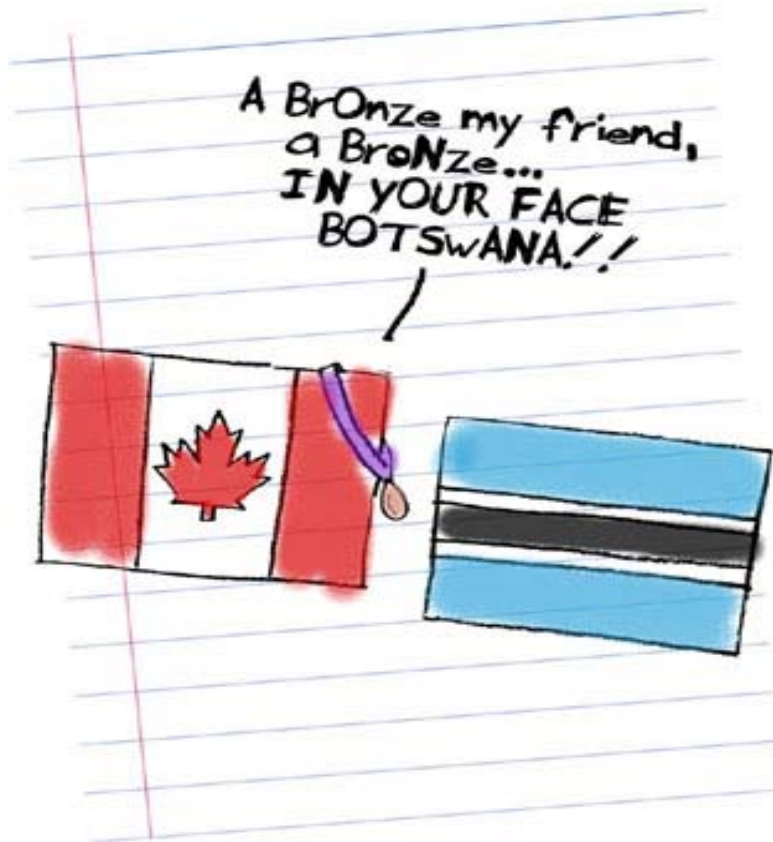




## Sports and the Olympics



SEDA receives funding from



Research prepared by Janessa Weir  
Winter 2010  
[www.saskdebate.com](http://www.saskdebate.com)  
*Various impromptu topics*

**Title:** Stop labeling Tiger Woods and other athletes as role models

**Author:** Clarence Chavez

**Source:** The Examiner

**Date:** December 11, 2009

**Web site:** <http://www.examiner.com/x-25504-SF-Mens-Issues-Examiner~y2009m12d11-Stop-making-athletes-role-models>

Maybe Charles Barkley had a point. It is time to stop labeling athletes as role models. We place huge expectations on athletes and want them to achieve a level of perfection we may never obtain.

When athletes fall, we are ashamed of them and criticize them for not becoming role models. Top athletes face serious scrutiny when caught in the wrong and a media circus pouring out every detail of their transgressions. For every top athlete who has been under the unfortunate limelight, there are several lesser known athletes who are law-abiding and family men.

These athletes whether our favorite players or on favorite teams, hold a special place in our hearts. We root for them and are happy for their success. When they lose, it is difficult for us and when in scandal we are ashamed of their exploits. As fans we tend to forget the majority of these athletes are in their 20's and 30's with the God given abilities to play a sport at the highest level. We expect these young men to handle fame and fortune like someone in their 50's and 60's who have learned from their mistakes and walk on a narrower path to success. We ask these young men to ignore the trappings of their youth, fortune, fame and all the leeches ready to rob them blind and just play the game, shake our hands and sign autographs.

Our children admire athletes and desire to wear their jerseys and emulate them. Because of this, we expect athletes to become a shining image of goodness and

maintain a positive attitude. Ironically we fall short of being the shining example of goodness and fail to always have a positive attitude. If one of our heroes walk by and choose not to speak to us, we hold them forever accountable for being conceited and a poor example of a role model. Not just children, but men and women in their 30's, 40's and over 50 look toward our younger brethren in professional sports and expect perfection.

What we don't understand is this "athlete" may come from humble beginnings with no guidance on how to handle resources that are greater than the sum of his family and generations before him. In our minds, these athletes are to always portray a pure vision of teamwork with the skills to win games. Regardless of the personal demons and issues they are going through, athletes cannot be flawed - but we can. What a double standard.

We want Tiger Woods not only as a great Golfer but a great person who will sign every autograph, talk to every fan and shake every hand. As I explained in a previous [article](#), we discover his unfaithfulness to his wife and yank him off the pedestal we placed him on. As the details of these personal matters grow, we continue to look upon him in a light that is not a role model. We let Tiger's personal indiscretions overlook the positives of the Tiger Woods Foundation which caters to helping and mentoring children since 1996. We neglect to remember his charity joint ventures with Target, St. Jude's Hospital and the PGA. We forget that through Tiger's programs and influence, kids who need assistance have received it and kids who never had an interest in playing golf now do. Instead we choose to cling to the news of the public details of his private infidelities. Tiger is no longer a person deserving of our pedestal. At the same time, if someone you know or perhaps yourself is in a similar unfortunate situation as Tiger Woods, then all of a sudden we are preaching "Everyone deserves a second

chance." A famous book I know sums it up "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?"

So to avoid any more of these shattering images we have of our top athletes, let us stop labeling athletes as role models. They are simply gifted athletes with the ability to play a sport at the highest level. Just as you are gifted in whatever profession you are in. It is obvious the perfection we expect of others is difficult to find. Perhaps we should focus on removing the plank in our own eye and become the role model we expect athletes to become.

**Title:** Taking Sports Seriously

**Author:** Jeffery Staden

**Date:** September 25, 2006

**Web site:**

<http://thesportslawprofessor.blogspot.com/2007/07/athletes-as-role-models.html>

With an NBA referee facing game-fixing accusations, pro quarterback Michael Vick accused of dog-fighting, and Barry Bonds' home-run chase reminding fans daily of baseball's perduring problem with steroids (which I've written about in the essays collected here), now seems as bad a time as any to gather some thoughts on the bromide about superstar athletes serving as role models for youngsters. Should parents point to these law-breaking, drug-ingesting, bet-placing, fan-despising, spoiled, pampered rich athletes and tell our children to be like them? Are athletes role models? Are they good ones?

Yes, on all counts.

1. First let's define "role model." It's not just "model," it's a model of a specific "role." This is an important limitation. None of us are models for children in an unlimited sense; even we parents should be humble enough to hope that our children do not mirror our behaviors completely. I'd like my

children to have my work ethic, which is impeccable (yes, my dean reads the blog); I'd not like them to have my over-intense commitment to my job, which is so important to me that it overrides any cost to my personal health or well-being (I'm going for a raise this year). We all want our kids to share in our good qualities, not the bad.

2. Athletes are role models for children, but only for the role of "athlete." Athletes display the athletic virtues: diligence, perseverance, the value of training, fair play and sportsmanship, grace under pressure, the pursuit of excellence. The best of our athletes exhibit these virtues abundantly, in full public display. How familiar is the story of the gifted athlete whose rise to stardom is fueled by endless practice, peak performance on notable college teams, and diligent perfecting of his professional game? How common is the athlete who has overcome a deeply difficult upbringing in single- or no-parent homes amidst neighborhood poverty and crime? This time of year I daily help my young children organize themselves to arrive on time, fed and properly dressed for baseball practice. What chance would my kids have were a parent not available to make sports participation easy? It amazes me that many of our accomplished professional athletes were able to put it all together and excel. One can watch any professional game in any sport and see role models at every position.

3. Yet some fans and commentators apparently want more. They want athletes to be more than a model of a role; they want athletes to be a model of all personal and public virtues. Why should we expect athletes to exhibit non-athletic virtues to any greater degree than we or others model such qualities? Virtues such as honesty, integrity, self-control, humility, kindness, generosity and the like are immensely important, but they are no more important to the athlete than they are to the rest of us. Why should I expect to point to an athlete or other celebrity to show my children an example of humility or generosity, more than I should

live a life where I can point to myself? But when the lesson is about the pursuit of excellence and the need to practice or the possibility of overcoming obstacles or the determination needed to succeed, well, professional sports players are exemplars. What more can we ask of them? That a person pursuing his own life's goals can unintentionally be a paragon of excellence for others is the best role model possible.

4. Of course some athletes fail to model the role that they have assumed and that we can rightfully expect from them. We can't fairly ask our sports stars to be especially kind or honest, but we can ask them to exhibit good sportsmanship and a commitment to fair play. I am personally dubious about the logic behind the ban on performance enhancements, for example, but rules is rules, and players who flout the rules cheat the game, much as talented players who squander their innate gifts cheat the duty they owe to their employers and, by extension, their fans. Athletes are models for their roles, and like any role model they can succeed or fail at that role. But it is on that singular and limited dimension, as an example or model of the specific role of the athlete, that we should judge our professional athletes, and no more.

5. Children understand my point implicitly. I can point to Kobe Bryant's wonderful form on a jump shot as worthy of emulation without my children taking my comment as an implicit endorsement of Bryant's broken adherence to his marital vow. I can (one day perhaps) mention Michael Vick's success as an NFL quarterback to evidence the possibility for a person to overcome certain physical limitations (in his case, inferior height for the position) and perform athletic tasks competently, and do so without endorsing mistreatment of helpless animals. And so on. I suspect strongly that the claimed worry about kids ("What can we tell our children?") that one hears when the foibles and errors of star athletes are once again brought to public light is nothing more than an invention, something we say

because we can't bring ourselves to speak the truth.

6. The truth is this: we're not really worried about our children. We fans should worry about ourselves. We have it in mind that we have a right to spy, pry and obsess about the private lives of people who "choose" certain occupations, such as athlete or movie star. And then we think that our decision to watch them (and spy and pry) justifies our holding them to a standard that we ourselves do not always meet. And that if they, the stars, don't like our spying and prying, then they (we say) should not have chosen to be in the public arena. Wrong. We watchers made the choice to watch, and it's a new decision each time we buy a ticket to the game or turn on the television. The basketball player will play (if that's his best occupation) whether it's in front of a small crowd or an international television audience. The player chooses to expose that much of his life (his playing of the game) to our scrutiny. The rest of the prying and spying is clearly not the athlete's choice; it's ours. Should we be surprised when that part of the athlete's life that the athlete did not choose to be held open to public scrutiny fails to measure up to the virtuous excellence we want to see (and very often do see) on the playing field or court? Should we be ashamed of ourselves for our constant, envious nosiness into what is often not our business? All of us "go public" with certain aspects of our lives, if only to advertise our businesses, apply for a job, or write a blog. Should that limited act of consent mean that all aspects of our life are now fair game for the prying eye? If not, then why should this be the case for the athlete?

7. Of course it's news and newsworthy when a high-profile athlete is accused of a serious crime or of cheating the game, much as would be the case for any other citizen. But our legitimate interest in the private lives of our celebrity athletes does not go much further. We need to allow these young men and women to try and fail at the "non-athletic" human virtues as much as we

permit everybody else. We ask enough of these athletes to achieve perfection in the athletic virtues. That they accomplish these athletic virtues so often and under such pressure is testament not to the demise of professional sports in this country, but to their success. Long gone are the days of baseball players drinking beer during games or basketball players using cocaine before the tipoff. Few today are the gifted athletes who negligently or lazily squander away their talent. Our professional athletes are more virtuous and yes, better role models than they have ever been. That we fans and observers fail to recognize this, and instead demand even more of them, creates a vision of a "role model" that is unrealistic and unreasonable.

**Title:** Top Reasons to abolish all Olympic Games

**Author:** Brian Martin

**Source:** *Freedom*, Vol. 57, No. 15, page 3

**Date:** 3 August 1996

There are lots of reasons to oppose Olympic Games as we know them, not just the 1996 or 2000 games but all of them. A brief outline of ten reasons is given here. The points made here summarise ideas analysed in far more depth and detail in various studies. Unfortunately, critical analyses of the Olympics receive virtually no attention compared to the massive governmental and commercial promotion of the Olympics.

No criticism is intended here of dedicated and talented athletes and their supporters. Nor do I claim that there is no value at all in Olympic Games. Rather, my argument is that there are such big problems with them that it would be better to abolish them altogether.

## 1. Nationalism

The Games are an arena for power politics. The 1936 Berlin Games were used by the Nazi regime to bolster its prestige. The US government led a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Games to protest against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Soviet government led a boycott of the 1984 Los Angeles Games largely as a pay-back for the 1980 boycott.

The usual rhetoric is that sports and politics don't mix, but actually the Olympics have been political from the very beginning. Politics is involved in decisions about hosting the Games and about which countries can participate. Boycotts of the Games are used to exert political pressure. It is precisely because sports *seem* to be neutral that it is so effective to use them for political purposes.

Governments, seeking the prestige of Olympic victories, organise the training of elite athletes. At the Olympics, competition between athletes is turned into competition between states. Athletes can't participate if their country doesn't. Victories by individuals and teams are treated as national victories, symbolised by flags and anthems and beamed around the world. Media coverage in particular countries is often biased towards the country's own athletes, reflecting and reinforcing nationalism. The International Olympic Committee (IOC), a highly undemocratic organisation, is composed of representatives from member countries. The IOC is a vehicle for international political struggle. Hosting the Games is seen as an opportunity for promoting national prestige. States of all political complexions -- liberal democratic, communist, fascist, military -- have embraced the Olympics, suggesting the lack of a moral core to the Games. The IOC has sought participation of all states, without applying any standards.

## 2. Commercialism

Corporate interests penetrate the Olympics through sponsorship of the Games themselves and through sponsorship of

athletes and use of athletes for commercial purposes. The media foster the Games as a giant spectacle, promoting professionalisation and commercialisation. Visible athletes can cash in on lucrative endorsements. Sporting success becomes a means of selling products. Gold medals become a way for athletes and commercial sponsors to make money. Commercialism and nationalism have gradually turned the Olympics into an enterprise only for full-time athletes, professionals in reality if not in name.

The Olympics have become big business mainly through television. The mass media use sport to sell programmes to advertisers. The Games, with their image as the ultimate sporting event, are a marketer's dream for reaching a global audience.

Through massive TV revenues, the IOC has become a major commercial enterprise itself, operating like a transnational corporation. Its decisions are increasingly dictated by money flows.

### **3. Competition**

The Games are exclusively competitive. This means that most competitors are ultimately losers. The focus is on a few top winners, whereas there are far more who struggle for years only to fail, sometimes due to bad luck or the machinations of sporting bodies. In any case, the nature of competition at an international level means that only a tiny fraction can end up ultimate winners.

Competition with high stakes -- Olympic medals -- means that the aim becomes victory at all costs. The pressure to win encourages illicit drug use, secrecy in training techniques, attempts at psychological manipulation of opponents, and training and competing while injured. The emphasis on competition and victory means that forms of physical activity that are more participatory and cooperative are marginalised. Sport can be satisfying and beneficial, both physically and mentally, for nearly everyone in the community. This can

only occur when the primary goal is participation, not victory in competition. The Olympic Games are elite competitions between athletes and between states. The obsession with Olympic success undermines the goal of cooperative, participatory sport.

### **4. Male domination**

From the beginning, the Games have always had many more men than women as participants, coaches and officials. Female athletes have received less funding and have fewer Olympic sports in which to compete. Many national Olympic committees have no women members and send no women to the Games.

The events included in the Games are mostly ones that give men an advantage, notably sports emphasising strength and speed. For example, most running and swimming events are over in a matter of seconds or minutes. Women are already much closer if not superior to men in ultra-endurance events, such as marathon swimming, but shorter events predominate in the Olympics. Similarly, events emphasising precision and skill rather than strength would give women a better chance. It would be quite possible to select or design events that would give women an equal chance to win in direct competition with men, but this has never been considered. Instead, women are expected to adapt to male sports. This also helps maintain the emphasis on competition rather than cooperation.

Male domination in the Olympic movement reflects and reinforces the predominance of men in the sports that receive the greatest attention in most countries of the world.

### **5. Racism**

The Games were set up by European elites and built on western sports. Through the worldwide publicity for the Olympics and the competition for national glory, more and

more of these sports have been adopted in countries where they had no popular following.

Many non-western countries have long histories of indigenous sports and games that do not fit the western model. These traditions have been submerged. The IOC is dominated by western perspectives on sport and appears to take no notice of non-western styles and traditions. This is not to mention the racism that can occur within and between Olympic teams.

## 6. Violence

Many sports, such as boxing, archery and the javelin, are modelled on skills for war. A number of sports involve violence themselves, including ostensibly "non-contact" sports such as basketball. The intense competition and partisanship linked to sports often cause spectators to become aggressive. On a number of occasions, sporting events have been the triggers for actual wars. In general, competitive sports reflect rather than reduce violence in the rest of society.

The Olympics were set up to foster peace and harmony. Instead, they have simply provided another arena for the continuation of violence between individuals in events and between states in the struggle for power and status. The awarding of the 1896 Games to Athens stimulated Greek nationalism, leading to a war with Turkey in 1897. The Olympic movement is powerless to turn its original goal of promoting peace into reality.

## 7. Celebrity

The Games foster a culture of celebrity that focusses on stars at the expense of non-elite participants. Spectators identify with Olympic heroes, attributing to them moral virtues such as courage and integrity. Yet the combination of specialist events plus a premium on winning means that Olympic athletes are often not suitable role models.

They may develop certain skills and strengths at the expense of overall good health, compete at the expense of other commitments or value personal success more than competing fairly or helping others. This is not the fault of the athletes, but rather a symptom of an elite competition in which victors are glamourised by the media and become potent symbols of national success.

## 8. Technological intensification

Olympic-level competitions are increasingly a struggle between applications of advanced science and technology to equipment, training, psychology, and drugs (legal and illegal). In cycling, for example, victory goes as much to the swiftest bike as to the best cyclist. Bodies are treated like machines, as means to the goal of winning. The increasing role of sophisticated scientific and technological interventions means that individuals and countries without the most advanced facilities are handicapped, creating another dimension to the racism built into the Olympics. Steps could be taken to overcome this, for example by assigning standard equipment to competitors randomly, but this would not serve the interests of governments with a technological edge.

## 9. Spectatorship

Watching sports such as the Olympics serves to integrate spectators (especially men) into the dominant value system of competitive striving for success. Under the guise of enjoying entertainment and supporting one's favourite team or athlete, spectators of sport are inculcated with the assumptions that life is a competition, that the rules are fair, that most of the rewards go to the winners, and that losers have only themselves to blame. These ideas are convenient for keeping workers on the usual treadmill. It is because of the similarities

between competitive sport and competitive business that sporting metaphors ("the level playing field," "scoring") are so prevalent in non-sporting arenas.

## 10. Government repression

Olympic Games are sites of reduced civil liberties. Because of the vast audience and huge symbolic value of the Olympics, various groups try to make their case through disrupting the Games, necessitating special laws and special policing to prevent disruption. Terrorists used the 1972 Munich Olympics as a stage. As the stakes become greater, so does the control over the opportunity to dissent.

### Strategies for change

#### A. Reform the Olympic Games

Various ideas have been presented to eliminate some of the problems with the Games. One is a permanent site such as Athens. This would remove the politics of site selection, in which making special gifts to IOC members has become routine. Another is to have multiple sites for the Games, so that the burden (financial and symbolic) on a single city would be reduced. Yet another is to have athletes represent only themselves and not represent countries. They could wear common uniforms. Team sports could be eliminated. This would reduce nationalist identification. These and other such ideas are good, but they are opposed by commercial and national interests and are unlikely to be introduced by the IOC, dominated as it is by these interests.

#### B. Use the Games as a site for political struggle

Another approach is to accept the Games as they are but to use them as a place for waging various campaigns. At the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, black sprinters on the victory stand gave a black power salute, with tremendous symbolic impact. Generally, though, this strategy is not very fruitful. It requires enormous efforts to become an Olympic athlete, yet opportunities to make political gestures are quite limited. For non-athletes, there are possibilities to make protests, but the Games do not provide a "level playing field" for political uses. Governments and corporations have the greatest opportunities for using the Games for their own purposes, whether through sporting successes, boycotts or just advertisements.

Olympics and Politics  
Wikipedia

### 1916

The 1916 Summer Olympics were to have been held in Berlin, but was cancelled because of the outbreak of World War I.

### 1920 & 1924

Budapest had initially been selected to host the Games over Amsterdam and Lyon, but as the Austro-Hungarian Empire had been a German ally in World War I, the French-dominated International Olympic Committee transferred the Games to Antwerp in April 1919. Hungary, Germany, Austria, Bulgaria and Turkey were also banned from competing in the Games. Germany remained banned until 1925, and instead hosted a series of games called Deutsche Kampfspiele, starting with the winter edition of 1922 (which predated the first Winter Olympics).

### 1936

The 1936 Summer Olympics, held in Berlin, were controversial due to the Nazi regime

that came to power after the city's selection. Adolf Hitler regarded it as his Olympics and he took them as a chance to show off the post-First World War Germany. The United States considered boycotting the games, but ultimately decided to participate. Nazi propaganda promoted concepts of "Aryan racial superiority," however African-American athlete Jesse Owens, winner of four medals during the games, did not face segregation and discrimination in Germany that were normal in the United States at the time.

French Olympians gave what appeared to be the Hitler salute at the opening ceremony, although they may have been performing the Olympic salute, which is similar. Both are based on the Roman salute.

American sprinters Sam Stoller and Marty Glickman, the only two Jewish athletes on the U.S. Olympic team, were pulled from the 4 × 100 relay team on the day of the competition, leading to accusations of anti-Semitism on the part of the United States Olympic Committee.

### **1940 & 1944**

All Olympic events in 1940 and 1944 were cancelled due to the outbreak of World War II. Great Britain that hosted the first post-war Olympics in 1948 and Nazi Germany hosted the last pre-war Olympics in 1936. Both countries were major players in the war and were at war with each other during this period. In addition, Japan was slated to host both events in 1940 (Winter in Sapporo and Summer in Tokyo) but both were cancelled due to war outbreak in the Pacific.

### **1956**

The 1956 Summer Olympics, held in Melbourne, were affected by numerous boycotts. Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon boycotted in protest of the Israeli invasion of Egypt. The Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland boycotted in protest of the

Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary during the Hungarian Uprising.

The political frustrations between the Soviet Union and Hungary boiled over at the games themselves when the two mens water polo teams met for the semi-final. The players became increasingly violent towards each other as the game progressed, while many Hungarian-Australian spectators were prevented from rioting only with the sudden appearance of the police. The match became known as the Blood in the Water match.

### **1968**

The 1968 Summer Olympics were held in Mexico City. At these games Tommie Smith and John Carlos, gold and bronze medalists, gave the black power salute during the Star Spangled Banner. The action was deemed to be against the principles of the Olympic Games and the two athletes were expelled from the Olympics.

Students in Mexico City tried to make use of the media attention for their country to protest against the authoritarian character of the Mexican government. The Mexican government reacted with violence, culminating in the Tlatelolco Massacre of October 2 in which more than two hundred protesters were gunned down by government forces.

### **1972**

The 1972 Summer Olympics held in Munich, Germany, were probably the most negatively affected games. Eleven Israeli athletes were kidnapped and ultimately killed by Palestinian terrorists. The terrorists demanded the release of 234 Palestinians.

### **1976**

Held in Montreal, the 1976 Summer Olympics were marred with boycotts as well as accusations against the East Germans of steroid use. The boycotts were held out by 26 African countries because New Zealand's national rugby team toured South Africa

Neither the Republic of China ([Taiwan](#)) or the People's Republic of China (mainland) competed.

Canada incurred \$1.5 billion in debt, which they finished paying off in 19 December 2006.<sup>[5]</sup> Montreal became the last publicly funded games.

## 1980

Moscow's 1980 Summer Olympics was the year of the largest boycott in Olympic history. The boycott included the USA and 61 other countries in response to the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. The 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, New York stirred controversy because of plans to convert the Olympic athletes' dormitory facilities into a state prison afterwards. This made legal history when the National Moratorium on Prison Construction won a court ruling allowing its use of the Olympic symbol on a poster as protected speech.

## 1984

Allegedly in retaliation of the 1980 boycott, the USSR, East Germany, Cuba and 14 other countries boycotted the Los Angeles 1984 Summer Olympics.

This was also the first time the People's Republic of China participated, having protested the Republic of China's presence in previous Olympics.

## 1988

North Korea boycotted the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, as it was still technically at war with South Korea. Albania, Cuba, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Nicaragua, and Seychelles also followed suit. [\[1\]](#)

## 2008

Since the beginning of 2008, especially during the protests of the torch relay of 2008 Summer Olympics, the prospect of boycotting the 2008 games in Beijing grew.

The protesters' aims are not only the human rights of Mainland China, but also the independent campaign and violence of Tibet. Another major factor was the Chinese support for the regime in Sudan, which is accused of committing genocide in the Darfur region; this issue led to Steven Spielberg pulling out as artistic director of the games. U.S. president George W. Bush committed to attending the opening ceremonies. Ultimately, no nations boycotted the games; however, several prominent world leaders such as Angela Merkel and Gordon Brown did not attend the opening ceremony.

The political issues in 2008 were not simply limited to issues involving China. Russia was embroiled in controversy as the Second South Ossetian War started around the same time as the games. This lent extra weight to the victory of the Georgia Women's Beach Volleyball Team over their Russian opponents (although the two players, Cristine Santanna and Andrezza Martins, were originally from Brazil).

**Title:** Performance enhancing drugs in the spotlight again

**Author:** Pat Sangimino

**Source:** Hutch News

**Date:** September 25, 2006

**Web site:**

<http://www.hutchnews.com/Sports/sangimino2010-01-16T22-27-34>

Pitchers and catchers report to spring training in about a month, meaning it's almost time for steroids to again take center stage.

It's becoming a rite of spring. Punxsatawny Phil sees his shadow, meaning it's six weeks until opening day and mere days before the next 'roid-raging athlete gets outed.

Mark McGwire jumped the gun this week by tearfully confirming what we knew all along. He used steroids throughout the 1990s, including in the 1998 season when he became the first major leaguer to hit 70 home runs in a season.

Frankly, the entire topic has been overplayed, making me wonder if the issue could be solved simply by legalizing performance-enhancing drugs in professional sports.

"Are you serious?" a friend and die-hard sports fan asked. "It would completely change sports as we know them today."

How's that? It's been driven into our vernacular that chicks dig the long ball and the appeal of the National Football League is that speed and size make for some amazing collisions. Legalizing performance-enhancing drugs for professional athletes would provide more of what sports fans truly want.

He thought about it for a minute, took a sip from his frosty mug and then waxed poetically about how watching a sporting event brings him back to the day when he could hit a fastball, or to that glorious time when his crossover really could break ankles.

"You weren't that good," I said, reminding him of his small-but-slow athletic shortcomings.

He chuckled and explained that the sports he's now watching have already been tainted by allegations and admissions of performance-enhancing drug use. However, he continues to watch - religiously - because the illusion that there are people trying to clean up professional sports gives him hope.

"You can't just give up that fight," he said.

Why? Experts say that steroid designers are always a step ahead of those charged with cleaning up the games. There are already masking agents that can cause one's urine to appear to be cleaner than Aunt Bea's kitchen.

This fight cannot be won.

"Think about explaining to your kid that you can play for the love of the game only to a certain point," he said. "Then there's a tradeoff - do drugs or get a real job. How do I tell him that becoming the next George Brett comes with a life-changing decision. Do we really want to go in that direction?"

The train going that direction left the station long ago.

And if he should be lucky enough to get there, he should know early on that he will be asked to decide for himself on performance-enhancing drugs. Don't fool yourself. The innocence is long gone. The illusion of policing the situation doesn't change that.

"At its most pure level, don't sports only exist because the people that watch them hold onto the dream that they might be able to do it better, faster or further than the guy they're watching on TV?" he asked. "Legalize steroids and you lose that."

Actually, professional sports exist to fill a void in our lives. A Sunday of football makes the Monday-through-Friday grind more palatable. They also cater to many of our vices. Gambling. Violence. Alcohol consumption. Did I mention gambling?

If you legalize steroids, you're simply improving the product. Think about it, wouldn't you want a player on your team so committed to his craft, he would do whatever it took?

Professional athletes are paid handsomely for their efforts, but make no bones about it, they are commodities. Their shelf lives are short. Their earning years are shorter. That said, there is pressure to perform because the day they stop getting the job done, somebody else will. When pressured to choose a syringe or a real job, there are millions of reasons to choose the former. Making it legal would simply end the

charade that anyone is truly outraged about it.

Exasperated, he got up to leave, but not before resigning himself to the legalization of performance-enhancement drugs in professional sports.

"If that's the next step in sports, then so be it," he said. "But my kids won't be participating and I don't know that I'll keep watching."

Where you going? I asked.

"Home. The Cowboys game starts in an hour."

Title: The Impact of Professional Athletes on the Olympic Games  
 Author: Bobby Coles  
 Source: Helium.com  
 Website:  
<http://www.helium.com/items/1022145-the-impact-of-professional-athletes-on-the-olympic-games>

Professional athletes have had an indelible and profound impact on the Olympic Games for several reasons. The Olympics were built on the notion of rewarding amateur athletes with a platform on which to compete. Professional athletes were prohibited from competition, leaving amateurs to gaze hopefully to the future Olympics as a place where they could shine and be recognized. The professional athletes were already being rewarded for their excellence in sport with handsome paydays and other lucrative endorsement opportunities.

Gone are the days of yore when amateur athletes took to the Games of the Olympiad and were hopeful of victory, gaining a moment on the podium to hear their National Anthem played. Professional athletes have ruined the Olympics for many amateur hopefuls, either by defeating them, or simply by taking precious spots away on

the rosters of each country. Professional athletes have impacted the Olympic Games in many different ways, shapes and forms.

Professional athletes have altered the scope of the games, simply by their presence. For example, in sports such as Basketball, rather than having a team of amateurs hoping to honor their country, wanting to relish in the fruits of their labours, the teams are comprised of professionals. The professionals are already playing in the big leagues, and are commanding top dollar for their toils.

The amateur used to be able to take solace in the Olympic Games as their chance to shine. Many amateur athletes work long hours to support the families that they do not get to see because of training schedules as well as work schedules. The grind of the daily routines for amateur athletes is exhausting. Amateur athletes rarely have any sponsorship money to use, and often have to front their own expenses in the venues of training.

The professional athletes have also given the Olympic Games some credibility in certain sports, prompting viewership on television to rise, which benefits the Games financially. The underdog teams rarely come out on top, since teams such as the U.S.A. team are comprised of the best players in the world.

Amateur athletes cannot typically compete with professional athletes for many obvious reasons, and their chance to shine is relegated to sports without professional involvement. The days of teams such as the 'Miracle on Ice' team are long gone. The Olympic hockey teams are now comprised of professionals, and the National Hockey League even takes a hiatus so that players may compete for their countries of origin.

The Olympic Games were originally intended for amateurs, but have shifted over and allowed professionals to participate.

This does allow for the best of each country to represent their homeland. In that regard, I suppose that that is what the Olympics are all about. Each country would love to send their finest athletes to compete in every event, in hopes of garnering some medals and instilling in their people a sense of national pride.

It is a sign of the times that professionals are allowed to compete in the Olympics, and as long as the best man or woman wins, it is fair for every country to allow their best athletes to perform. Unfortunately for the amateur athletes, big business rears its ugly head and takes away another thing from those not among the elite in society.

As the 2008 Olympic Games draw nigh, we, as a collective audience, can hope for some underdog victories, cheering for all of the David's against those Goliath's that oppress.

Title: Organized Sports for children and preadolescents

Date: June 6, 2001

Author: American Academy of Pediatrics

Website:

[http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;107/6/1459?fulltext=vitamin+D&searchid=QID\\_NOT\\_SET](http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;107/6/1459?fulltext=vitamin+D&searchid=QID_NOT_SET)

## ABSTRACT

Participation in organized sports provides an opportunity for young people to increase their physical activity and develop physical and social skills. However, when the demands and expectations of organized sports exceed the maturation and readiness of the participant, the positive aspects of participation can be negated. The nature of parental or adult involvement can also influence the degree to which participation in organized sports is a positive experience

for preadolescents. This updates a previous policy statement on athletics for preadolescents and incorporates guidelines for sports participation for preschool children. Recommendations are offered on how pediatricians can help determine a child's readiness to participate, how risks can be minimized, and how child-oriented goals can be maximized.

## INTRODUCTION

Participation in organized sports can have physical and social benefits for children. However, the younger the participant, the greater the concern about safety and benefits. The involvement of preadolescents in organized sports is a relatively recent phenomenon. In the early 20th century, physical activity was a more regular part of life for the average child. Sports and games provided an additional outlet for physical activity and were characterized by play that was generally spontaneous, unstructured, and without adult involvement. Participation in such sports and games allowed for development of motor skills, social interaction, creativity, and enjoyment for participants.

During the latter part of the 20th century, "free play" or unstructured games primarily gave way to organized sports. The starting age for organized sports programs has also evolved to the point that infant and preschool training programs are now available for many sports. Organization of sports has potential benefits of coaching, supervision, safety rules, and proper equipment but can also create demands and expectations that exceed the readiness and capabilities of young participants. Organization can also shift the focus to goals that are not necessarily child oriented. Clearly, the nature of the organization can determine if it has a positive or negative influence.

This statement is an update to a previous policy statement on athletics for

preadolescents<sup>1</sup> and incorporates guidelines for sports participation for preschool children.<sup>2</sup> Recommendations are made on how pediatricians can help determine a child's readiness to participate in organized sports, how risks can be minimized, and how child-oriented goals can be maximized.

### **ORGANIZED SPORTS PROGRAMS: LIMITATIONS AND RISKS**

The effects of organized sports participation on growth and maturation have come under question, as have the effects of growth and maturation on the ability to participate in sports. Because children are beginning to train and compete at earlier ages, there is increasing concern about potential negative effects on growth and maturation. Reports of gymnasts and divers with short stature or ballet dancers with lean body types or late menarche have contributed to such concerns. Despite such reports, it is unclear if these characteristics were a result of intensive training or other factors, such as dietary practices, psychological and emotional stress, or selection bias for the sport.<sup>3</sup>

The effects of immaturity on sports participation are more obvious. When the demands of a sport exceed a child's cognitive and physical development, the child may develop feelings of failure and frustration. Even with coaches available to teach rules and skills of a sport, children may not be ready to learn or understand what is being taught. Furthermore, many coaches are not equipped to deal with the needs or abilities of children. Basic motor skills, such as throwing, catching, kicking, and hitting a ball, do not develop sooner simply as a result of introducing them to children at an earlier age.<sup>4</sup> Teaching or expecting these skills to develop before children are developmentally ready is more likely to cause frustration than long-term success in the sport.<sup>5</sup> Because most youth sports coaches are volunteers with little or no formal training in child development,

they cannot be expected to correctly match demands of a sport with a child's readiness to participate. Educational programs are available for youth sports coaches, but most coaches do not participate. Nonetheless, coaches may still try to teach what often cannot be learned and blame resulting failures on shortcomings of athletes or themselves.

Parental or adult supervision of children's activity is usually considered to be desirable. However, in organized sports, inappropriate or overzealous parental or adult influences can have negative effects. Adults' involvement in children's sports activities may bring goals or outcome measures that are not oriented toward young participants. Tournaments, all-star teams, most valuable player awards, trophies, and awards banquets are by-products of adult influences. Despite good intentions, increased involvement of adults does not necessarily enhance the child athlete's enjoyment. The familiar image of a parent imploring their 5-year-old to "catch the ball," "kick the ball," or "run faster" is a reminder of how adult encouragement can have discouraging effects.

### **ORGANIZED SPORTS PROGRAMS: BENEFITS**

In contrast to unstructured or free play, participation in organized sports provides a greater opportunity to develop rules specifically designed for health and safety. Organization can allow for the establishment of developmentally sound criteria for determining readiness to play. Organization can also allow for a fair process in choosing teams,<sup>6</sup> matching competitors,<sup>7</sup> and enforcing rules. Rules specifically targeted at younger athletes can reduce injuries. Recommendations have been made to limit dangerous practices, such as headfirst sliding in baseball<sup>8</sup> and body checking in hockey.<sup>9</sup> Safety accommodations associated with organized youth sports can also include smaller playing fields, shorter contest times,

pitch counts for Little League pitchers, softer baseballs, matching opponents by weight in youth football, and adjusting play for extreme climatic conditions.<sup>10</sup> The availability of qualified coaches in organized sports can be a key factor in providing safety and a positive experience.

In this regard, the effects of organization provide positive environments for young participants. Unfortunately, not all youth sports participants have access to all known safety measures. Furthermore, a great deal remains to be learned about safety in youth sports. Additional resources are needed to study injury prevention and ensure that all participants will benefit from existing safety measures. The prospects for additional development and implementation of safety measures are far greater for organized sports than for unstructured free play.

Despite many potential benefits of organization, there is no consensus as to the overall value of organized sports for preadolescents. A return to the days of free play has been suggested as one means to eliminate negative aspects of organized sports. Unfortunately, the days when children had the time, opportunity, or inclination to play in neighborhoods or local parks have passed. Today, there are more demands on a young person's time, more options for free time, diminished requirements for regular physical activity, and fewer opportunities for free play. School-based physical education programs have also been reduced throughout the years and can no longer be relied on to provide adequate levels of healthy activity.<sup>11</sup>

Regular physical activity can help reduce the risk of many adult health problems, including diabetes, obesity, and heart disease.<sup>12</sup> However, with less time dedicated to free play and school physical education programs, the result may be lower activity levels and lower levels of fitness for children. There is a greater need to protect opportunities for structured and unstructured

physical activity for children. Organized sports may not provide all physical activity needs but can be a viable means to increase activity levels in children and, hopefully, lead to the adoption of active lifestyles as adults.

### **Organized Sports Programs: Optimizing the Benefit-to-Risk Ratio**

If organized sports are going to be safe, healthy, and beneficial for children and preadolescents, there must be reasonable goals for participation and appropriate strategies to attain these goals. Reasonable goals for children and preadolescents participating in organized sports include acquisition of basic motor skills, increasing physical activity levels, learning social skills necessary to work as a team, learning good sportsmanship, and having fun.<sup>13</sup>

Organized sports sessions should be tailored to match the developmental level of participants. Most preschool children have short attention spans and are easily distracted; therefore, exercise sessions should be short and emphasize playfulness, experimentation, and exploration of a wide variety of movement experiences. A reasonable format would consist of no longer than 15 to 20 minutes of structured activity combined with 30 minutes of free play. Concentration will be maximized if instructional sessions take place in a setting with minimal distraction. Instructing younger children using a show-and-tell format with physical demonstration may be more effective than with verbal instruction.

For children and preadolescents, factors such as fun, success, variety, freedom, family participation, peer support, and enthusiastic leadership encourage and maintain participation, whereas others such as failure, embarrassment, competition, boredom, regimentation, and injuries discourage subsequent participation.<sup>14</sup>

Pediatricians, as experts in child development, can help parents and coaches determine readiness of a child to participate in organized sports. Readiness is often defined relative to the demands of the sport. Because different sports and even the same sport may vary widely with respect to demands and expectations, pediatricians must understand these demands to help determine if they are appropriate for the physical and cognitive maturation of participants. Preparticipation examinations are typically not mandated until junior high and high school. However, annual examinations for younger children afford an opportunity to promote physical activity and address issues of readiness as they apply to organized sports.

Pediatricians can further advocate safe sports participation by promoting better education and training of youth sports coaches. Standards for coaching competency are available, and certification for youth sports coaches should address these competencies.<sup>15</sup> In addition, pediatricians can work with sports administrators and coaches within their community to share relevant information on child development, injury assessment, first aid, and injury prevention. Pediatricians can also take an active role in developing safety programs while ensuring that existing safety measures are observed. A pediatrician may be one of the few adults who can objectively determine when pressures and expectations of organized sports become excessive for any individual or group. Finally, pediatricians can serve as role models for appropriate sideline behavior and can help parents and other adults remember the reasons children want to participate.

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Organized sports for children and preadolescents provide an opportunity for increased physical activity and an opportunity to learn sports and team skills in

an environment where risks of participation can potentially be controlled. Unfortunately, when demands and expectations of the sport exceed the maturation or readiness of the participant, benefits of participation are offset. The shift from child-oriented goals to adult-oriented goals can further negate positive aspects of organized sports.

To optimize the safety and benefits of organized sports for children and preadolescents and to preserve this valuable opportunity for young people to increase their physical activity levels, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following:

1. Organized sports programs for preadolescents should complement, not replace, the regular physical activity that is a part of free play, child-organized games, recreational sports, and physical education programs in the schools. Regular physical activity should be encouraged for all children whether they participate in organized sports or not.
2. Pediatricians are encouraged to help assess developmental readiness and medical suitability for children and preadolescents to participate in organized sports and assist in matching a child's physical, social, and cognitive maturity with appropriate sports activities.
3. Pediatricians can take an active role in youth sports organizations by educating coaches about developmental and safety issues, monitoring the health and safety of children involved in organized sports, and advising committees on rules and safety.
4. Pediatricians are encouraged to take an active role in identifying and preserving goals of sports that best serve young athletes.

Title: Parent sues LPSB over GPA requirement  
Author: Walter Pierce

Date: Monday, January 18, 2010

Website:

<http://www.theind.com/content/view/5501/1164/>

Curtis Hollinger, a Lafayette attorney and father of a Lafayette High basketball player, filed suit in state district court late Friday against the Lafayette Parish School Board over what he says is athletic discrimination. Specifically, Hollinger's suit accuses the board of a kind of intellectual reverse discrimination against basketball players (and other sports athletes) because the 1.5 grade point average required to participate in team sports is .5 lower than the 2.0 GPA required for cheerleaders.

"Specifically, the school board has a policy on its books that cheerleaders have to maintain a 2.0 and people who engage in traditional sports such as basketball and track, they have to have a 1.5," Hollinger tells the INDSider. "My basic argument is that cheerleaders and those who engage in those other sports are both athletes. Cheerleaders are definitely athletes just as ball players are athletes. So, to treat one athlete different than another athlete in the requirements for academic performance, to me, is unequal treatment and against the Constitution."

According to the suit, the LPSS' GPA requirement "perpetuates the negative stigma and stereotype that high school basketball players are stupid, inherently inferior intellectually and inherently incapable of meeting higher academic standards ..."

Hollinger is quick to point out that the suit is not a class-action suit on behalf of all student athletes in Lafayette public schools. Rather, it is on behalf of his son. But he maintains that the lower academic standard for athletes creates an environment in which all student athletes seek to only do the minimum amount of work to satisfy the GPA, rather than strive for academic success.

Hollinger hopes the suit achieves a goal of forcing the LPSB to raise its GPA requirement for athletes and to make the requirement uniform. The former all-American tennis player at UL tried to entice schools to voluntarily raise

their GPA requirement for athletes from 1.5 to 2.5 last November with an open letter to the school system offering \$1,500 to any school that raised its standards. He says he got no response from the school system or any schools. "I'm hoping that the lawsuit itself can serve as a model that would encourage the school board to change its overall policy for all athletes," he says, "so the athletes themselves would no longer have this stigma associated with them as being intellectually inferior."

So what's next? "It's war, that's what's next," Hollinger says. "I anticipate them coming at me with every theory they possibly can and every resource they can to defeat the lawsuit."

An e-mail seeking a response from the Lafayette Parish School System went unanswered Monday; the LPSS, however, is closed due to the Martin Luther King federal holiday.

**Please note: this research package is just a small sampling of potential topics under this theme. Clubs should brainstorm potential resolutions and pursue independent research outside of the package. It is possible that some of the final resolutions selected by the hosts were not touched upon by this research package.**

# SEDA

The Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association (SEDA) is a non-profit organization that promotes speech and debate activities in English and French. The Association is active throughout the province from grade 5 through grade 12, and at the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan. The Association coordinates an annual program of speech and debate tournaments and other special activities, including a model legislature.

SEDA's staff, along with printed and audio-visual materials, are available to assist any individual or group interested in elocution and debate.

SEDA is a registered charitable organization.  
Charitable No. 11914 0077 RR0001.

For further information:

Saskatchewan Elocution  
and Debate Association  
1860 Lorne Street  
Regina, Saskatchewan  
S4P 2L7

Telephone: (306) 780-9243  
Fax: (306) 781-6021  
E-Mail: [info@saskdebate.com](mailto:info@saskdebate.com)  
Web: [www.saskdebate.com](http://www.saskdebate.com)

# SEDA PATRONS

Honorary Patron - Hon. Dr. Gordon L. Barnhart,  
Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan  
Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for  
Sport, Culture, and Recreation  
Saskatchewan Law Foundation  
Celebrate Canada Committee for Saskatchewan  
Luther College High School  
Official Minority Language Office,  
Department of Education  
Dr. and Mrs. Ayman Aboguddah  
Mrs. Morris Shumiatcher  
John Archer Family  
Olivia Shumski

## Affiliations

Canadian Student Debating Federation  
SaskCulture Inc.

*SEDA receives funding from*

