

# **“Let’s preserve the spirit of sport”: Preventive approaches of using performance enhancing drugs among national level athletes in Sri Lanka**

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## **Abstract**

The Misuse of medicinal drugs and substances to enhance performance in sports is a serious issue for sports and as well as public health issue due it’s long term negative impacts to individuals and society. The title, analyze in preventive approaches of using performance enhancing drugs among national level athletes in Sri Lanka. The doping in sports has become a serious issue in Sri Lanka in sports such as rugby, boxing, weight lifting, athletics, cricket etc. This paper was described specific objective such as to provide the evidence of doping usage among athlete in Sri Lanka and pathway of eliminate or minimize the impact of the given challenges of athlete. In this sense noticeably athletes who are used performing enhancing drugs were highlighted. The challenges faced by the athletes could be analyzed in numerous ways in this study. Especially in Sri Lanka there is lack of performance enhancing drugs researches. Accordingly, There is a space to be filled up and will be answered by this study. Using the methods of investigative journalism and secondary data analysis were used of this study. As this study is analytical in nature as far as possible an attempt was made to collect secondary data. Extensive review of previous studies was carried out provide a conceptual background of the study.

## **Key Words**

Performance enhancing, National athletes, Drugs, Doping

## **Introduction**

Sri Lanka Anti - Doping Agency (SLADA) has been established, and all the anti-doping activities done through it. Ministry of Sports stated that the government was spending millions of rupees on medication and supplements and towards raising the awareness on the use of banned substances around the country by conducting several seminars for sportsmen/women, coaches and sports officials. The doping in sports has become a serious issue in Sri Lanka in sports such as rugby, boxing, weight lifting, athletics, cricket etc. The doping is being spread rapidly. While some approved medicines have abuse potential, their attractiveness for doping is diminished by the fact that these products are well known and detection methods are available. This type of method, substances affected to the athlete health and sport spirit.

Ministry of Sports stated that the government was spending millions of rupees on medication and supplements and towards raising the awareness on the use of banned substances around the country. Also conducting several seminars for sportsmen/women, coaches and sports officials. Government has pumped in more money to increase the number of athletes to be tested annually from 200 to 500. They will be tested randomly while at training by flying squads and during competitions.

However usage of performance enhancing drug is in a considerable condition in Sri Lanka at the current situation. Even the convention against doping in sport act, No 33 of 2013 has been accepted, athletes are using performance enhancing drugs. This is not only athletes' responsibility, sport governing bodies and stake holders also responsible for preserve spirit of sport as known as protect the clean athlete. Agenda 2020 has shown the IOC's ultimate goal is to protect clean athletes.

## **Increase of drug use amongst professional athletes in Sri Lanka**

Six athletes, four different disciplines and all six have tested positive for banned substances in the last year in Sri Lanka (Colombage, 2014). Three Sri Lankan rugby players being tested positive for drugs during Sri Lanka's encounters against United Arab Emirates and Hong Kong in the recently concluded International Rugby Board (IRB) tournament in Colombo but other related incidents of other Sri Lankan sportsmen at international levels as well (Ladduwahetty, 2011).

The other most recent occurrence of doping charges came when a Sri Lanka opening batsman was tested positive at the 2011 World Cup while Weightlifter who was tested positive at the Asian Weightlifting Championships in China a fortnight ago (Ladduwahetty, 2011).

One of the Boxers was also tested positive and was stripped off a Commonwealth Games Gold Medal in New Delhi on the same charges. This is not the first time a Sri Lankan medalist was charged for using performance enhancers. Earlier Sprinter was charged of using steroids and was suspended from taking part in games in April 1998, but was later exonerated of the accusation(Sandeshaya., 2010). With the increase in drug use amongst professional athletes it is essential that the school bodies and the government work together to ensure this trend does not trail down to school level. Coaches from many of the boys' schools in Colombo have been known to provide their players with supplements and steroids often illegally (Uduwana 2014).

The one of Sri Lanka wicketkeeper has been sent home from their tour of New Zealand after testing positive for a banned substance. He becomes the second Sri Lankan cricketer to fail a doping test. One of batsman was suspended for three months after testing positive during the 2011 World Cup (Guardian sport, Monday 7 December 2015, 15.46 GMT).

The research and studies provide evidence of doping usage among athlete in Sri Lanka. But there are numbers of articles and few studies about why do athlete use drug and supplements of Sri Lanka. ' Drugs galore in Sri Lanka sport ' reviewed By Dinouk Colombage (Colombage, 2014) is one of online article that has been included the previous situation of drug usage of national athletes. According to his report Sporting bodies in Sri Lanka must be held accountable as it is their duty to monitor their athletes and prevent any such controversy.

Most recently uduwana & madhushani (2014) has explored an integrated performance enhancing attitude of national level athletes in Sri Lanka such as drugs and supplements related behaviors, personal related behaviors, and environment related behaviors. Sixty national level athletes (age range=20-40; 47 males) were selected as the subject and measure the doping related behaviors. Research results strongly indicated a high contribution of environment related behaviors towards doping such as 58% persuaded to doping by financial rewards and 50% persuaded by pressure to win from sponsors. Easy of availability ergogenic aids of (38%), lack of knowledge regarding sport rules and doping (40%) and lack of confidence in sport (40%) were other doping related factors that had lower contribution to total doping behavior. Research findings indicated a positive relationship between doping among athletes and above mentioned attributes.

### **Actions and policies of doping**

International Convention against Doping in Sport was adopted on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2005, in Paris, at the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) . Convention against doping in sport act, No 33 of 2013 has been accepted document today. The Sri Lanka Anti-doping Agency is established under article 10 of the Convention against Doping in Sports Act. No. 33 of 2013 with the intention of working in cooperation with international organizations on anti-doping activities in sports (Range, 2013).

In October 2011, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) ruled that the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) own doping rule - which barred offenders who had received bans of longer than six months from competing in the next Olympic Games - was unenforceable. IOC's rule 45 states that anyone banned for a doping offence for six months or more should miss the next Olympics (four years or more). An Olympic ban is beyond WADA's sanctions of a maximum two-year ban (Hilary & Marcus, 2011).

The President of the National Olympic Committee (NOC) in Sri Lanka, Hemasiri Fernando, believes in such a ban. "We should set an example to the others. If someone is found guilty of knowingly taking a banned substance, then he or she should be given the most extreme punishment, they should be banned for life. That would help the young athletes to think twice on taking banned drugs and also to be extra vigilant not to be misled by their coaches trainers and medical advisers," said Fernando (Ladduwahetty, 2011) . IOC's rule 45, which states that anyone banned for a doping offence for six months or more should miss the next Olympics (four years or more). Olympic ban is beyond World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) sanctions of maximum two-year ban Sri Lankan athletes in drug scandals. This situation should be changed.

Six athletes, four different disciplines and all six have tested positive for banned substances in the last year in Sri Lanka. In light of this revelation, the Sports Ministry has decided to

administer surprise dope tests in schools throughout the country. The Sports Ministry said that a special squad would be assembled to travel around the country administering these tests in hope of eradicating drug use amongst school athletes (Colombage, 2014).

### **Possible reasons for use of performance enhancement**

In recent decades, society has undergone some far-reaching changes, with the result that doping is increasingly present in modern sport. Factors not directly related to sport influence high-level athletes and youngsters alike. In the medical community, scientific developments have led to the introduction of drugs and methods able to treat a variety of health problems. Some of these drugs and methods have been misused in order to improve athletic performance. Increase in the grants and salaries paid to athletes in some sports have considerably increased the appeal of a career in high-level sport, where performance is rewarded with cash in Sri Lanka.

The demands of high-level sport are increasing constantly. Records that are continually broken (sometimes with the help of drugs) raise the standards used to evaluate athletes. Athletes face many constraints in maintaining a high-level performance, such as pressure from the general public, the media and the people around them, as well as the obligation to achieve excellence and keep up with a busy schedule of events. In addition to long, frequent and intense training sessions that leave little time for recovery, high-level athletes also face risks from overtraining and, in some cases, the need to compete in spite of an injury.

Modern lifestyle habits often desensitize us to all the products and medications we use to nourish or care for ourselves, lose weight, stay awake, increase productivity, and so on. The sale of readily available ergogenic products also encourages the use of doping substances. Physical appearance is extremely important in society. Even among athletes, many people use products such as creatinine and steroids to enhance their physical appearance.

Especially, some athletes need to special supplements to build muscles and control their weight because of the nature of games such as Judo, Weight lifting, Wrestling etc. Sport practitioners have particular responsibilities in addressing this issue. Athletes need to be aware of the problems that can follow supplement use, and sport authorities need to ensure that nutritional education and guidance for athletes is of the highest standard. The need for the appropriate regulation of dietary supplements is emphasized. Nutrition supplements use and drugs. It does not explain exactly why some athletes take steps towards the use of illegal substance and methods. In saying this, it is useful to reflect on the fact that some Performance Enhance Substances are right on the border between acceptable and banned substances (such as creatinine, glucosamine). Consequently, the question of whether such substances should be on the banned list or not has been raised.

Drugs in sport are of concern to medical practitioners because of the implicit risks to the health of the athlete. There are also ethical concerns about cheating by artificially enhancing performance. Health professionals must be aware of the need to avoid giving 'banned' medications and the need to provide written notification when restricted substances are necessary. Unfortunately still this is not circulated properly in Sri Lanka.

Athletes are a high risk group for binge drinking and alcohol related harms. Future prevention efforts targeted for athletes should address the unique social and environmental influences on athletes. Programs should also take advantage of motives of athletes for self-limiting alcohol intake. Colleges, athletic departments, coaches, and sports medicine professionals are urged to act to help reduce athletes' risk of alcohol related harms.

## **Recommendations to address the issue**

According to Coubertin the most important thing in the Olympic Game is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well. But today it is abolishing by the modern sport setting. Reduction to misuse drugs and supplements was thought by the National Level Athletes. Different types of ideas were received in specific sports such as, need advice about Doping, need additional counseling, and increase confidence level of the game. Additionally, they mentioned need to continue training workout and need to balance diet for players.

Targeted education is particularly important given the fact that the supplement industry is largely unregulated. Contaminated with substances could lead to a positive dope test that has been repeatedly reported. Consequently, any anti-doping programme should incorporate information regarding the risks of using nutritional supplements and drugs to health and to eliciting positive dope tests. Having said this, future prevention programmes could also take into account the potential for 'decision myopia'. Nutrition supplements use is not necessary unless individuals have a specific need or deficiency.

Better dietary plan will overcome the nutritional deficiency. Further, depending on the type of drug usage and the attitude of those involved should also be taken into consideration as to how these individuals are held accountable. After all Sri Lankan children are watching now more than ever. Too often the bottom line is more about winning and getting that big bonus than following the same guidelines taught to children about sports and the life lessons they are supposed to be getting from it. Yet despite the health risks, and despite the regulating bodies' attempts to eliminate drugs from sport, the use of illegal substances is widely known to be rife. It hardly raises an eyebrow now when some famous athlete fails a dope test. Developing school children awareness program is more valuable for reducing doping risk. Correspondingly athletes' awareness programme development should be based on responsibilities of athlete, dietary plans and reducing the pre competition stress.

Testing process must become more stringent and more regulated. Everyone involved in sports must know what they can and can't take and this list must be updated regularly as new things are developed. The main problem is that all concerned individuals and associations don't have knowledge of the prohibited products. It should be developed knowledge and awareness among all parties who include sportspersons, physicians, governing bodies and trainers. At the beginning of each year WADA sends out the list of drugs that are banned to the relevant authority (Sri Lanka Anti-doping Agency), each year there are some additions and subtractions to the list.

Athletes environment is should be controlled. Supporting team will want special attention about athletes' pressure from others. If not, Sponsors will think that athletes were weak to market the product. Athletes' environment related behavior can be controlled in competition period by the sports officers. It can be helped to build up genuine athletes.

Punishment process and discuss the impact of doping should be corrected in Sri Lankan sport context. The main argument is that a two year ban is not necessarily long enough to properly disrupt the careers of those who have cheated. Many banned athletes are able to stand down, train hard, and come back in good shape. They miss two years out of their careers but those who are considering taking shortcuts know that even if they are caught, they can return and continue to earn high incomes. Being caught 'positive' the first time for anabolic steroids; amphetamines or blood-doping should be a life ban or a ban of at least 5 years. Penalties are much longer than those that exist at present.

Athletes will develop a positive attitude towards doping if they believe it offers more advantages than disadvantages. Coaches can take certain steps to prevent this from happening, such as raise the athlete's awareness of sporting values, ethics and compliance with the rules, provide the athlete with information on the harmful effects of doping for health, the consequences of a positive anti-doping test for the athlete's chances of continuing with his or her career and give the athlete the skills required to make informed decisions.

Athletes will be more likely to use drugs if they believe the people they regard as important want them to do so. Besides the coach, these people may include teammates, family members and other team members, such as the physician. Depending on the team structure, the coach can help ensure that they all support the anti-doping effort by encouraging a negative attitude towards doping in the home. Among other things, the coach can provide the athlete's parents with information on doping, and can sometimes involve them in anti-doping initiatives.

In some cases athletes may not want to use drugs but feel they have no choice. For example, they may have the impression that they are not as skilled as the best athletes in their sport, or that they have reached their maximum potential, or else they may simply want to be the best, whatever it takes. They may also believe most record-breaking performances are achieved through doping, that doping controls are ineffective, or that doping will help them compete on equal terms with opponents who use drugs. Although sporting authorities will still need to implement anti-doping policies and tests to show that they are serious in wishing to eradicate doping from sport, there are nevertheless a number of things that can be done in the athlete's immediate environment. For example, providing top quality training aimed at maximizing the athlete's potential, combined with supervision from specialists where necessary (e.g. physician, nutritionist, fitness trainer, etc.) will help the athlete to realize that dope-free progress is possible.

## **Conclusion**

Finally can be concluded that, the need for more social research, particularly to determine the factors that influence an athlete to use drugs ; the need to work with athletes when developing anti-doping strategies; the need to start proper way to educate athletes at a young age ; the need to assess the effectiveness of anti-doping programmes; the need to incorporate the ethical issues into anti-doping programmes and the need for harmonization among Sport ministry, NOC, National Federation and other sport bodies. The sportsmen and women of any country are considered ambassadors of their nation. It is not themselves but their country that they represent. Therefore is it not the responsibility of those governing to take concrete and stringent measure that ensures a doping free 'Sri Lanka Sport'. The sportsmen and women together with the governing bodies are yet to know the steps taken by the country's leading authority to prevent indulgence in doping. Meanwhile the public watches on with disappointment, as year after year, our sporting stars fall prey to doping allegations and are stripped of their hard earned glory.

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