

THE GLOBE AND MAIL



Published 2006

Inside Dope: How Drugs are the Biggest Threat to Sports, Why You Should Care, and What Can Be Done About Them by Dick Pound

John Wiley and Sons, 228 pages, \$32.99.

Reviewed by Mark Tewksbury

When Ben Johnson tested positive for steroids and was stripped of his gold medal at the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, many of us on the Canadian team suspected that there were issues with doping in sport, but thought at that time it was *somebody else's* problem. A year later, when one of my teammates on the Canadian National swim team tested positive for an illegal performance enhancing substance, popularly known as steroids, it was impossible to ignore the obvious. Drugs in sport were more pervasive than any of us was willing to admit.

This is exactly the point that Dick Pound hammers home in his new book, *Inside Dope: Why Drugs Are The Biggest Threat To Sports, Why You Should Care, And What Can Be Done About Them*. Never one to pull a punch, Pound writes in the same no holds barred style that has ensured him headlines over the past years as the tough, straight talking president of the World Anti Doping Agency, making his book a must read for anyone who wants to see sport cleaned up once and for all.

"I am no diplomat," Dick writes. No kidding. People who use drugs to get ahead unfairly in sport are "cheaters", their behavior is "disgusting" and dopers are labeled the "sociopaths of sport". Clearly, Pound cares. And as he points out early in the book, so should we.

Sport remains one of the most important developmental vehicles in the world today, both on a personal and societal level. But inherent to its goodness is the upholding of ethical principles that include self-respect, respect for others, and yes, respect for the rules. That is the social contract that we buy into when we agree to take part in sport, and the lack of regard for this contract is what concerns and frustrates Pound so deeply.

Time and again in the early part of the book, perhaps to a fault, Dick repeats his mantra that drugs are dangerous, drugs are cheating, and if we accept that drug usage is normal, as many a doper would urge us to do, then we are agreeing to let sport go to the next level of abuse. What will be left in the end will no longer resemble sport but rather some freak show. If we care about the future of our kids and of sport then we must act now.

It is hard to disagree. Some of the most fascinating parts of the book include the stories that Pound shares of the athletes who have crossed his path because they have tested positive for banned substances. If systematic drug abuse is a problem in sport, so, too, is

the culture of denial that accompanies it. Pound shares a list of excuses that athletes use when caught for doping that would be truly hilarious except for the sad state of affairs they reveal. As Dick states, "Even when they get caught, they lie about it, with denials and excuses that defy the imagination." And it is not only the athletes who are culpable. Some of Pound's harshest comments are reserved, rightfully so, for the major leagues. Their systematic claim that there is "no problem of drugs in my sport," makes Pound think he might "throw up". I wasn't far behind. Still, all is not doom and gloom. The very creation of the World Anti Doping Agency and of a single World Anti-Doping Code is in itself some kind of miracle. Pound outlines the path to their existence in a way that allows the reader to understand the intricacies and significance of both.

It is hard to believe how inconsistent the doping penalties were in the past from sport federation to sport federation, and even how unclear the list of banned drugs were from sport to sport. Just as the laws of the land change significantly from country to country, so too did everything around doping. Before the World Anti Doping Agency existed there was no central organization that could enforce the rules. With WADA there is not only a sport commitment to change, there is also a governmental one as well. The International Convention against Doping in Sport means that the responsibility to fix the problem is shared. WADA monitors compliance and then the sports and government have the power to act. Not just with athletes, coaches and sport federations, but with the doctors, pharmaceuticals, traffickers and many other guilty parties that have created the problem of doping in sport

In reading this book one can't help but wonder *what took so long for sport authorities to take this issue so seriously?* The truth is buried in the middle of the book, when we learn that former IOC President Samaranch considered the issue of doping as "more of a nuisance than a gut issue". Exposed publicly by a reporter in 1998, action was finally taken. Pound argues that the best way to tackle the issue of doping is to change attitudes and educate alongside policing. Now with Samaranch gone, it looks like attitudes have finally changed enough to truly make a difference. Pound writes, "I want sport, not a circus. I want athletes, not gladiators. I want human beings, not mutants. Don't you?" Yes, Dick, we do!

Mark Tewksbury is three-time Olympic medallist, advocate for ethics in sport, and author of Inside Out: Straight Talk from a Gay Jock.