambitions which made them take on significant sacrifices and train considerably more than the aggregate of 30 days in one

calendar year, which president Avery Brundage had defined as the maximum for amateurs (Killanin and Rodda, 1976, p.152). Hence, the amateurs too were hooked on (the essence of) sport. They too were seduced by the desire to push themselves to their limits, by an unruly will for victory. If their ambitions were to manifest themselves in results, they too had to adopt a professional attitude to their training and careers.

But even though all elite athletes eventually adopted the professionals' standards for training and came to regard the professionals' attitude to sport as normative, the amateur ideals and the behavioural norms that originated from these (the spirit of sport) continued to be the benchmark against which athletes would be marked, and this has led to the criticism and labelling experienced by athletes caught doping. In order to participate in the big competitions, the professionals were bound to submit to the norms of the amateurs, while the amateurs prepared themselves to live as professionals. Hence the present conflict and ambiguous labelling of athletes caught doping as deviant outsiders.

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Notes

1 Coubertin (2000) elaborates on this relationship elsewhere, as he emphasises that sport is:

> “a *passionate movement of the spirit* that can range from ‘games to heroism’. Picture this basic principle, and you will come to see the athletes whose excesses you criticize and censure today as an elite who radiate energy, people who are far more idealistic (and therefore, necessary for the public) than those who claim to stick to simple physical education to guarantee the future. These educators are people whose faith is flat, a faith that, left to its own, will have no followers in the near future, and no altars after that.” (p.576)

2 Despite the negative conception of professional athletes, the IOC acknowledged them for their performances. As Killanin and Rodda (1978) write: “While he was despised it was fully admitted by the IOC as a whole that most professionals were excellent sportsmen” (p.145).

3 The word ‘amateur’ was removed from ‘Rule 26’ in 1974. But until 1988 it was still effective that “a competitor must not have received any financial reward or material benefit in connection with his or her sports participation” (IOC, Olympic Charter, 1982, Rule 26, p.17). It was permitted to receive financial compensation for lost earnings in connection with participation in the Olympics, but this compensation could not exceed what the athlete would have earned by attending his/her occupation during the same period. At the Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988, certain groups of declared professionals, such as the tennis players, were ‘temporarily’ accepted as participants. But it was not until the IOC session in Tokyo in 1990 that it was finally decided to replace Rule 26 with a ‘Rule 45’ (the so-called athlete’s code), which allowed the world’s best athletes to participate. The rule was adopted in the Olympic Charter in 1991 (Gafner, 1996, p.242).

4 In 2003 I conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with 34 Danish elite cyclists together with a colleague. The athletes were informed about the study by mail and then contacted by phone, whereafter a date for the interview was settled. Most interviews took place in the rider’s own home. It is material from these interviews that are presented. I know the identities of the interviewed cyclists, but all riders were guaranteed anonymity so that they could speak freely. Pseudonyms are therefore used to protect anonymity (Christiansen, 2005).

5 Novel Erythropoiesis Stimulating Protein (NESP) is a drug that causes increased production of red blood corpuscles similar to EPO, but whose effect lasts for a longer period of time.

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