

DOPING, DRUGS AND SPORT

by Monique BERLIOUX

Last June the monthly American magazine "Sports Illustrated" published a series of articles entitled: "Drugs in Sport", by Mr. Bil GILBERT.

We thought it would be interesting to recapitulate on certain points which Mr. GILBERT brings up.

"The use of drugs - legal drugs - by athletes is far from new, but the increase in drug usage in the last 10 years is startling. It could, indeed, menace the tradition and structure of sport itself", says the author as an opening gambit, quoting some particularly striking examples such as the two following ones:

"Amphetamines were among the drugs banned for use by athletes in the 1968 Olympic Games, and for which post-event testing was conducted. A U.S. weight lifter, who admitted most of his colleagues took a few amphetamines before competing in order to get that extra little lift, was asked how the Olympic ban affected performance. "What ban?" he asked blandly. "Everyone used a new one from West Germany. They couldn't pick it up in the test they were using. When they get a test for that one, we'll find something else. It's like cops and robbers..."

"Are anabolic steroids (a male hormone derivative that supposedly makes users bigger and stronger than they could otherwise be) widely used by Olympic weight men?" rhetorically asks Dave Maggard, who finished fifth in the shotput at Mexico and is now the University of California track coach. "Let me put it this way. If they had come into the village the day before competition and said we have just found a new test that will catch anyone who has used steroids, you would have had an awful lot of people dropping out of events because of instant muscle pulls".

The taking of medicinal substances either to enable one to run faster, jump higher, overcome nerves or even in some cases to enlarge muscles, seems to be a common

occurrence in some circles, just as drug-taking appears quite normal to many young people today. In both categories those concerned refuse to make a personal effort by relying on the unnatural ease and artificial source of energy induced by a product which conceals their deficiencies.

Nearly every sport has been contaminated by the experiments of doctors, trainers and masseurs in their quest for the philosophers' stone. On another scale, one has only to read the daily papers to see how much drug-taking is spreading amongst all young people, the majority of whom are not athletes.

The problem appears to be a common one and a mutually expedient solution could undoubtedly be found if some serious thought were given to it.

I remember the incident in Rome in 1960, when the Dane, Enemark JENSEN, met his death in a road cycle race as a result of his taking drugs - perhaps not even an overdose. This sad experience during the Olympic Games was in many people's opinions at the root of the setting up of the International Olympic Committee Medical Commission.

It has even been admitted by some competitors that they have taken stimulants in spite of the risk of being caught and shamefully disqualified. We can be sure, and this is confirmed by the Prince de Mérode, President of the International Olympic Committee Medical Commission, that for those who were tempted - more often than one would imagine - to gain those precious inches "*the fear of discovery was the beginning of wisdom*".

Some of the most eminent personalities in the world in the field of medicine, have agreed to be members of this commission. Day by day they carry their researches further with the aim of divulging different drugs and above all finding ways to analyse them. The tests in Mexico were conducted meticulously. Obviously they could not be carried out on every single athlete, which would have been impossible, but the practice of deciding at the last minute who was going to be tested, unquestionably helped to put a stop to any more cases of drug-taking in other competitions.

The fact that only two athletes, out of eight thou-

sand in Mexico, were disqualified, should be put down to the excellent work of the International Olympic Committee Medical Commission. One of these athletes was a competitor in the Modern Pentathlon who had absorbed too large a quantity of alcohol before the shooting event, the other being a wrestler who had inhaled a cotton-wool swab soaked in ammonia. The former was disqualified as a result of the Medical Commission's test, and the second in the ring itself, by the President of the Federation.

We should remember that the controls did not in fact lead to any disqualifications. On the contrary, certain "female" competitors disappeared from the scene.

This is only a primary step. The aim of Olympism is to generate strong, healthy and energetic young people who, in the words of President BRUNDAGE, will be "*finer citizens, fit to serve their countries better*". It is not in fact the aim of the Movement, as founded by Baron de COUBERTIN, to make men into probes and guinea pigs.

Let us quote Bil Gilbert again, with the example he gives us of golf and of the "image" one should have of a champion and a sport.

"Golf is a prime example of a sport in which the struggle against pressure is a major part of the contest. Tension is to golf what the oxygen debt is to a miler, muscle fatigue to a cyclist and pain to a hockey player. It is therefore meaningful that this sport is one of the few in which sedative use is surreptitious and regarded as an underhanded practice. When interviewed at a recent tournament, a number of the touring pros were immediately suspicious of any mention of sedative use, quickly claiming that if - perish the thought - drugs were used, public knowledge of this would be bad for the "image" of the game".

This is also the kind of image that an Olympic competitor should create.

The struggle is not an easy one, it is true, as, in so far as sports leaders are concerned, it is a question

of persuading them that such a fight is necessary. In point of fact *"the arguments against defining what is dope, writing anti-dope regulations and enforcing them are usually convincing in one respect. They make it clear that many people in sport are afraid that such rules would either force them to change their current drug practices or have them exposed. In the final analysis, this fear and the guilt feelings it engenders are more shocking than the drug practices themselves. Rationally - and legally - there is no reason for the guilt, particularly in America where there are no laws prohibiting the use of any legally obtained drug. A shotputter who takes prescribed anabolic steroids is breaking no law. He risks no punishment. Yet most such athletes feel guilty, as do many physicians who inject Novocain and hand out pep pills. Each "off the record", "no comment", "I don't know anything about it", each - let's say it - lie adds another thread to the fabric of guilt. It gives further evidence that unless controls are established the present practices inevitably will lead to a sports scandal and humiliation"*.

This is why the problem of doping in sport as that of drugs amongst young people can and must be solved.

It is not wishful thinking that it could be the athletes themselves who take the lead at the head of a movement directed towards the establishment of strict laws forbidding the use of drugs in every country. Some countries have already come out in favour of this. It is a matter of spreading these regulations for the good, not only of sport, but of humanity.