



# The Line in the Sand for British Strength Sports. No Second Chances and the Creation of a Drug Free for Life Ethos

## Authors' contribution:

- A) conception and design of the study
- B) acquisition of data
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## ABSTRACT

Performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) crises in sport provide stories for the mass media. From individuals such as Ben Johnson and Lance Armstrong, to countries and organisations such as Russian Athletics and Major League Baseball. More recently, research has emerged that suggests that those who take drugs, even the once, are permanently advantaged over those who never have (Egner et al., 2013; Eriksson, 2006). This has expanded existing arguments related to PEDs, even extending debate to one that argues that PED use should be monitored and legalised in order to create a level playing field – as opposed to ‘banning’ athletes. In contrast, there are varying reasons for the rationale of ‘clean’ sports. In the first kind of discussion related to this the central premise is often about health concerns and PED use. In the second discussion, we hear much about cheating, unfairness, and the perversion of sport (Schneider & Butcher, 2000). At the present time, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) police PED use in sport and use Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs) that allow a sliding scale of transgressions with lifetime bans not given in the first instance of a failed test. Put simply then, these ADRVs do not facilitate a system for those not wishing to compete with others who, at any time, have used PEDs. However, in the 1980's a number of people in Britain made the decision to distance themselves from what they saw as significant doping in British and international Weightlifting. They achieved this through creating competitive strength organisations dedicated to a drug free for life ethos. In this paper I draw on the experiences and reflections of some of these key people, and contend that it was the ideology of fairplay that influenced this movement, and that the rules on PED use should not be fully authoritative and determinate.

## KEYWORDS

performance, doping, elitism, values, natural

## Introduction

In many respects our use, and understanding, of the term sport is based on the culmination of a series of social and cultural contexts within history and what we have recorded as sports events (McIntosh, 1985). From these, the constituent rules that define a specific game, and that involve a degree of skill and physicality, create our determinations of what sport is (Haywood et al., 1990; Coakley & Pike, 2009). And whilst for a brief period of time the term sport might have been contested in the post industrialisation era, chiefly between the end of the

19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginnings of the twentieth century with the rise and fall of Turnen<sup>1</sup> and Physical Culture<sup>2</sup>, any meaning that sport has contemporarily is now synonymous with ideals of performance and the Olympic decree of Faster, Higher, Stronger. In many respects, it can be argued that this modern interpretation of sport fits well and echoes what can be considered the ‘essence’ of sport in that many feel that it is timeless and has an unchanging character. This is largely because modern day podium and performance sport mirrors the very nature and contestation of the ancient Greek games with their reliance on, and admiration for, human accomplishment in the field of physical ability as well as the aesthetics of the human body (Young, 2004).

In the late modern period, the original growth of codified, rule-based modern sport under the UK public school system was complemented by, and accelerated through, the advent of competition and the rapid professionalization of sport (Hargreaves, 1986; Mangan, 1986; Holt, 1990; Holt & Mason, 2002). Through these interrelated processes, attention in sport was increasingly turned to performance enhancement, physiological testing, and skill development; all key tenets of performance sport (Lyle, 2002; Robinson, 2010; Day, 2011). So it is no surprise then that sport and human performance, once rationalized, would continue to be pushed in a scientific manner with, unsurprisingly, efforts at circumventing rules stretched in order to maximise technique, activity, and overall execution. And whilst it might be said that the *genie* of performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) was opened and let out in the 1950s and 1960’s - principally through the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR - East German Republic) and Soviet state sponsored systems and then copied by the West’s perhaps tacit realisation that fire needed to be fought with fire - any casual review of history related to the ancient Olympic Games sees that gaining advantage, i.e. through the consumption of bull’s testes, was always seen as fair game (Yesalis & Bahrke, 2001).

It is no wonder then that sport today has an underbelly, seemingly no matter how well policed, that echoes with the old Greek philosophy of improving performance and the more recent, comparatively, Soviet ideal of Anthropomaximology<sup>3</sup>. As a consequence of this some concede that the battle against PEDs is futile and that, given their prevalence and sophistication, testing for them in the context of sport is now redundant (Savulescu, Foddy & Clayton, 2004). This argument extends to one in which sport is best thought to move to a PEDs permissive (allowed) system of explicitly monitoring athlete health in order to mitigate against known risk factors rather than the current preventative system. Much of this concession is based upon the idea that drug use is considered to be commonplace in modern society, that all drugs carry risks, and that these risks should prove to be the burden of individuals. And also in part because some feel that the majority of top class athletes use PEDS, although whether this obviates the need to police PEDs in lower level/participation sport is open to question.

At times then, the hope for PED free performance sport seems to be difficult to achieve and perhaps is tantamount to no more than an illusion, one covering the reality of what actually takes place. The truth is that there has been a succession of PED scandals within sport over the last 50 plus years, with an acknowledgement that some athletes, some training camps and coaches, and even some state systems (most notoriously the former DDR in the 1960s and 70s) have encouraged and supported a culture of PED use. Nevertheless, notwithstanding concerted attempts to combat, and vilify, PED use since, since the 1980s – with, most notably, Ben Johnson’s positive test at the 1988 Seoul Olympics – a succession of PED scandals has taken place. Indeed, each decade

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<sup>1</sup> Turnen was a German system of Gymnastics based exercises popular in the early 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries (see Pfister, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Physical Culture is a historical concept that embodies a range of health and fitness movements that started in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, principally in the UK, Germany, Sweden and the USA. It advocated various exercise systems in order to see off what was then seen as the emerging problems of a more sedentary lifestyle. The movement drew from quite an eclectic range of folk games, combat sports, and various systems and methods of physical training.

<sup>3</sup> The term anthropomaximology is used to classify a system that researches how best to identify, through a variety of physiological and psychological methods of adjustment, the optimum working state (including sport) for human beings (see Kuznetsov, 1982).

since has presented major PED transgressions that have resulted in precipitous falls from grace. For instance, the Irish swimmer Michelle Collins in the 1990s, the BALCO scandal (including the fall of Olympic sprint champion Marion Jones) and Lance Armstrong's positive results (and final admission to PED use in 2013) that initiated a deep introspection of the culture within cycling in the 2000s, and continued issues of state sponsored programmes (such as Russia) within the 2010s.

And at time of writing, many of the major sports leagues within the USA have experienced a number of PED scandals that seem to indicate that their use is rife, and somewhat accepted. There are also renewed calls to examine what seems to be the incredibly high incidences of athletes with medical conditions that require what some – perhaps cynically, perhaps realistically – state might be unexpected, yet luckily timed episodes of medicinal intervention (with recognised performance enhancing qualities) that fall under the banner of Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE). And added to this there has now been, thanks to the reanalysis of older samples though improved anti-doping methods, what seems to be, a wholehearted approach to the reallocation of medals and places from the 2008 and 2012 Olympic Games.

However the idea that there is a unanimous consensus and approach to countering PED use in sport is false. Indeed, some judge that for any part of life to be drug-free at this point in contemporary postindustrial culture is virtually impossible. The position put forward by some here, one that this paper has briefly mentioned, is that drugs are completely integrated into everyday life and that any separation of athletes from the lived experience of modern life would be impossible. In reality, any conceptualisation of what constitutes drug free sport is complicated by a variety of factors that render any idea of morality difficult to determine – whilst at the same time advocating the administrative regulation of PEDs in order to show how this could temper, or control, what are already fundamental, factual understandings of the inherent risks of PED use in sport. The proposition promoted here then, is that a system that monitors athlete risk and lessens the potential impact and damage to health through medical intervention is one that is a) more genuine and b) more reflective of the intricacies, minutiae, and lived experiences of contemporary society.

As an example of how some posit what they believe is the futility of continuing drug testing within sport, Savulescu et al. (2004) presented a number of arguments to support this. In no particular order, these included such postulates as: the fact that classical music and other performance type 'art' allows drugs (for creativity etc.); That - similar to the previous point - the 'spirit' of sport would be enhanced by allowing genetic manipulation, ensconcing it as one element within a variety of other factors that lead to success in sport; That allowing drugs would create an even playing field; And that permitted drug use would be safer – if 'safe drugs' were allowed.

Yet it would be remiss to neglect the opposite side of this argument within academia. An example here is how Devine's (2010) position, in response to Savulescu et al. (2004), made what might be considered two major contributions to this group of arguments. These were: firstly, that the notion of drug use should be discouraged because it can unsettle what he terms the "balance of excellences" in sport (Devine, 2010, p. 2). The example he used is tennis, whereby a power game – facilitated by drugs – could 'overpower' the other elements within the game that spectators enjoy (i.e., rallies, returns, trick shots, etc.). Another more contemporary, topical, argument would be the development of rugby union and rugby league in the last 20 years, with power and physical strength perhaps seen to have overtaken guile and creativity. You can also add the sport of American football and use the emerging Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) evidence here related to the significant, long lasting, and debilitating effects of playing the sport to expand the argument. In the second position Devine (2010) advocates, he grapples with elements of philosophy and what sport might actually 'be'. In fact, Devine does use Bernard Suits' (1978) definition of sport to help here – one which is based upon an agreement by participants to adhere to rules. This helps us differentiate and make a moral, or more to the point definitional and existential, distinction as to what sport 'should' be.

Accordingly, these types of explanations allow for a range of arguments to be made both for and against the use of drugs in sport. Whilst numerous in nature, some examples include the call for a more lenient approach to PED use. One example of an ‘alternative’ style in this vein, made by Kayser and Smith (2008), calls for a prioritisation in drug usage (and monitoring) to focus on harm reduction and the like. Some, such as Harrison et al. (2014) also submit that the long-term adverse consequences of PED use need more study, including the withdrawal symptoms, whilst acknowledging the significant detriments to health that can and do arise as a consequence of use.

Clearly then, there are some important differences in how some academics and those involved in the wider policy making decisions fields regard PED use and subsequently, how any permissions and restrictions of their usage should be enforced. Yet at this moment in time, there is still an appetite for drug-testing and as it stands the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), and other organisations, police the use of PEDs in sports. Despite this, we have still been left with a series of cherished sports stars capable of seemingly effortless excellence, alongside other sport stars revealing a more sinister, in the sense of actively looking to circumnavigate or completely ignore rules related to PED use, set of true affairs. This is despite the advocacy and implementation, since the 1980’s, of a more stringent global drug-testing framework. In sum, the permeation of PEDs within sport seems to be never-ending.

Given all of this, this paper looks to outline what sport and PED use is, what it might be and, using historical archives and interviews with some of the main protagonists, outlines the manner in which resistance and contestation of the traditional acceptance of and penalties for PED use have already been challenged by a series of strength sports in the UK.

### **The Current ‘State of Play’**

As stated above, it is the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) that oversees a range of initiatives that have the goal of PED free sport at their heart. Established in 1999, WADA is an international independent agency recognised and funded by both national governments and global sport movements, such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). Whilst they oversee research, education, and issues of law enforcement, much of their *raison d’être* is centered on policing Anti-Doping rule violations. These violations include testing for prohibited substances, controlling efforts of misinformation, missed tests, tampering, as well as possession, complicity, and prohibited association (WADA, 2016).

But the very structural context of global elite sport makes the job of WADA difficult. This structure means that funding for many sports and sport organisations is usually linked to performance outcomes and almost predictable management patterns. This is underpinned, and exacerbated by (1) a wider culture of excellence which only values winning, (2) a growing professionalisation of sport which has added income to the prestige of winning (in a culture of excellence), and (3) a public demand for records and for more spectacular athletic performances. All in all then a dangerous combination that encourages individuals, performance directors, head coaches, and indeed anyone concerned with under-performance to take risks in order to be the best.

Given all of this and WADA’s limited annual budget - in 2014 just \$26, 684, 298 (WADA, 2014) and even in 2018 just \$32,102,828 (WADA, 2018) - it is not unsurprising that the difference between those caught using PEDs and the reliable estimates of the extent of drug use within sport differ quite markedly<sup>4</sup>. This is even more

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, the USA Doping Administration (USADA) state that there are “at least three million PED users in the U.S” (USADA, 2014).

so when some national teams benefit from what seems to be state sponsored support and the significant financing and resourcing that this infers<sup>5</sup>.

### Ethical considerations

The fact that PEDs work should not be up for debate. Many of these drugs, steroids and growth hormones in particular, have their origins linked to the medical professions and are still used widely in that context. What is in question here is the extent to which they can help sporting performance. Whilst it is generally agreed that they help and that training benefits are accrued from dosing, at times arguments have been made that specifically minimise the impact that they can have on sporting achievement. Although admittedly, it is oftentimes those that dope themselves who profess that PED use leads to minimal improvement. Clearly, arguing against this position and detailing how it might be undermined presents difficulties. More specifically, the complexity of actually conducting tests and studies on the impact of PEDs on specific sports and human performance means that ethical issues in terms of health arise. It is certainly difficult to envisage how long term administration of PEDs for the sole purpose of study and experimentation might be ethically sound if it is for sport, and not explicitly for the medical community.

However, the evidence that exists certainly shows how they can work and, in fact, can work without even doing any training whatsoever (see Bhasin et.al., 1996). We also know that they have been and are still currently used widely at elite levels across many sports. And it is perhaps this notion of *how well they work* that underpins some of the arguments related to the use of PEDs in sport. In other words, do they work a little or a lot, and how advantageous is using them, even just the once, for athletes?

Yet before we tackle this subject in more detail, it is first worth pointing out how we might regard sport itself. One way in which we can do this is to revisit Suits' (1978) explanation of how games and sports can be defined, through analytical philosophy, by the following four pillars. That firstly, a pre-lusory (lusory equalling a playful state) goal needs to be established. For instance, putting a ball through a goal. Secondly, that inefficient means would be used to do this – in effect, making something harder than is necessary, i.e. having to kick a ball into the goal instead of shooting it through with a cannon, or more simply even just picking it up and running with it. Thirdly, that a framework to ensure the selection of inefficient means needs to be in place, in other words, a set of rules. And lastly, that the participants within the game accept those rules in order to allow the game or sport to be played. This is the lusory attitude, one that decrees that players must accept the rules to make the game, or sport, possible. Using these four essential elements, it is reasonable to assume that participants in sport should not seek to bend rules or gain advantage in ways that are detrimental to the game. Admittedly, Suits' explanation of these pillars in the context of sport extended to needing to define sport through being skilful, physical, and widely played and stable. Yet this qualification of sport still posits that acceptance of rules if a necessary condition for it.

Similarly, Lewandowski's (2007) constraint model of sport, one that builds upon Suits' game playing, argues first that athletes look "to maximize their skills and creativity within constraints" (p.27), and second that participants in sports are bound by conventions and rules. This is even when the athletes can play sports *well* and with creativity and skill (Lewandowski, 2007). Fairness then, bound within the constraints of rules and existing even within the higher echelons of performance, is the essence of both models.

And perhaps underpinning both of these ways of seeing sport as *fair* is the historical concept of amateurism. A set of ideas that arose in the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the UK public school system and diffused into the wider

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<sup>5</sup> Examples of national sports teams banned by WADA for Rio 2016 were the Bulgarian and Russian Weightlifting teams. And the recriminations from the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics and the findings of continued state regulated doping systems had led to Russia being banned internationally.



political and administrative context, achieving a dominant position central to how sport was organised and seen. The main tenet of it was that there was a certain *purity* of sport - that amateur sport was not about labour but play - and that sports were supposed to be played fairly and with respect (Dunning and Sheard, 1979; Holt, 1989; Mason, 1988). And this viewpoint is echoed more recently with Zakham and Mascio's (2018) assertion that sport needs to be bound by an ethos or 'spirit' in order to ensure integrity. So, fundamentally, many definitions of sport and the manner in which we understand it are based on the idea that it is *fair*.

And this is where it becomes interesting. Particularly if we follow the idea that some like to think that fairness in sports will only be achieved by allowing all participants equal access to PEDs. This take on the morality of doping eschews any thoughts that doping is any different to other means and ways of gaining advantage, i.e. through high altitude training, supplements, sport science support etc. Advocates of this approach say that monitoring by doctors and sports scientists would ensure only safe drugs and amounts were used, that it would create a level playing field, and that sporting records could continue to be broken, further spectacularising it. Moreover, much of the gist within this argument posits that the health of sportspeople will be better ensured with a more universal access to the best available medical advice and treatment.

The discussions related to permitting doping in sport then are quite neatly summarised by Schneider and Butcher (2000), who outline four major clusters of arguments used to justify PED use within sport. The first is based on the idea of cheating and unfairness, the second, harm, the third, the perversion of sport, and the fourth, the dehumanisation of sport. The paragraph above detailed how the first and second would, in a system that allowed doping, be negated by parity and medical supervision. And the third and fourth clusters might be determined to be redundant by some in lieu of the fact that drugs, of all kinds, are ubiquitous in modern society. In this sense, and perhaps overarchingly, some believe that the use of drugs is only reflective of broader society and that any drug use, be it aspirins, anti-inflammatory drugs, penicillin or the like, make the idea of drug-free sport redundant.

So for the reasons above, and others, some people like to believe that allowing all athletes access to the same drugs and systems enabling, promoting, and monitoring their usage would invalidate any advantages gained from using PEDs. The issue here, however, is that this belief sits at odds with what are the widely understood consequences of using medicinal drugs, with, for instance, wide variations in how individuals react to different types of drugs. The medicinal terminology is often simplistic, outlining *common* and *uncommon* reactions and the range of possible side effects that individuals may encounter. These terms, *by definition*, acknowledge that individuals may well react differently to exactly the same dosages and types of drugs. Put simply, and in the context of sports performance, the reality is that some who take PEDs may well respond positively to certain types, dosages, or incidences and timing of exposure, all of which are based more on their individual genetic predisposition and physiology and how they can assimilate and effectively use PEDs. Given our current understanding of *talent* and *ability*, it is probably fair to say that this does not *currently* sit within any existing interpretations of sporting aptitude. And we can move on to what might be termed as the *really unfair* advantage that PEDs can give. Put simply, as an example, steroid use – even just the once – has been found to permanently advantage those who have taken them over those who never have through permanently increased fibre areas and number of myonuclei (Egner et al., 2013; Eriksson, 2006).

However, this idea of PEDs (more specifically, anabolic steroids) conferring a permanent advantage is more of a new one in terms of public awareness and discourse, and is perhaps not even truly part of the argument against drug use as of yet. But it is not to say that the *idea* of drug use, even the once, advantages users over non users has never been held. Please hold this thought as we will return to it later on.

## Weightlifting/Powerlifting in the UK

Sport historians agree that the sport of Weightlifting arose from 19<sup>th</sup> century vaudevillian acts that preceded and laid the foundation for physical culture in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Buck, 1998; Eichberg, 1998; Klein, 1993; Cook, 2011). In Britain, from the 1850s Weightlifting was originally performed under the banner of various other sports (Athletics, Wrestling, Fencing, and Gymnastics) until 1911 when the British Amateur Weight Lifter's Association (BAWLA) was created in order to bring all weightlifters under one self-governing body. The rise of international competitions in the early twentieth century ensured that the codification of the sport took place, and by the 1930's the trio of the Press, Snatch, and Clean and Jerk disciplines had taken precedence as the accepted lifts of international competition for Weightlifting under the remit of the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF). BAWLA continued throughout the world wars and post war with both Olympic lifting and All-Round Weightlifting<sup>6</sup> (Crisp, 2016).

World championships in Powerlifting (distinct from the sport of Weightlifting) emerged in the 1970s and continue to this day with the same three recognised lifts of the Squat, the Bench Press, and the Deadlift. And BAWLA continued as the National Governing Body (NGB) for all three of these disciplines, alongside the Weightlifting ones. Be that as it may, in the 1980's a new federation, the British Amateur Weightlifters Guild (BAWG) appeared to cater for a wider range of lifts. This new federation then split into the British Powerlifting Association (BPA)<sup>7</sup>, and then onto what has become the International All Round Weightlifting Association UK (IAWA-UK), although the BAWG never *officially* retired. Also, other Powerlifting organisations appeared, most notably the British Powerlifting Organisation (BPO) in 1994, which split into the British Powerlifting Congress (BPC) in the 2000's<sup>8</sup>, which then in turn split in 2008 into the British Powerlifting Union (BPU) and the Global Powerlifting Committee – Great Britain organisation (GPC-GB). And in 2008 British Weightlifting (BWL - they had dropped the *Amateur* label by now) decided that they did not want to reapply to the International Powerlifting Federation (IPF) and recommended that a new organisation, the Great Britain Powerlifting Federation (GBPF – later renamed British Powerlifting), should take over the sport of Powerlifting in Britain.

Now whilst I have not intentionally set out to make the above confusing, it is nevertheless a rather convoluted matter of affairs compared to the very linear development that many other sports have experienced. So let's retrace where we were and where we are now. Previously, BAWLA (again, now called BWL), oversaw Olympic Weightlifting, Powerlifting, and All Round Weightlifting for the better part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. However, the current state of play is that they continue to oversee Olympic Weightlifting, but the All Round lifting is now overseen by IAWA (UK), and the popular sport of Powerlifting is now overseen by British Powerlifting as well as the BDFPA, the BPO, the BPU, and the GPC-GB (BDFPA, 2016; BPO, 2016; Cook, 2016; IAWA (UK) 2018; IWF, 2015).

### The Weightlifting/Powerlifting split in the UK – ostracised and radical

But let us revisit some of the above, in particular, the splintering of the strength sports that started in the 1980's. Given the aims and scope of this paper, it is first worth pointing out the respective approaches to drug-testing that each organisation has. BWL is aligned to WADA, the BDPFA is not - yet offers lifetime bans in the first instance to those failing drugs test or contravening testing procedures. IAWA (UK) do likewise (administer

<sup>6</sup> There were still 42 other lifts in the rule books, All-Round Weightlifting encompassed these with competitions involving select lifts as well as postal leagues (For info, a postal league is a competition that allows for the submission of results [still refereed] rather than competitors having to attend a competition).

<sup>7</sup> The BPA has in turn changed its name to the British Drug Free Powerlifters Association (BDFPA).

<sup>8</sup> When the original BPO aligned itself to another world Powerlifting federation and some BPO members wished to stay with the World Powerlifting Congress that the BPO had originally set up with.

lifetime bans for single episodes of PED use), and British Powerlifting follow WADA guidelines for their testing programmes. The other federations do not test for drugs<sup>9</sup>. And the original 1980's 'splitter', the BAWG had drug-testing as one of its maiden edicts.

So how did this *original* split come about? In truth, it is difficult to completely catalogue the history of strength sports in this country as much of it is unrecorded. Here, I am indebted to Tony Cook, Steve Gardner, and Frank Allen, three of the main protagonists in the development of strength sports in the UK in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, for their help in piecing together some of the missing links that the books and archives did not hold. Whilst it was possible to describe and outline what happened and how the strength sports in the UK split, it was not possible to understand 'why'. For this, the firsthand experiences and recollections of these main protagonists was considered essential for the true story to emerge. Here then, interviews with the three took place over a one-year period of time and included email contact and further confirmatory questions. With each of the interviewees the intention of the questioning was to clarify the author's interpretation of the archival data (such as NGB information and gazette/fanzine recollections), as well as to more fully aggregate the narrative as a whole. In short, the interviews were less traditional in methodological approach and more used as a corroborative tool to check on the author's interpretation of the archival data. This was essential seeing as they were at the heart of the story and allowed them to elaborate on the finer details of how and why strength sports in the UK 'split', of which the paper now outlines.

Put simply, the original split to the BAWG (and then in turn to the subsequent splintering of other organisations) was down to a dissatisfaction with bureaucracy, and the emphasis on the Olympic Lifts, on the one hand, and a growing realisation from some that some competitors "were marching to a different beat to their peers" (Cook, 2015, p. 77). In truth, it seems that some strength officials in the 1980's understood the distinct advantages that PEDs conferred and were insistent that there needed to be a greater emphasis on policing their use. An example of this is Steve Gardner's illustration given to myself of seeing many people improve from regional to near international status in very short periods of time; and improving approximately 20% after having had static performances for a decade or more. This viewpoint was echoed, with examples, by Tony Cook and Frank Allen.

The four individuals who created the BAWG were Tony Cook, Frank Allen, Clive Nevis and Chris Gladding, and they were later joined by Ken Smith and then Steve Gardner. Ken and Steve both then went on to create the BPA in order to alleviate some of the (high) membership pressures that the BAWG was experiencing with people devoted to just the powerlifts of the squat, bench press, and deadlift. It is worth pointing out, however, that the split was not carried out without first attempting to address it within BAWLA itself. The main protagonists involved in the split did, initially, report the PED use that they had seen. However, they felt that they were met with indifference, and at times even a tacit acknowledgement of the extent of the problems, but given no answer or solution. Understandably, they came to understand (or at the least, believe) that there was an acceptance by top officials of the fact that top lifters 'doped'. Once this understanding was combined with an undercurrent of bad feeling at the grass roots level, and once it appeared that enough lifters and clubs were in favor of a split, the BAWG was then formed.

But it was not an easy split. Indeed, there were lifetime bans from BAWLA (for bringing the sport into disrepute by publically acknowledging the widespread use of PEDS to the general media) for some, and alleged death threats and even an alleged arson attack on the home of one of the main drivers of eradicating PED use, who believed, wholeheartedly, that PED use sat directly in opposition to the essence of strength sports and that any use conferred a permanent advantage. They were, in the words of some of them, *Ostracised*. And their approach to insisting upon a lifetime natural status and exercising lifetime bans was seen as *Radical*<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Although for accuracies sake, one, the BPU – does have an amateur affiliate that drug tests.

<sup>10</sup> Both the terms *Radical* and *Ostracised* were used by Steve Gardner and Tony Cook in their recollections of the events.



This holds true both ways, in that some of the Powerlifting federations that arose in the 1990s and beyond presumably wanted to *ensure parity* within the sport of Powerlifting and, in an effort to create what they saw as an even playing field and individual choice as to whether or not to take drugs, made explicit the fact that they would not test for any drugs whatsoever.

But in terms of the natural movement, it is fair to say that the initial drive to promote non PED sport was undertaken by a small number of people who had the foresight to see that others would join them. What has happened since is that participants in strength sports, in the UK and elsewhere, now have choices. These are related to using PEDs, using them and potentially suffering a temporary ban in the first instance if they test positive, or choosing to compete in ‘lifetime’ natural movements that have zero-tolerance approaches to any doping, whether this belonged in the past or not.

## Conclusion

This paper is historical in approach, piecing together documentation and interviews/corroborations of events from some of the main protagonists of the split that occurred in British strength sports. What the paper does bring up though, is a question mark regarding how sport, fairness, and approaches to and acceptance of PEDs may need to be tackled in the future. As it is, there is currently a conciliatory, forgiving approach to PED use, from global sport structures and WADA, in that athletes and sportspeople do have a second chance. Redemption, if you may. But while the reader may now appreciate some of the ways that wider society and indeed, scientists argue about the ethics behind PED use, some more complex ideas have been presented by this research. These surround the differences inherent within how individuals can either accept the status quo, or develop their own practical responses and solutions to what they see as the systemic disadvantages that modern day sport, imbued with the intrinsicity of second chances for those who transgress and are found guilty of PED use, imposes on lifetime drug free athletes.

This is important to disentangle, and the research demonstrates how in some sports recurring issues of fairness and equality for those who have never taken PEDS, and want to compete against similar minded people, took precedence for some. Here, I feel it is important to highlight what I see as the end product of the research – the fundamental ideas. Whilst the research sought to draw on the experiences and reflections of some of the key people involved in the development of strength sports in the UK, the research principally offered an opportunity to explain why fairplay was given such precedence within the movement (s), and how practical answers could be first informed, and then developed. In short, a realisation, one now being more commonly accepted as scientific fact and not just the anecdotal evidence from the last 40 years, that perhaps a move away from performance, doping, and elitism, to values of fairness requires a *natural for life* movement.

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