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Bachelor Thesis
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The Cold War in Sports: The Relationship Between Performance Enhancing Drugs, Soft
Power, and National Identity

Abstract

Steroids and performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) are today often seen as a tool that is ingrained in Eastern European, former Soviet, and above all Russian culture. The United States, however, also has an impressive history with doping. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the American side of doping more. The context in which this is done is the last 15 years of the Cold War. The second chapter will deal with the reality of doping by looking at the Summer Olympics events during that time period. The third chapter focuses on the perception of PEDs and steroids by Americans by looking at American popular culture of the 1980s. The social concept of national identity in relation to soft power will also be discussed in this chapter. In the fourth and final chapter the contrast between these two will be examined. Throughout this work the concept of soft power, coined by Joseph Nye Jr., will be central. The argument established in this thesis is that PEDs are both American and un-American at the same time.

Keywords: Sports, politics, doping, Cold War, soft power, national identity

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1.1 Overview

“*Steroids are not the problem, they are just another side effect of being American*”

—Christopher Bell, *Bigger Stronger Faster**

The quote that ended the 2008 documentary *Bigger, Stronger, Faster** would be the very start of this thesis. It made me think: even though steroids are considered to be very American, there is still a huge taboo resting on it. Hard work beats cheating seems to be the consensus. This, however, is often not the case in reality. Drugs give athletes the 0,1 percent extra that is needed to beat the opponent of equal talent and potential but who is not using drugs. The incentive to provide them to elite athletes in order to make them reach their athletic potential quicker and exceed it is therefore great. The politics surrounding PEDs make up for a great discussion.

International sports and politics have for a long time been closely intertwined. The 1980 and 1984 Summer Olympics boycott by the United States and the Soviet Union respectively are great examples of this. Both nations withdrew from the sport event in order to make a political statement. A more recent example would be the 2014 Winter Olympics in Russia where Barack Obama and several other world leaders decided to not attend the opening ceremony. I, however, am not interested in these obvious forms of protest as in not showing up. What is far more interesting is when two nations in conflict do compete against each other in sports events. The political battle continues on the battlefield of the sports arenas.

The Olympics were the closest the United States and the Soviet Union got to actually fighting each other during the Cold War. They physically competed against each other in many different sports. The United States, the Soviet Union, and later East Germany were the top three competitors at the Summer Olympics almost every year during the Cold War. This was the event to showcase their superiority over the enemy. An important question we could ask ourselves is to what lengths these nations would go in order to prove their strength in sports. This is where performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) come into play.

1.2 Context

Modern anabolic steroids were already used by German soldiers during World War II and they would soon find their way into competitive sports after the war.

Weightlifters of the Soviet Union and East Germany were known to be using testosterone to boost their performance. As a response to the Soviets, American physician John Ziegler started tests with the drug Dianabol, which he did on American weightlifters in the 1960s (Maraniss 361). The invention and use of this drug raises questions on both the politics and ethics of the United States, a nation that has had strict rules against drugs since the beginning of the 20th century.

Sports have been a topic of academic research since the early 1970s during which the North American Society for Sport History (NASSH) was established. When looking at sports from an international viewpoint, a large part of the studies has been done with a focus on either sports as “a part of colonialism or a form of cultural imperialism” (Dichter 2), the globalization of sports (Keys 64), and sports as a form of soft power (Grix et al.). Regarding the use of PEDs, most current day scholars choose to focus on its physiological or psychological effects (La Gerche; Onakomaiya; Palermo et al.), the prevalence (De Hon et al.), or the synthetic structure and scientific components of the drugs. This leaves a gap where both of aforementioned topics come together: the international politics of performance enhancing drugs. The aim of my thesis then will be to combine the studies on sports available focusing on the concept of soft power, with the aspect of PEDs to provide new insights on the politics of international sports regarding PEDs.

Soft power is a concept established after the Cold War by political scientist Joseph Nye. It follows the rule that “If a state can make its power seem legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. If its culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow” (Nye 167). Instead of using force, a nation uses co-opting tactics to exert their power. Prestige is one of these crucial tactics and is and always has been a very important aspect of the Olympics, especially during the Cold War. The prestige that is gained by winning more events could be seen as a form of soft power as the nation is making its culture more attractive. Athletes during the Olympics do not represent themselves, but rather represent their respective nation. The nation therefore creates the impression that they are superior when it comes to athletic activities, which could also translate to being superior in war. This form of soft power will be discussed thoroughly in the second and third chapter.

I am mostly fascinated by the contradictions when it comes to U.S politics on drug use. The nation has for a long period had strict laws on drugs, but apparently the use of drugs is condoned when they are used to beat the enemy. Users and distributors

of cannabis are seen as thugs, while users of PEDs are often received as national heroes. Furthermore, the fact that many Americans look down on the use of PEDs could be used for political purposes. This combination leads to the research question of this thesis: How did the United States use performance enhancing drugs and steroids politically during the Cold War period from 1970 until 1990 and how did they help shape the American national identity of that time?

The term politics can constitute many different things. To clear things up: the description: “political affairs or business; especially : competition between competing interest groups or individuals for power and leadership” from the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary will be the meaning of the word politics throughout this work; unless it is stated otherwise. All the laws, actions, and practices to beat the competition fall under this.

1.3 Outline

To answer the research question, my thesis will consist of a part that analyzes empirical data and a theoretical part. These shall be chapter two and chapter three respectively, the first chapter being this introduction. The second chapter involves a case study of the Summer Olympics of 1972, 1976, and 1988. The reason for this period is the prominence of PED use and the new tests created to detect them. The prevalence, effects, and laws regarding PEDs will be important in this analysis. The three major participants of the Cold War (US, USSR, DDR) will all be part of this with a focus on the United States.

In order to get a better idea of the perspective and viewpoints of Americans on PED use, in the third chapter I will use theoretical methods on American popular culture involving sports in aforementioned timeframe. This is important as it gives us a better understanding of the contradictions between the U.S practices and thoughts on these drugs. The politics on PEDs go further than just laws and use. Popular culture could also use the idea of PEDs for political purposes and I expect some works to use it to either support the Cold War, while others do not. The pieces of culture that will be looked at are WWE/F wrestling and the film *Rocky IV*, which share many similarities. Studies on Cold War sports popular culture are scarce (Baker; Shaw). Unfortunately, the amount of those involving PEDs is even more so. Therefore I had to look at studies on PEDs and sports entertainment outside the Cold War and link them to the time period of

the 1970s and 1980s. Opinions on PEDs do not seem to have changed a lot in the United States.

The concepts of national identity and Americanism are central in this section. WWE/F contains characters that are said to portray the ideal American man and nationalism is a recurrent theme in its storylines. Steroids also were, and still are, a big part and controversy within the industry. The usage of steroids for aesthetic purposes that started during the 1970s continues until today. Actors and WWE wrestlers may be inclined to take them in order to adhere to the standards created in the 1970s and 1980s and perhaps even surpass them. Think for example of the actor Dwayne Johnson, who also was a former wrestler. Due to having the same muscular size as wrestlers such as Hogan, he is always accused of steroids, but he himself claims to have not used them since he was 18 (Roberts). Here we can already see the paradox that will become evident later on in this thesis. Even though he is often accused and slandered because of steroids, he was also the highest paid actor, and thus one of the most popular ones, in 2016 (Robehmed).

The fourth and final chapter of this thesis will bring the second and third together, looking specifically at contradictions and similarities between reality and fiction and the effects. The research question will be answered in two parts. The prevalence and use of PEDs amongst the world leaders' athletes will be compared to the opinions and thoughts of the citizens of the United States. Furthermore, how these drugs helped shape the national identity of the United States during the Cold War, which influences are still visible today, will be examined.

1.4 Relevance

The politics of sports were not only visible during the Cold War. Three of the world's most powerful nations today: the United States, China and Russia are mostly in the top three of the Summer Olympics. We see that the countries who are international competitors in economy and influence are also major competitors in sports. The will to beat the other world powers is great and still leads to the use of PEDs in order to gain soft power. Russia has been reported to have run a state-led doping program during the 2016 Summer Olympics. Many Russian athletes had to withdraw as a result. At the same rate as the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) invents new tests to detect existing drugs, new drugs and methods to mask these drugs are created to get through those tests. We can never be sure whether an athlete who passed a drug test is really

drug-free or not. We saw that eight years after the 2008 Olympics, advances in technology made it possible to detect new drugs. Athletes who passed the test in 2008 now suddenly were disqualified. Even at the moment that I am writing this, on the 30th of March, 2017, four more Russians are disqualified by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) from the 2012 London Summer Olympics for doping (Grohmann). Due to this insecurity, the discussion surrounding PEDs will always exist. The same goes for steroids in popular culture and WWE today. Many actors are caught with steroids which they have used to become the ideal American that was created in the 1970s and 1980s. Once they are caught they are often slandered by the audience, but before they get caught they are admired. The Americans had and still have a vision of an ideal American that is both superhuman and natural, without the use of drugs. This vision, however, contradicts itself, because for the majority of the Americans the performance and physique of this vision is unobtainable without the use of steroids. This thesis will not merely serve as an analysis on PEDs during the Cold War. Elite sports and PEDs are tied together and the taboo on the drugs needs to be broken in order to open further conversation on whether or not they should be allowed in elite and perhaps amateur sports.

2: Soft Power and PEDs at the Summer Olympics of 1972, 1976, and 1988.

2.1: Overview of the Chapter

The IOC banned PEDs in the late 1960s and its Medical Commission started testing for those during the Summer Olympics of 1968. This chapter will take a close look at the numbers the IOC released regarding doping. In essence, these are the only facts we have. The first large scale tests started in 1972. For this reason the Summer Olympics of 1972 will be the first event I will look at. The reason I have skipped over the 1980 and 1984 Summer Olympics is because at these events either the United States or the Soviet Union did not participate. Since this thesis is interested in finding out more about the foreign relations between especially these two nations I will not go into detail for these two years. I might, however, mention them, since advances in drug detection could be important for the analysis of the 1988 Summer Olympics.

“To suggest that Olympic sports problems are not of “clear Presidential dimension” ignores the fact that international sports activity has been an important factor in initiating . . . and improving . . . international relations” (Jones and Harrigan). If we accept that sports are an important part of international politics and PEDs are an important part of sports, then we can conclude that PEDs are also an important part of international politics. The goal of this first chapter is to elaborate on that specific theory. This chapter will deal with a number of questions. I will look at and discuss the reported PED use of the United States, Soviet Union, and East Germany at the events mentioned before. More importantly, through academic data, testimonies of athletes and coaches, technology, and laws I will test whether or not these results are reliable. I will also go through the different actors, think of athletes, coaches, Olympic organizations, the U.S. government, involved in PED use and testing and their motives in order to find out who plays what role in the debate. This would lead to an answer to the seemingly easy question: why did the United States Olympic athletes resort to PEDs during the Cold War and what role did the U.S. government play in this? Soft power will be central in this chapter; both the United States and the Soviet Union were trying to gain prestige by defeating each other at especially their national sports. For example, the United States beat the Soviets at ice hockey in 1980 and the Soviets beat the United States at basketball in a very controversial match in 1972. They both wanted to prove that they could win even if the sport was not theirs, but the competing nation’s specialty.

2.2: The Reliability of Drugs Tests

First things first, I want to get the facts out of the way. The IOC has released testing reports for each of the events I will discuss in this work. 2,079 tests were administered in 1972, of which 7 came back positive. Out of these 7 athletes one was American. No Soviets or athletes from East Germany were caught. In 1976 a total of 2,054 tests were administered, of which 11 came back positive. This time two Americans got caught and again no Soviets or East-Germans. Zero Americans, Soviets, or East-Germans tested positive during the 1988 Summer Olympics (Dubin 354). So what do these results tell us about the actual drug use of these nations? The answer would be nothing. These results were completely expected. The question we have to ask ourselves however is: are these results reliable?

There are several factors that could have influenced these results. Some of them are the advancement of drugs, the type of drugs, and methods for detection and even detection masking. Another one is corruption in both the host country organizing committees and Medical Commission. The luck of not being chosen for a drug test also plays a role. The only ones who truly know who, how much, which, and when drugs are taken by an athlete are the athletes themselves and their coaches.

For some particular reason, PEDs and anabolic steroids are especially associated with the Soviet Union and East Germany. One of the reasons could be that they are generally considered the pioneers of state-led doping. East Germany had the State Plan 14.25, which was the “code name for a secret cross-disciplinary program to develop new and more efficient doping techniques and brought together coaches and scientists from a wide range of fields” (Spiegel). The Soviet Union likewise had a secret state-led program with the same goal. They even tested whether or not the newly developed steroids were detectable (Ruiz). Even though both nations ran these extensive programs, none of their athletes ever got disqualified from the Olympics, and their gold medals still stand today.

American sports, on the other hand are often associated with “the man-to-man struggle, or from the battle of man against himself” (Scott). Drugs have turned this around. Even though East Germany and the Soviets were the pioneers in PEDs, American athletes quickly started using them too as a response to the Soviet domination at the Olympics. This way of thinking, “if they’re using, then I should better start using too,” has for a long time been one of the major motives for athletes to start using PEDs because they believe that if they do not use them they will have no chance of becoming

successful in their sport (Kirby et al. 213). This creates a vicious circle in sports, in which more people start using PEDs, and thus more people get tempted.

Weightlifting was at the time possibly the Olympic sport in which anabolic steroids were used the most as they were the most effective due to their weight gaining properties. Ken Patera, an American weightlifter who competed in the 1972 Summer Olympics 110+ kg weight class has openly admitted to using steroids. After losing against the Soviet Vasily Alekseyev in 1971 he was determined to win in 1972 because now he could afford drugs: “Last year the only difference between me and him [Alekseyev] was that I couldn't afford his drug bill. Now I can. When I hit Munich next year, I'll weigh in at about 340, maybe 350. Then we'll see which are better—his steroids or mine” (Scott). According to Patera, the Olympics are not an event in which athletic capabilities are tested, but rather the quality of a nation's drugs. Sports are often used in a political context to “demonstrate social, economic, or political supremacy over another nation” (Lin et al. 23). I would like to add technological supremacy to that; the advancement in technology to create PEDs. Steroids and other PEDs could be seen as weapons in the Cold War. Both the United States and the Soviet Union exerted their power by expanding their weapon arsenal and developing new technologies that could be used for warfare. Having better steroids would mean the nation's technology is far superior. Brigitte Berendonk, a German discus throw and shot put athlete, even dubbed the previously mentioned State Plan 14.25 “the Manhattan Project of Sports”. (Blickenstaff). The fact that this athlete links PEDs to nuclear weapons shows its importance in international politics. Not only can we see the concept of soft power in the winning of sports and medals, but also in the creation of PEDs.

Coming back to the reliability of drug tests; Patera was not the one American disqualified by the IOC in 1972. One would think that the IOC would be more cautious after an athlete openly admitted to wanting to start using steroids. Patera later claimed, however, that he did not hear anything from the U.S. Olympic Committee (Todd 95). We could go with either one of two theories. Patera was using drugs that could not be detected by the technology of that time (or he found another way to cheat the test) or the Medical Commission was biased or even bribed and did not pick him for a test. Bottom line is that for sure we know that he used drugs, but he did not get caught.

Patera was not the exception to the case. It was estimated that many U.S. Olympic competitors in 1972, especially weightlifters, cycled their drugs, so that at the competition they could still feel the benefits, but all of the traces of the drugs were out

of their bodies (Wade 1399). However, even when there were traces of drugs in one's body, they sometimes were still allowed to compete. One example of this is Carl Lewis, a track-and-field athlete who tested positive for several substances before the 1988 Summer Olympics, but nevertheless was allowed to compete. He says that many Americans underwent the same treatment when they failed a drug test prior to the Olympics (Mackay). Frank Shorter, a long distance runner, basically thought in the same fashion as Patera. When he was asked if he was to compete in the 1980 Moscow Summer Olympics he answered by saying "Yeah, if I can find some good doctors" (Wilson 74). At least a third of the U.S. cyclists received blood transfusions prior to the 1984 Olympics (Reich). Blood doping, however, was only banned in 1985, so one could argue whether or not it was cheating. American Olympic athletes seem pretty confident in overcoming drug tests and doing whatever it takes to win. These examples from East Germany, the Soviet Union, and the United States show that even though an event is drug tested, and athletes pass these tests, that does not necessarily mean that they are not on any PEDs. Undetectable drugs, drug masking, and even corruption in the Olympic committees make the drug tests of the 1970s and 1980s very unreliable. The majority of data that we know about American Olympians using PEDs during the 1970s and 1980s is self-reported and it has been shown that "studies of psychoactive drug use indicate that self-reporting is characterized by under-reporting" (Petroczi et al. 1). Therefore we can safely assume that the examples above are just a portion of what really happened.

Interestingly, these early cases of athletes admitting to using drugs to enhance their performance did not spark any media outrage in the United States (as it does nowadays with the Russian doping scandal) and neither did it when more athletes admitted it 10 years later (Moore). Back then a lot of people did not care about steroids it seems. There was limited information available and Americans simply did not know that much about them and the risks involved. The tone of the above mentioned articles in which athletes confessed does make it seem, however, that the journalists interviewing the athletes had their opinions on PEDs clear: it is cheating.

2.3: U.S. Doping vs. East Bloc Doping

I do believe there is one large difference in drug use between the United States and the Soviets and East Germans. This difference is that in the Soviet Union and East Germany the doping programs were state-led, whereas in the United States athletes or coaches still chose to use them themselves (at this moment in time we have no proof

that the United States had a doping program). However, that does not change the goals or intentions athletes had when taking them. One could even argue that the way the Soviets handled it was safer than the United States. American athletes still had the will to beat the Soviets and do whatever it takes and that includes taking steroids and other PEDs. It is arguable whether this is simply due to the competitive nature of elite athletes or due to patriotism. PEDs often did not come without a prescription though. John Ziegler, the physician who brought anabolic steroids to the United States recalled athletes who developed liver problems because they took 20 times the recommended dose (Wade 1400). They only saw the perceived benefits, and did not listen to the possible side effects as they were blinded by the possibility of finally beating the enemy.

There are some signs, however, that the United States government did get involved in the Olympics to win more medals. Expert on sport policy and doping Dr. Thomas M. Hunt views the Amateur Sports Act of 1978 that was signed by President Carter as “a product of a Cold War perception in the late 1960s and 1970s” because “Soviet dominance on the Olympic fields had a detrimental impact on American prestige abroad” (Hunt 2007a, 809). For this particular reason, the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) decided to cover up test results of American Olympic athletes that came back positive. Something similar happened during the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. Before the test results could reach the IOC, they were destroyed by the L.A. organizing committee (Hunt 2007b, 110). The United States government did want to show their power to the world by winning medals at the Olympics, however, its athletes could in no way be cheating as that would only discredit the United States as a whole. This form of soft power was central in sports during the Cold War.

The United States also did not do a lot to prevent their Olympic athletes from using drugs, for example through legislation. Anabolic steroids were only banned in 1990 with the Anabolic Steroids Control Act. Other drugs such as ephedrine were also not regulated until the 1990s. As mentioned before, the USOC also covered up many cases of banned substance use by Olympic athletes. Former director of the USOC Wade Exum has claimed that the committee’s “lust for medals had helped it overcome moral sense” (Powell). They saw through drug use as they wanted more medals. These claims are backed by another former employee of the USOC, Medical Chief Director Dr. Robert Voy (Jones). Former USOC President Don Miller has admitted that more than

80 athletes tested positive before the 1984 Olympics; these results were also withheld and the athletes were allowed to compete (Hunt 2007b, 104).

Furthermore, drug tests are expensive today and probably were even more expensive in the 1970s. The Olympics got commercial in 1984, and any drug tests that would be conducted would reduce profit. The USOC even admitted that they did not want to provide for drug tests in 1984 for this particular reason (Hunt 2007b, 105). So, even though the United States did not have a state-led doping program comparable to the Soviets or East Germans, they did not actively fight doping and inspired athletes to be extra competitive in order to satisfy their lust for medals.

I have stated previously that it is arguable whether these American athletes used PEDs specifically to beat the Soviets and East Germans, or to simply beat their opponents, regardless of nationality and political views. Those who argue that it was to beat the Soviets and East Germans could mention the fact that they were the ones who, according to the information available today, started doping in the Olympics. The American athletes started doping as a response. Therefore they started to beat the Soviets and East Germans. However, I believe that there is a flaw to this argument. How would anyone explain the use of PEDs in national sports competitions during the 1960s and 1970s, such as baseball and American football?

Again, drug testing amongst baseball athletes did not start until the 1990s (which did not seem to stop drug use), so we are limited to testimonies from athletes themselves. MLB players Tom House, Mike Schmidt, and Dale Berra have all admitted to using steroids and other PEDs from as early as the 1960s up to the 1980s (USA TODAY; Chass; Times Wire Services). The same goes for NFL players, with the most notable example being Lyle Alzado, who claimed to have gotten a brain tumor caused by his steroid abuse starting during his college years in the 1960s (Thomas Jr.). He later died of this brain tumor. We can see that in the same year as Ziegler brought steroids to the United States as a response to the Soviets, athletes who competed in national sports had access to them. So, if we want to attribute drug use at the Olympics to an athlete's will to beat the Soviets, we have to take this information into account. Since MLB and NFL players started using PEDs as soon as they had access to it, I believe it is simply in an athlete's blood to win, regardless of ethics and risks. There is no difference between an Olympics athlete and a MLB athlete. They just want to win; if the Canadians were winning at the 1988 Olympics, the American athletes would have done whatever it takes to win too.

2.4: Conclusion

From this chapter we can conclude several things. First of all, drug tests at the Olympics at the time were and today still are not reliable and many athletes who have passed them have later admitted to using PEDs. Secondly, East Germans and Soviets were pioneers in developing PEDs, however, they were just as quickly brought to the United States. While they were first brought to the United States to give their athletes an edge, or actually bring them on par, with the pioneers, the drugs made their way to national sports within the same decade. This demonstrates that many elite athletes do not care about who they have to beat. If it improves their performance, they take it, regardless of risks. As I have shown, politicians, however, do care and as a result President Carter signed the Amateur Sports Act of 1978. From this moment on international sports have been under a governing body established by the United States government. This has before been dubbed as the politicization of sports (Lin et al. 26; Kruger et al. 528). While the extent to which sports, and PEDs, have been politicized was greater in the Soviet Union and East Germany, the United States still invested many resources into international sports.

The PEDs and anabolic steroids that made their way to the United States during the Cold War are still a controversial topic of discussion today. Not only athletes and coaches are involved, but sponsors, media, etc. all play influential roles in the discussion. Can we revert back to seeing athletes that are not on drugs now that we are used to their performances on drugs? Should we even want athletes to stop taking PEDs and should we just accept them as part of sports? Ziegler, the doctor who brought steroids to the United States, regrets his actions. For the introduction of the book *Death in the Locker Room* by Bob Goldman he wrote: “It’s a disgrace. Who plays sports for fun anymore?”, referring to the health risks athletes are willing to take by using PEDs to win a sports competition.

3: Soft power and PEDs in Cold War popular culture

3.1: Overview of the Chapter

PEDs and anabolic steroids have not been a very sought after topic in popular culture during the Cold War. Only after 1990 did they find their way into popular culture. Films released after 1990 mainly put PEDs in the worst light possible. Infamous is the 1994 BBC episode of *Lifestories: Families in Crisis* on Aaron Henry starring Ben Affleck, who becomes crazy and violent because of his drugs. The movie exaggerates all the side effects of anabolic steroids in an attempt to prevent teens from starting to use them. The so-called “roid rage”, a moment of extreme aggression induced by steroid abuse, central in the film is not even a scientifically proven side effect (Lundholm et al.). The study concludes that correlation is not necessarily causation and that the “roid rage” is influenced by other psychological factors that many steroid abusers have in common. The 1993 movie *The Program* similarly puts steroids in the worst light possible.

Still, for this thesis I want to look at steroids in popular culture before the 1990s, during the Cold War. How are they treated in American popular culture before the 1990s? Are the creators of culture trying to convey any political messages? How were American stars on anabolic steroids perceived? Unfortunately, the only form of conventional popular culture that features both sports and PEDs that was produced during the Cold War is *Rocky IV*. Besides films however, there is the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE, formerly WWF), an important part of American popular culture and full of political influences. Popular culture has a large influence on children and young adults. Analyzing this film and these large fictional sports events should give us a better picture of what the American citizen knew about PEDs and steroids during the Cold War. Whereas the previous chapter focused on PEDs from the perspective of the athletes, coaches, Olympic committees, and other institutions involved in doping, this chapter will be dedicated to the creators of popular culture regarding sports and PEDs and their audience.

The idea of steroids could be used politically in order to blacken someone's, or a nation's, reputation. Previously we have discussed soft power, which could be performed actively; by winning at sports as we have seen in the previous chapter. However, a higher level of soft power could also be attained by reducing the soft power of your competitors through the utilization of the popular opinion of a nation's citizens

against their competitors. “Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others” (Nye 2008, 95). The way this is done is not necessarily explicitly stated by Nye. Of course, it has to be without force to be soft power, but I believe this could be done in either of two ways. First, by making your own country more attractive; or secondly by making another nation seem less attractive. The government is not the only actor in establishing soft power through this way. The creators of culture are too. “Culture in Politics is to place culture within state foreign policy as the expression of a national interest, which contributes to the reification of the national character, belief systems, strategic cultures and national identity” (Kim 3). Political American culture therefore serves the purpose to basically embody the United States and all of its values and ideologies in an attempt to make the nation more attractive to not only those living in the United States, but also outside of the United States.

A large number of people are reached through popular culture. How do Americans view Americans on steroids is a question central in this chapter. The concept of national identity comes in handy here. I dare to say that soft power could in no way be achieved without a positive national identity. A nation wants to create an attractive national identity so that not only its own citizens, but also citizens in other nations can identify with what the country stands for. It has previously been shown that national identity and soft power are closely intertwined in a study of Chinese Olympic athletes (Jiang). Whereas in the previous chapter steroids were primarily used to gain an edge in performance during athletic events, it is important to note that this chapter will also deal with another motive for taking steroids, namely that of becoming more muscular, leaner, and overall create a physique that is regarded superior for American standards.

3.2: Americanism and National Identity in WWE/F

Wrestling, the entertainment version, will be the focus of this chapter. Whereas there is only one film that could contribute to this thesis, there are many characters in WWE/F wrestling that could be examined. I want to look at the main characters in *Rocky IV* the same way as in wrestling, as there are many similarities between the two. Both forms of culture are basically staged fighting put alongside a storyline that is inspired by the events of that time period. We have an American hero and a Soviet villain. Examples of characters in wrestling that are most associated with the Soviet Union and the Cold War are Ivan Koloff, Nikita Koloff, Nikolai Volkoff, Boris Zhukov, and the Iron Sheik, mainly because he was in a tag team with Volkoff. The portrayal of

this stereotypical Soviet character in *Rocky IV* comes in the form of Ivan Drago. On the other end of the spectrum we have the American heroes. In the film this is obviously Rocky Balboa. The most significant hero of the 1980s in wrestling would be Hulk Hogan.

First we have to get a better understanding of WWE/F as for non-Americans it is often a very misunderstood form of entertainment. Many people who have not grown up with WWE/F consider it fake sport. What they forget to realize is that Americans do know that it is fake and see it as entertainment rather than sport. The best description I have ever heard of WWE/F is that it is basically a soap opera for American men aged between 18 and 40. It involves rivalries, ethics, etc., but the characters resolve their problems in the old fashioned American way: by fighting. Some of the storylines in wrestling have continued for as long as many soap operas and therefore the audience gets to develop a connection to certain characters. Others have dubbed entertainment wrestling as performance and drama; it is “an athletic performance art where the winners of the matches are prearranged” (Earnheardt et al. 26). The goal of the show is not to win or lose, as that is already predetermined, but to entertain. Furthermore, “professional wrestling provided a similar [like films] avenue for public expression of patriotism” (Mondak 141). The effects of popular culture and film on their audiences are very alike. For these reasons I believe we could see entertainment wrestling as popular culture.

Sports play their own roles in shaping not only a nation’s own national identity, but as is the case in fictional sports also the national identity of other nations. The trope of Americanism vs Anti-Americanism is one of the most recurrent themes in WWE/F wrestling. Hulk Hogan was the real American character in the 1970s and 1980s, Stone Cold Steve Austin took over that role in the 1990s, and now we have John Cena, who recently collaborated with Ad Council to create a video called “We Are America”, in which he embraces the differences between Americans. Hogan claimed to know what it meant to be a real American and it was a lot simpler than Cena’s vision of an American. He is famous for saying: “Train, say your prayers, eat your vitamins, be true to yourself, true to your country, be a real American”. He says all this while flexing his muscles, or as he calls it himself: his “24 inch pythons”, one of his main attractions. French philosopher Roland Barthes described wrestling as “the spectacle of excess” (14) long before the WWF and WWE existed. It had to be grand and superhuman-like.

Hogan, who at the time was 6' 8" and 303 lbs, was supposed to not represent the average American, but the ultimate American.

Americanism has at least two meanings: "it can refer to ideals and ideologies or to a way of life" and is used to "mobilize a people to do better by demanding that they live up to their ideals or to participate more fully in the American way of life" (Bender 2). Referring back to the quote by Hogan before, this is exactly what he is trying to do. He is using the idea of a real American (him) to get young fans to do as he says. This turns these children to see him as the real American. He further does this by making his theme song "Real American". Fans in the stadium are waving around American flags. In the context of the Cold War, he basically tells to be an American and do not cheat on your country or on yourself (be true to yourself) and do not be like a Soviet who does cheat. The irony here is, Hogan himself has admitted to using steroids to get the physique he had (NYTimes 1994). In order to become "the real American" that he created he had to take steroids, which as mentioned before are not always considered American.

3.3: Steroids in WWE/F

We do, however, have to keep in mind that steroids were not necessarily seen as cheating during the 1970s and 1980s as limited information was available. WWE/F did not test for steroids at the time and nowadays the rule is: "The "non-medical use" and associated abuse of prescription medications and performance enhancing drugs, as well as the use, possession and/or distribution of illegal drugs, by WWE Talent are unacceptable and prohibited by this Policy, as is the use of masking agents or diuretics taken to conceal or obscure the use of prohibited drugs" (WWE). They only started testing after the steroid awareness movies of the 1990s when the public started to perceive them as harmful. Hogan also only testified in 1994, showing again that before the 1990s they were not really a problem that many Americans knew of. A large number of American wrestlers has taken them and none of them seemed to perceive them as cheating at the time. CEO of WWE/F Vince McMahon has admitted that he has provided steroids for at least 43 professional wrestlers (O' Sullivan). Once Hogan admitted though, he was never seen as the American hero that he had represented before. The American fans thought they could be like Hogan if they trained hard and ate their vitamins, but after they realized he had used steroids to get where he was, they gave up on that dream. The year in which he confessed to using steroids was the last

year that he received the Wrestler of the Year Award. He changed promotions from WWF to World Championship Wrestling, Inc. (WCW) in the same year, where instead of the American hero he became leader of the villainous wrestling stable New World Order. Steroids made Hogan both the most popular hero of the 1980s and one of the most popular villains in the 1990s.

Former American wrestler Lawrence Pfohl, known by his ring name Lex Luger, blames American ideology for the involvement of steroids in sports and entertainment: “It's the ends justifies the means in sports. We are taught that since we were little. The old, 'Do whatever you got to do to win, to be the best. Step over, step on and step through.' So that is how all this performance-enhancing drugs got into our culture. And that leads to guys wanting to take shortcuts. And then, cheat until you get caught, and then lie” (Fish). Young Americans are led to believe they have to do all they can to become better and steroids are an effective tool to reach that goal quicker. This is a stark contrast to Hogan’s amendments to live by. Prayers, vitamins, and training hard were, and possibly still are, not enough to make it in WWE/F wrestling.

The “do whatever you can to win” mentality that Pfohl mentioned is also present in Bell’s documentary *Bigger, Stronger, Faster** mentioned in the previous chapter. The documentary features a scene in which the director’s brother, a powerlifter and ex-wrestler, manages to finally bench press 705 pounds. His parents, who despise steroids and know of their son’s steroid use, are in the crowd and cheering; forgetting their opinion on steroids. Bell responds to this scene in an interview with Neal Conan by saying “Yeah, you know, I said there's a clash in America between doing the right thing and being the best and so you can't always do both” (Conan). Both Pfohl and Bell attribute using steroids to being American, or in other words: being the best. Others, such as the general secretary of the Oceania Weightlifting Federation Paul Coffa, however, blame the pre-1989 Eastern Bloc countries for the involvement of PEDs and steroids in today’s sports (Oliver). This was also a recurrent theme in the previous chapter. We can see a clear division between a group of people who believe steroids are ingrained in American society because of the Americans and their ideals themselves and a group of people who blame the Eastern Bloc countries of the 1960s until 1980s.

3.4: Politics in WWE/F

Now that we have discussed the American side of wrestling, it is time to look at it from an international perspective. Since the beginning of entertainment wrestling it

“has relied on global politics, current events, and popular culture to engage its fans with characters and storyline” (Canella 1376). We see this during the Cold War in the characters mentioned earlier in this chapter. To make Hogan the new American hero, the old one, Bob Backlund, first had to be defeated by a bad character (Rahmani 95). The Iron Sheik, a very stereotypical Iranian character came in and basically reenacted the tensions between the United States and Iran of the 1980s. Hogan then in turn redeemed the United States by defeating the Iron Sheik wearing a T-Shirt that says “American Made”. Hogan was everything that Backlund was times two: taller, more muscular (due to steroids), and above all, more American. This new type of American hero was possibly inspired by the bodybuilders of the 1970s, such as Arnold Schwarzenegger.

After the fight with the Iron Sheik, Hogan fought everything that was un-American at the time. The largest group of villains in wrestling was without a doubt the Soviets. They entered the stage singing their national anthems, carrying Soviet flags, and performing Russian moves such as Volkoff’s “Russian Bear Hug” (Mondak 142). These characters were there not to win. The audience was a 100 per cent pro-American. They were simply put there for the Americans to believe they had already won the Cold War. They were all inferior to the ultimate American Hulk Hogan: shorter, weaker, less muscular, and fatter. They were there to be shouted at and ridiculed. “In one match against Nikolai Volkoff in 1985, he [Hogan] even went as far as headbutting the flag of the Soviet Union, which despite being an extremely ineffective fighting strategy against a flag only cemented his place as the musclebound defender of the United States” (Magee). Even until today, these “Russian” wrestlers continue to find their way into the WWE/F for the same purposes. In 2014, Russian characters Rusev and Lana celebrated their win accompanied by pictures of the Russian flag and President Vladimir Putin while being booed at by the Americans. The Russians also ridicule the United States values to aggravate the fans. A less recent, but more controversial, foreign character in WWE/F was Muhammad Hassan, an Arab American character portrayed by an Italian American, who emerged after the 9/11 attacks.

3.5: *Rocky IV* and PEDs

The reason why I wanted to include the film *Rocky IV* in this chapter is because it shares a lot of similarities with WWE/F wrestling. Both forms of culture feature staged fighting and an Americanism vs Anti-Americanism theme. The big difference

between the two is that *Rocky IV* is not live and as a result reaches a much broader audience, also outside the United States. Furthermore, unlike WWE/F, PEDs and steroids are explicitly mentioned. The fact that they explicitly mention PEDs makes the politics of them even clearer.

The scene that I specifically want to look at is towards the end of the film in which Rocky trains for his fight against the Soviet Ivan Drago to avenge his friend Apollo Creed. First I will give a short bit of background to understand the Americanism and relation to WWE/F in this film. Creed is basically the first American hero (Backlund in WWE/F), who gets ruthlessly beaten to death by the Soviet in an exhibition match. Creed is America personified, entering the ring in shorts with an American flag pattern and to the song “Living in America” performed by James Brown. The Soviet Union struck first and killed an American in a friendly boxing match. Now, the United States needs a new hero that will avenge not Creed, but the whole nation. He arrives in the form of Rocky Balboa (Hogan in WWE/F).

Now we move on to the training scene before Rocky’s fight with Drago. Rocky trains in every way that resembles the American ideals. He trains himself, with some help of friends, embodying American individualism. He moves into a shed and trains using nature. He carries a log around, pulls a weighted sled, chops wood, and lifts stones. He trains the old fashioned way using his own strength. Drago, on the other hand, is a product of the Soviet Union. He uses fancy machines and scientific methods to become stronger. The Soviet Union does everything they can to demonstrate their superiority by showcasing these technologies. By doing this they try to establish their soft power. They want to show they are more technological advanced than the United States. Rocky shows that, in sports, that is not always better. Drago is “coached by his Government to humiliate the American” (Maslin). The only part they do not publicly show is the part where the scientists inject PEDs into Drago. Here it is important that it is not Drago who injects the drugs, but the Soviet scientists. At this point Drago is simply a pion for the Soviet Union. When these scientists get asked how Drago got so strong, they deny the use of doping by answering: “like Popeye, he’s eating spinach every day”. This seems similar to what Hogan was saying at the time. Drago’s spinach and Hogan’s vitamins are simply both a codeword steroids. The only differences are that one is a Soviet and the other is an American and that about the Soviet people knew he was doing steroids and about the American they did not.

The film first of all greatly exaggerates the effects of PEDs, similar to the movies of the 1990s mentioned before. However, this time it is not to prevent teens from doing steroids, but to slander the Soviets for using them. Drago is able to punch with 2,150 psi or lbs per square inch, which is humanly impossible and would kill a normal human with one punch. Therefore, both Rocky and Drago could be considered superhuman. The difference is that Rocky did it the natural, read American, way. The actor who played Rocky and also directed and wrote the film, Sylvester Stallone, however, may have not achieved his physique naturally. In 2007 he got caught in Australia carrying Human Growth Hormone (HGH) and he admitted to using it. He opened up about his use of steroids in an interview and moved towards a more open discussion of HGH (Celizic). Instead of the side effects that come with abuse, he mentioned the benefits that come with controlled use.

The film ends by Rocky beating Drago and ending the Cold War singlehandedly. *Rocky IV* suggests that soft power won the Cold War. Rocky won over the Soviets and made them believe in American values; as Drago is saying at the end: “I fight to win, for me”. He now fights for himself, not for the Soviet Union anymore. The Soviet audience is cheering for Rocky, who is carrying an American flag. He won them over by being a better athlete than the Soviet, despite all the technology and drugs that the Soviet used.

3.6: Conclusion

In an interview, Christopher Bell mentioned the purpose of his documentary: “A lot of things that we believe in aren't necessarily the truth, and that's kind of what I wanted to explore in the film” (Conan). This is exactly in line with the conclusions that can be made from this chapter. The American dream is often portrayed to be: train hard, or more in general work hard, and you will achieve your goals. On the other hand, in popular culture, Americans portray the Soviets as the ones who are taking shortcuts and being lazy as they are the pioneers of doping. Neither of this is necessarily true. We see two sides on the spectrum of American's opinions on steroids. Some believe it is part of American lifestyle and the will to be the best, while others blame the Eastern Bloc countries for creating them first. I believe it is not one or the other when it comes to the topic. I believe both of these sides are correct. East Germany was the first nation to start experimenting with PEDs, however, Americans use it too for both national and international prestige. WWE/F characters and movie stars such as Sylvester Stallone

and Arnold Schwarzenegger often are described as the ultimate Americans. They worked hard and represent the shared values of the nation. The fact that Hogan never became as popular as before he admitted to using steroids shows the general perception of steroids by those who do not know a lot of it: it is cheating and un-American. However, I believe that American values can go hand in hand with PEDs and steroids; and will use the next section of this thesis to go deeper into that statement.

4.1: Conclusion

The research question of this thesis was: How did the United States use performance enhancing drugs and steroids politically during the Cold War period from 1970 until 1990 and how did they help shape the American national identity of that time? Since the question is divided into two parts I shall also provide the answer in two parts. That does not mean that national identity will be left out in the part on politics and vice versa as there is a clear connection between politics and national identity.

To answer the first part of the question, we have found through testimonies of athletes that the Americans, contrary to what is often thought, did indeed use PEDs during the Olympics in the 1970s and 1980s. The large difference regarding drug use between the United States and the Soviet Union and East Germany is that the United States doping was not state-led, whereas those of the Soviets and East Germans was. We do, however, see some government involvement with the Amateur Sports Act of 1978. There is proof that the committee that was established by President Carter covered up some incidents of steroid use. The political use of PEDs and steroids did not only occur through the enhancement of the performance of athletes, but also aided in the creation of a positive national identity for the United States. The muscle building properties of steroids shaped the superhuman size of the ultimate American of the late Cold War. In one incidence of film (*Rocky IV*) we found that the idea of steroids was used to slander the athletic capabilities of the Soviets and at the same time improve the national identity of the Americans. Both ways of uses of PEDs and steroids served the same purpose: to increase the soft power that the United States had.

The second part of the question is where it gets more interesting. Steroids were often associated with the Soviets then and the Russians fulfill that role now. We see this not only in the opinions of the Americans, but also in American popular culture of the 1980s. American athletes have justified their use of PEDs by accusing the Soviets of taking them first and in WWE/F wrestling Hogan has associated steroids as cheating and un-American, even though he was using them himself. These drugs, however, did play a really important role in establishing soft power and shaping national identity. These drugs are also present in national sports such as baseball and football. A minority believes, and in my opinion in fact acknowledges, that PEDs and steroids are part of being American and American ideology. Americans may not always like the idea of PEDs and steroids, but when their favorite athlete or sports team that is on these drugs wins, they seem to forget all about it.

In American sports, and in the United States in general, we see a certain paradox; you cannot be “a real American” and take drugs and you cannot be “a real American” without drugs. American at the time was, and today still is, synonymous with being the best. At the same time, individualism, doing something with your own strength, is one of the American values. These two do not go well together. One cannot be the best without PEDs, because with the use of these drugs you do become better, even if it is just by one percent. The position of the United States at the end of the Cold War made them abandon their value of individualism slightly in an attempt to beat the Soviets with their own medicine. The arms race for the best drugs started; drugs that could both not be detected by drugs tests and would put the athlete at an advantage greater than that of the concurrent nation. Drugs that turned talented Americans into super-humans both in performance and appearance.

We still see the consequences of this era today. Hollywood actors get more muscular quicker and athletes, especially Eastern Europeans and Russians, get banned from sports events for the use of PEDs. This leaves us with several questions. How are these actors able to naturally get a better physique than those of the 1980s? How are Americans and other athletes who claim to be natural today able to still be competitive with other nations, such as Russia, that are on drugs at the Olympics? Are PEDs involved or have they developed better training and nutrition programs? We have seen that drugs tests are fairly unreliable and the first could definitely be the case. This remains a question unanswered until more information is available.

4.2: Discussion

This thesis served as an introduction into the topic and to inspire further research into the American side of doping with a focus on mainly the international politics and the politics of national identity. Few academics have done research on the topic, but it never managed to spark a lively discussion. Every day we know more about PEDs and its qualities. As mentioned above, however, a lot of questions regarding them remain unanswered. This thesis then also has plenty of limitations. I have mentioned that steroids are often ascribed to Russians, but did not go deeply into why this actually is the case. What are the politics behind this thought? I also only went into two areas in which PEDs and steroids are used (Olympics and WWE). Many other areas, think of Hollywood and national sports, are left behind. As I used the context of the Cold War to illustrate my arguments I was limited and could not discuss to the use of PEDs in other

contexts. Also, since this paper discusses two sides of the drugs, real sports and fictional sports, I could not go too deeply into one specifically, which leaves gaps within both aspects.

Suggestions for further research

Since research on the politics on PEDs and steroids is scarce, the possibilities for future research are vast. The most obvious area in which more research could be done is the ethics of PEDs and steroids. A discussion that has been going on since people have known about them, but has only recently received the attention of academics, is on whether or not these drugs should be legal or not. Furthermore, research on whether or not education on them targeting teens could be beneficial would also be welcome. The most important change I would like to see in the discussion on PEDs and steroids is a more open view. They are quickly portrayed negatively while, with thoughtful use, their properties could be positive. Athletes and actors would not have to lie if we changed the negative viewpoint on steroids, which in turn would get rid of the unreal expectations that the lying brings with them. Honest research from the perspective of Russians on the politics of steroids is a possibility too. We often take an American approach to areas such as steroids. The Russians obviously have other ethics and values and their opinions backed with solid arguments would be welcome to the discussion.

Further and deeper research into the soft power of steroids during the Cold War could help substantiate the discussion that I would like to start with this thesis. Research with a focus on another time period could do so too. Finally, I believe this thesis is most limited at the part on popular culture. What are the politics of steroids in Hollywood exactly? Do reluctant actors get paid more when they take them? Do they see it as a necessary evil or do they have a more open view towards these drugs? How do these drugs help shape the personal identity, in contrast to the national identity? Honestly, it is not necessarily important what aspect of PEDs and steroids is researched, as long as they are researched more. As turned out from this thesis, they are, and always have been, an important factor in society, whether it is in the United States or Russia. At the same time they remain unspoken of.

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