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It seems reasonable to assume that the great sport-loving public has a rather uncomplicated view on doping in sports. Either you accept the use of performance-enhancing drugs in sports, or – which probably is by far the most common view – you totally condemn doping. In academic sport studies, the perspective is different. There are considerably more, and stronger, voices advocating legalization of drugs in sports, not least among philosophers of sport; and, by the same token, there are many totally opposed to doping. But there are a number of scholars with a perspective on doping that's characterized by detachment, normatively and morally. Besides researching the actual abuse, individually and in aggregate, they also study structural circumstances that promote the use of drugs in sports; besides evaluations of the efficacy of the anti-doping efforts, they consider the effects of various anti-doping schemes on the integrity and privacy of the athletes. Ask Vest Christiansen, himself an internationally renowned scholar in the field, has read a recent, thus detached, introduction to drug use in sports, *An Introduction to Drugs in Sport: Addicted to Winning* by Ivan Waddington and Andy Smith (Routledge). Christiansen finds much to appreciate in the book, and a couple of disconcerting mistakes and misjudgments notwithstanding, he recommends the book as a solid introduction to the problem of doping – knowledgeable, well written and easy to read.

## Highly recommended introduction

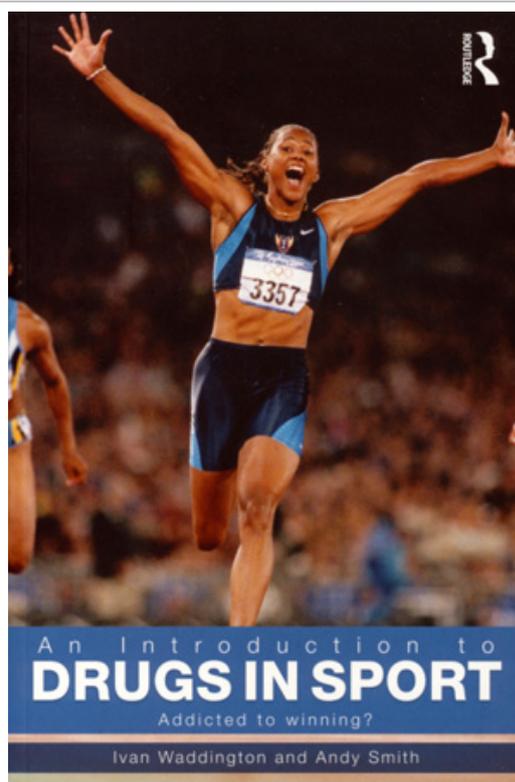
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*Ivan Waddington & Andy Smith*  
**An Introduction to Drugs in Sport: Addicted to Winning**  
270 pages, pb.  
Abingdon, Oxon: [Routledge](#) 2009  
ISBN 978-0-415-43125-5

*An Introduction to Drugs in Sport* is an expanded and reworked version of Ivan Waddington's, *Sport, Health and Drugs* from 2000. That book consisted of two parts, the first of which had four chapters covering various aspects of sports and health, and the second six chapters on sport and drugs. In this new book the four chapters that focused on health have been replaced with six newly written chapters on sport and drugs, which supplement the six existing chapters on the subject. As the authors state in the preface, they believe that this revision is significant enough to justify the new title – and I agree.

The book's analysis draws on Norbert Elias' figurational or process sociology and his distinction between a detached and an involved approach to the subject matter. In this instance it is the authors' ambition to offer readers "a relatively detached analysis of modern sport" (p. 4). This makes sense, since it is a basic premise for researchers that we must seek, as far as it is possible, to put our prejudices aside in favour of a dispassionate analysis. Elias, however, excludes the



possibility that a sane person can have an either completely detached or a completely involved perspective. Therefore no sociological analysis can be completely detached. With this in mind it is perhaps surprising that Waddington and Smith feel the need to note that: "It is certainly not our claim to offer in this book anything remotely resembling 'ultimate truth' – whatever that might be – or complete detachment" (p. 5). Generally, I have a difficult time with academic books that don't have anything 'true' to say about their topic. Why should I read them? In this context, however, the statement resembles most of all an unnecessary genuflection to relativism, since the authors go on to say that the purpose of a detached analysis is to be able to give a more realistic account (and therefore also a more true account) about the topic in question. Moreover, they have written a good book, with many wise and enlightening points that will benefit those who wish to take part in or learn more about the doping debate.

One thing that is without doubt true and correct is that the concept of doping is muddy. Also, it is evident that the doping rules to date have led neither to a lower prevalence of doping nor to a level playing field, that WADA's definition of doping is inconsistent, and that neither the health argument nor the fair play argument is functioning persuasively against doping. These points are addressed in the book's detailed analysis.

As an illustration, *An Introduction to Drugs in Sport* discusses three paradoxes concerning drugs and health: A central argument against drugs in sport is that they are health damaging, but at the same time the sports industry has no quarrels in landing huge sponsorship deals with alcohol and tobacco firms, despite the fact that alcohol and tobacco kill more people than all other drugs combined. Many athletes have a far higher risk of occupational injury than someone working in mining or construction work, while they are sanctioned for using drugs whose adverse health effects have completely different proportions. It also seems inconsistent to ban athletes' use of intravenous injections of water and minerals, while a number of anti-inflammatory drugs, such as NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) which are known to have some unpleasant side effects, are used legally by athletes.

One of the central points of this book is that a theory that will explain the problem of drugs in sport is inadequate if it simply focuses on the individual. It must look at the people, organisations and institutions that surround the athlete. It must therefore not only be able to answer why athletes use drugs, because that is to understand the problem in static terms. A proper theory, says Waddington and Smith, should ask the question in dynamic terms and thus be able to explain why, over the past four decades, athletes have *increasingly* used drugs; it should be able to explain the growing *demand* for illegal drugs by athletes, and finally, such a theory should be able to explain the increased *supply* of drugs to athletes. It is the book's sociological ambition to offer an analytical framework for these issues. And for that reason a number of classical theories of drug use are rejected as inadequate (Chapter 4).

” It is ... a pity that the book reproduces Gabe Mirkin's 1970s myth that athletes would be willing to eat a magic pill if it could make them an Olympic champion, even if it would kill them soon after.

Waddington and Smith's alternative is to emphasise two independent but essential processes: firstly, the pharmacological revolution that has taken place *outside* of sport over the last forty years in parallel with the medicalization of a range of human conditions, and secondly, the importance that is placed on victory *inside* sport in the same period. The link between the two processes is sports medicine and the doctors who have become increasingly more common in the athletes' environment. The point is that “? far from being one of the key bastions in the fight against the use of performance enhancing drugs in sport, sports medicine has actually been one of the major contexts within which performance enhancing drugs have been developed and used” (p. . 89).

To substantiate that point the authors include two case studies which show differences in prevalence and practice of drug use, in professional cycling and professional football respectively (Dominic Malcolm has co-authored the football chapter).

The last three chapters deal with the political circumstances surrounding the establishment of WADA (co-authored by Dag Vidar Hanstad), the efficiency of the current doping policy, and finally how future anti-doping work can be improved. These chapters also provide good and detailed insight into the challenges associated with the coordination and implementation of reliable, internationally harmonized anti-doping work. I found chapters 11 and 12, on WADA's work to date and future challenges, particularly interesting. Here the hegemonic 'law and order' approach is evaluated, and the authors' question the appropriateness of controls and surveillance, which has been the sport organisations' main response to doping scandals over the past 40 years. According to the authors this strategy has done nothing to reduce the prevalence of drug use, but instead has led to significant reductions in athletes' rights. As an alternative to this traditional punitive approach, the authors propose more emphasis on harm reduction in future anti-doping policy.

The book functions as the title indicates, as a solid introduction to the problem of drugs in sport. And although there is too much text on each page for my taste, it is written in a fluent and easily readable style. I do, however, have a few reservations. It is for example a pity that the book reproduces Gabe Mirkin's 1970s myth that athletes would be willing to eat a magic pill if it could make them an Olympic champion, even if it would kill them soon after (p. 111). This study was probably never conducted and there is no reason to believe the dramatic postulate.<sup>[1]</sup> Neither do I understand why the authors praise the International Cycle Union's (UCI) 2007 contract for professional cyclists

(*Riders' commitment to a new cycling*) to be a step in the right direction regarding the doping problem (p. 150). The contract did indeed bear UCI's new zero tolerance to doping stamp, but it was also – as lawyers, the European Elite Athletes Association (EU Athletes) and a number of cyclists have pointed out – legally unacceptable and an insult to the athletes' rights as citizens and employees.<sup>[2]</sup>

But these are minor quibbles and do not alter my overall impression that this is a good and well written book. It is highly recommended even though, as the authors point out, it might not provide the ultimate truth about the doping issue.

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[1] For a critical analysis of this myth see Ask Vest Christiansen & Verner Møller (2007). *Mål, medicin og moral*. Syddansk Universitetsforlag, chapter 7.

[2] See [www.euathletes.info](http://www.euathletes.info) for the athletes' attitude. Or for a closer examination see: Verner Møller, *Løgn over løgn. Om Michael Rasmussens Tour de France exit*, People's Press, 2009.

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