

# “Athletes and Pills: Lloyd Percival and the Crothers Controversy of 1966”

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On March 31, 1966 Bill Crothers sent a letter to the Registration Committee of the Central Ontario Branch of the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada accusing Lloyd Percival of having administered pep pills to this athlete as a means of enhancing their performances in competition. Crothers had been Canadian Athlete of the Year in 1965 and was to win a silver medal in the 800 metre event in the 1968 Olympics. Percival, founder of Sports College and the Fitness Institute, was Canada's best known track and field coach.

Canadian track and field was immediately plunged into a lurid controversy involving its best known coaches, athletes and officials. The affair turned on a subject (the non-medical use of drugs in sport) about which Canadians had not previously heard very much. In June 1966 the media came to know of the Crothers charges and the remainder of the controversy was played out in public.

After holding hearings, the Central Ontario Branch of the AAU of Canada made a ruling on Percival's eligibility as a coach which seemed to substantiate Crothers' charges. In July 1966 the national executive of the AAU refused to involve itself in the case in spite of request from the Central Ontario Branch to do so. Percival sued the five member Registration Committee for libel and slander in the Supreme Court of Ontario.

Reports vary on the outcome of this case which was settled out of court after some testimony had been given. One of the conditions of the settlement was, apparently, that none of the parties would reveal the terms of the settlement. Most commentators have assumed that Percival was exonerated.

Extensive documentation exists on this controversy. The Public Archives of Canada holds the papers of John Davies (an official with both the AAUC and the Canadian Olympic Association) and the papers of the AAU itself (now open to research). Although Percival died in 1974, many of the key participants are still alive and can be approached for interview.

John Smart has written three other articles on Percival's career. In August 1982 he gave a paper on Percival's work as a fitness advocate to the Fifth Canadian Symposium on the History of Sport and Physical Education at the University of Toronto.