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The Manipulation: Neofytos' story (Cyprus 🇨🇵)

Neofytos is a 28-year-old former weightlifter. He started weightlifting at a young age, amazed by the bodies of weightlifting athletes. Eventually he found out that he was very good at it. Training became a way of life for him, as he followed a very demanding program. His daily routine included training sessions for 2.5 hours at least five times per week he had double training sessions lasting for 4 hours.

Eventually, his hard work paid off. Neofytos became a champion in national competitions and soon started competing in international ones. In the junior categories, he was the champion at several national and international events. He also represented his country in the World-, as well as the European Championships. Among the most important moments in his career was his participation in the Olympic Games.

During his long career, there were several occasions when Neofytos faced both injuries and serious plateaus in his performance. He never used prohibited substances to overcome these situations, although he knew that many of his fellow athletes did. Instead, he was routinely using nutritional supplements such as creatine, tribulus and ecdysterone.

Neofytos was innocently working with his coach on combining training and supplementation effectively however, at a competition, he was called in for doping control testing and a month later, he was truly surprised to find out that he was found positive for a prohibited substance, oxandrolone. Neofytos could not understand how he was found to be positive for a prohibited substance in a doping control because he was not aware of having taken any prohibited substances.

The decision for his case was announced with a great delay and immediately after a national championship where he had ended up first. Neofytos is sure that there was a reason for this delay, a reason that he could not explain.

He started thinking that this could be a power game between the weightlifting federation and NADO. *"There were debates between my federation and the sport authorities, they couldn't reach a consensus on some political issues. And I don't think it is a coincidence, that the day after my federation rejecting their proposal, I was notified that my sample was positive; one month and one day after the control"*, Neofytos says. He does not trust any of these organizations because he believes that they engage in political games, even at the expense of athletes.

Nonetheless, Neofytos was disappointed with his coach. He was doing everything his coach told him, taking all the supplements provided to him without asking any questions. Initially *"I knew what supplements I was taking but the stuff that the coach was giving to me, and might have called by different names, I didn't know. Because when there was a control the*

coach was saying not to worry, everything is OK, we are not doing anything illegal” he says. Now, he feels that his trust was betrayed. Perhaps it was his coach’s fault. Coaches have a big ethical responsibility to answer to. Even if it was not his coach’s fault and Neofytos was indeed tested positive due to a contaminated supplement, he might have been able to prevent that. Now it is too late to do anything, and his career is over.

Reflecting on his career, Neofytos thinks that he should have been much more cautious. He should have asked more questions about the supplements that he was taking and he should have been actively checking everything much more thoroughly.

To avoid this trouble and make things fairer, Neofytos thinks that doping should be legalised. He rationalises this by saying that ***“doping should be free for all so the stronger should win; now they catch some whereas others don’t get caught and still benefit”***.

The Legacy: Dora's story (Cyprus - true)

Dora is now 51 years old. She is a former track and field athlete. She started with sports at the age of 13. Eventually she became among the best runner in her country. She competed in several international competitions, including the Olympic Games. To achieve this, she trained really hard, sacrificing many things from her personal life. But she never regretted it because she is proud of her achievements. Dora is a very popular athlete in her country. The Ministry of Sport appointed her as a sport ambassador for the promotion of fair play and values of sport. She is very proud of being a sport ambassador. She feels that she has earned so many things through sports. She feels that she has been respected by others and as well as that, she became a better person. *"I gained a lot as a person; I became an elite athlete because of my patience and persistence. I never felt I was making sacrifices; it was my choice. If I was born again I would do exactly the same things"*, she says.

Dora was aware about doping in sports; in fact during her time in track and field she was approached several times to use substances in order to improve her performance. When she was competing, the movement against doping was not as strong as it is today, and many athletes were using doping substances.

Dora however always felt that this was not the right way to train and compete because using substances, while others don't, is dishonest. She always felt that it was disrespectful towards one's talent and work, as well as towards other competing athletes in particular and to the whole ethos of sport in general.

Dora reflects on her sporting days and remembers welcoming doping control tests. She says *"I was sure about the supplements I was taking and I was happy in participating in doping controls as this would certify that I made this performance being clean"*. Dora was feeling that constantly and regularly testing negative on doping controls would further evidence her talent and confirms the validity of the records she had gained. She believed that there is no fun in hiding from fellow athletes, friends, family and sport authorities because of doping. According to Dora, **sports should be fun and help to build a solid character**.

Dora believes that a good lifestyle with some assistance from nutritional supplements is sufficient to compete at a high level. Dora was using nutritional supplements because she was training really hard. She was working with a medical professional, advising her on which supplements to use in each training period. She did not trust other athletes or supplement dealers in these matters. She wanted to be sure that the substances she was taking were only those that her body truly needed and only those that would not contravene any anti-doping regulations.

Could she have achieved more in her sport if she had used performance-enhancing substances in a more industrious manner? Looking back to her career, she is sure that she made the right choices with respect to doping and supplement use.

The Proficiency: Daniel's story (Germany - true 🇩🇪)

Daniel is a cyclist, a semi-professional cyclist, having turned down a big deal to go professional in order to pursue sport 'for fun' and to study. Many athletes feel this way; that the professional circuit, though attractive and often lucrative, brings with it pressure. It is this pressure that Daniel has seen drive many into doping to achieve an edge. Daniel's studies have taken him deeper into the whole subject of doping: his research and PhD studies were centred on the topic and his personal experiences as a competitive cyclist have - of course - involved him being tested many times. Daniel's network of athletes has kept him close to the discussions around doping and anti-doping in sport.

Now, 31, Daniel talks of the sacrifice and commitment to sport, having a coach driving him forward, the hours of road work and endurance testing and how, by being "*always on my bike*" he'd achieved international standard by the age of 16, but then realised that "*riding 300 kilometers a day was killing me*".

Nevertheless he is adamant that he would not take pain killers for performance enhancement. "*Coffee maybe*" that is as far as Daniel is prepared to go into 'grey area' decisions, and that is mostly because there is a certain coffee culture in cycling. "*I would never take caffeine pills though*" he adds. Tramadol, widely used in some sports, is also strongly resisted by Daniel, "*it's just stupid*" he says "*very dangerous*" and "*gets in the way of riding properly*". Tramadol not only poses risk to the users, but it is dangerous to the competitors as well. We know for instance that car driving is not allowed on Tramadol, so it just cannot be safe in the fast moving, close clustered world of competitive cycling.

Daniel is also cautious about supplements and advocates close medical supervision and dietary adjustments in instances where deficits, (iron, potassium etc.) are detected, and in his competitive world, blood testing is common.

There's been some liberalisation of the use of inhalers. In the past, cyclists used to have to apply for and get exemption permission from the federation on medical grounds, now WADA imposes and monitors a 'use threshold' and this has significantly reduced the bureaucracy associated with their use. Daniel, it seems, feels that this is not in the sport's best interest: if there is no medical problem, use of inhalers is unfair and given that a number of cyclists. Cycling is not short of example. Thomas Dekkar have admitted non-necessary (performance enhancing) usage, and given the controversial 'cloud' over Bradley Wiggins' recent wins, there is certainly a grey area here.

Daniel is sanguine about testing "*I get tested a lot.. often in the 'off season' too*" he says. But he is also confident he can compete successfully at a very high level without doping. Well, at least in so far as time trials are concerned, in national and international competition he is up there with the leaders.

"I don't know about grand tours though" he says. "After eight or nine days my performance decreases, it's very, very hard." With tours running for twelve days or longer, Daniel can imagine why some might resort to performance enhancing drugs. Unlike many of us, Daniel knows how it feels to be eight days into a competitive tour, exhausted, with performance fading and he has great admiration for those who go on and succeed in these conditions without access to enhancement.

On the future of doping and doping controls Daniel has strong views: he is enthusiastic that much more testing accompanied the aftermath of cycling's scandals in the 1990's and commends the introduction of the 'biological passport'. Nevertheless, with new substances appearing all the time it is insufficient just to test for the *"old stuff"*, and WADA and the sport federations and the governing bodies need to constantly listen to athletes. Daniel argues for greater 'intelligence', more time and money on seeking out and detecting new substances, checking and keeping ahead, more observation, greater education and unbiased information.

After a successful career Daniel reflects on the great question that athletes all ask when suspicions are raised, as they frequently are in cycling: *"Did X or Y competitor really deserve to be placed ahead of me?"* In the context of the recent investigation of the state-led organised doping in Russia, where athletes have very little choice, Daniel remembers an incident from his past: *"The Russian rider (that took gold) was really suspicious for us.. there was a big gap and we never saw him before or .. afterwards.. but I wouldn't like to change my silver medal with the gold medal because..(the difference is)..I **have the freedom to decide my own behaviour and I'm very happy with that decision.**"*

Daniel is also grateful to his team manager. Managers - he argues - can be key agents and gatekeepers in the whole process. His was very good. *"We went to the sports university in Cologne"* Daniel remembers *"and there was an expert who told us about the effects and side effects of the famous drugs.. That was really helpful."* It is true too that Daniel learned from others of the early death of certain other racers. He learnt early on of the importance of knowing his body and knowing of the potential impact of certain substances.

The Pressure: Armin's story (Germany)

22-year-old Armin used to play football and go skiing in his leisure time. At the age of 16, a triathlon coach scouted him while he was swimming. Since then Armin has become a triathlete at competitive level. Today, he competes in Olympic distance at national level and he is ranked among the top 100 German triathletes. At the beginning of his training, he could quickly improve his performance yet at the same time the pressure of competitive sports caused Armin to suffer from insomnia and anxiety and he was unable to perform when it mattered the most in competitions, or in training.

Armin did not use dietary supplements in the first years of his career until participation in many endurance units and the long competitions made him try out several different protein bars, powders and gels. Especially for biking he felt that *"it is impossible to compete at these large distances without various supplements"*. Luckily, Armin was coached thoroughly in the use of supplements by sport physicians, aiding him in deciding which supplement would best suit his needs. He knows now that his body does not tolerate every product and he does not trust every substance. He only bought supplements designed to aid athletes either in a pharmacy or directly from reputable manufacturers.

In the meantime, he is sponsored by a nutritional supplement manufacturer and as justification he says: *"Those products are legal and their use is no problem in my personal environment: All supplements I take are nothing more than orange juice with extra sugar"*.

In triathlon, a quick regeneration is key to success. At the beginning of a competition, enough energy must be available – this is delivered with the help of drinks supplemented with protein, vitamins or carbohydrates. Armin often uses protein shakes to support his regeneration, and ice baths to help this process. His blood marker levels are checked routinely among his peers in order to properly dose the substances tailored specifically to the needs of each athlete.

Armin thinks that **performance enhancing substances are mainly used in order to train harder**. For example, Armin knows plenty of athletes who take pain medication that can be legally purchased, such as Ibuprofen, or other substances of this kind which – he believes - are actually not as promising as ibuprofen. Armin himself however completely rejects the use of pain medication because he believes that it is important to listen to his body and identify when it needs a break.

Like in so many other disciplines, there are doping controls in triathlon. Armin says: *"The controls are a very big invasion of privacy. Many athletes are more afraid of accidentally taking in something prohibited, than actually consciously taking performance-enhancing substances."* He says athletes also must be cautious of what they eat, as some foods might be contaminated and then result in a positive doping test. However, he realizes that the

doping control system in Germany is well-developed and allows for a clean and fair sport, especially in comparison to other countries. Armin believes that it is nearly impossible to dope in triathlon without detection in Germany. He thinks that there are enough preventive measures in the anti-doping system to keep many athletes from using illegal supplements. Those who do dope have financial motivations: *“Everywhere where the money is, there are possibilities”*, he remarks. But nobody in Armin’s immediate surrounding uses illegal substances. However, Armin is certain, that the theme of **performance-enhancing substances in his sport is something no one wants to talk about**. He assumes that despite the control system there is a dark zone of athletes who dope.

The Regeneration: Tom's story (Germany)

Tom is a 27-year-old water polo player. Sport was always important in his family and Tom swam competitively until the 8th grade. When he was about 13 years old, he lost his interest in swimming and started training with the water polo team just for fun. He quickly decided to stay. Because of his physique and the fitness that he had built up swimming competitively, he was a natural water polo player.

Tom then changed teams and started playing water polo on a competitive level with a well-known water polo club. His training started to become very professional. In his new club, Tom came in contact with nutritional supplements for the first time. Other players in his team supplemented their diet with magnesium and beta-alanine, and Tom started supplementing his diet with these substances, too. *"Beta-alanine is only used after a very exhaustive endurance unit"*, Tom says, *"but magnesium is used by nearly every player and every team before training. Both supplements help my body regenerate after playing, but they are not the reason for my success."* Above all, doctors and physiotherapists look after Tom and his teammates three times a week to aid their recovery from training.

For Tom, nutritional supplements are just necessary in some disciplines. He counts water polo as one of them: *"We often play many games in a very short amount of time, and without these supplements it would be impossible to perform at the highest level."* Still, Tom is generally against the use of other nutritional supplements.

In his 10-year career, Tom has had about 25 doping control tests. For him the controls were just a routine: *"It is part of the sport, part of being an athlete, not much changes in your daily life."* However, Tom remembers some situations that he personally feels were an invasion of privacy. But for Tom, the doping controls work very well in Germany although he acknowledges that these controls are not done so diligently in other countries. He thinks this is somewhat unfair. ***"The control system can only work at international level, if every country has similar regulations."***, he says.

Tom quit playing water polo at the highest national and international level after a 10-year career and went back to his first club to only play recreationally in his free time. Here, the use of dietary supplements reduced immediately, and Tom now only uses magnesium infrequently and after very exhausting endurance units. Thinking back, Tom regrets a little that he didn't stay with his former club to play at the highest level, but at least he has more time to regenerate and time too for his private life now.

Today, Tom also coaches water polo. He is very cautious about how to use supplements in the diets of his players: *"I would never tell any of my young players to take supplements. It would cause real problems if I did. **Everyone must make the decision about the use of any performance-enhancing substances alone.** I only try to advise them as best as I can."* When

he is asked, Tom will only recommend taking magnesium. In part because he admits that he does not know much about other supplements. During his own career, he just listened to nutritionists and searched for information on the Internet. He also thinks that the bodies of young players will provide everything they need until they are 21. Tom would advise other young athletes that overall having fun should be the most important motivator. The key to success in competitive sports is having the talent and the capability to push oneself both physically and mentally.

The Conviction: Henning's story (Germany)

The 16-year-old Henning is a competitive road cyclist, coming from a family of cyclists. At the age of 13, he transferred to a school specializing in preparing talented children for elite sports. In Germany, these specialist sport schools aim to prepare talented young athletes for Olympic careers, or national level squads at the very least. Aspiring young athletes who are nominated for admittance are among the top athletes in their age group. It is a great opportunity for those who want to make an elite sport career but of course, not all of them succeeds.

Henning's family was always very supportive. His father was a professional cyclist, so was his brother. His mother helped Henning stay on track with his diet – always making sure that he ate enough to perform properly. With time however it got harder for Henning to get all the energy he needed for his sports through a normal diet alone. Despite being against dietary supplements, Henning saw himself forced to start taking additional carbohydrates and proteins. Henning says: *"I use dietary supplements systematically and often in the form of gels, bars or drinks during competitions. These supplements are mostly prepared by my sponsor."* He also adds that sometimes he takes caffeine tablets at the end of a race – a supplement well known among competitive cyclists.

When Henning changed his coach, his training hours increased. For Henning's new coach it is essential that every athlete has enough energy, especially when they are still growing. Still he forbade the entire team from taking tablets and is generally against the use of performance enhancing substances. Henning's coach believes that a lack of training, a bad diet and little sleep are the most likely causes of bad results. Because of this he lets his athletes take breaks from training even at the smallest indication of the flu or some another illness.

Despite their coach's dislike of substances, three of Henning's six teammates still use other substances in addition to nutritional supplements. So does Henning's best friend. He takes Aspirin and a nasal-spray. Henning says: *"My best friend is from a very competitive family and has a lot of pressure on him. It is even possible that his bad acne derives from his excessive use of Aspirins. Many competitive cyclists take Aspirin to clear their heads, without really needing it. Aspirin doesn't sound so bad after all."*

Not only on Henning's team do the athletes take substances. Henning believes it is the lack of an official control system in youth sport that leads to many athletes using performance enhancing substances – especially those who are not very successful. In fact, Henning himself has only been tested once by a doping official. Despite this, Henning believes that most athletes in his sport at his level do not take such substances. However, Henning thinks that is somewhat different among adult professional cyclists. The work of many institutions has led to an open discussion about substances and youngsters have been educated or put

off. Henning believes that in cycling the situation is slowly getting better, and only about 20% of the professionals dope nowadays.

Henning believes that the sport itself has grown more professional as well and that it is a good sign that doping athletes are getting caught. He believes the norms of the absolute world best athletes in his sport have changed, which is why Henning no longer has any problems with his personal motivation. He does not feel the need to use any performance enhancing substances, believing that he is capable of having just as much success even without – just as his brother before him, who himself was successful with a good diet, little stress, much training and a lot of sleep. Henning, typical of his age, voices his view with much conviction ***“You can be successful without dietary and performance enhancing substances.”***

The Perseverance: Vassilis' story (Greece 🇬🇷)

Vassilis is a 31-years-old former swimmer. In his long career, he has participated and received distinctions in Olympic Games and other major competitions, World- and European Championships. He has won many medals in European and World Championships.

Vassilis was involved with sports at the age of 6 and participating in swimming classes that he really enjoyed. Ever since, he has not stopped swimming. Swimming has helped him to stay fit, toning his muscles. For Vassilis, sport represents a way of living, with training becoming his daily routine.

From the early stages of his swimming career, Vassilis was really eager to succeed and become a competitive athlete, with this goal completely changing his everyday life. As a competitive athlete, he had to follow a demanding program, including 3,5 hours training on a daily basis, with 5-hour long double training sessions three times a week. Keeping a balance between being muscular and flexible was difficult for him, and so too was overcoming performance plateaus at various stages of his career.

Vassilis has always had a negative attitude towards performance enhancing drugs: *"I would never put my career at risk for any reason"* he used to say. He would never considering using doping substances as the risks are really high. Vassilis says *"There is an important negative part on this. Who can reassure you that it won't harm your health or you won't be tested; a doctor, a professor, who? You should not start thinking about it at all. At least this is how it worked for me"*. Also, Vassilis is not tempted by seeing other athletes improving. *"It is cowardice to accuse other athletes for being doped and winning over you. They may have done it; I don't know. What I do is I look at their strong points; what they do and win and try to copy it. If they are doped and get caught this is their problem"*.

For Vassilis, it is important that athletes respect the rules. Luckily, Vassilis' coach was like-minded. Vassilis has been asked to provide samples for doping controls many times, and has also been included in WADA's ADAMS database. Adapting his training regime to meet his goals was Vassilis' key to success. He saw dieting as a way to have the energy he needed - no special attention to calorific intake, just eating to keep moving.

In Vassilis' words, success in swimming is all about talent and hard work, but he recognizes that the coach plays an important role too. His advice to other athletes is to be persistent and perseverant: *"Usually, athletes face more sorrows than happiness. They should be able to control their feelings in order to succeed."*

Today, Vassilis takes part only in amateur swimming competitions, and works as a swimming coach for young children. As a coach, he is sure that athletes do not need performance enhancing drugs to be successful, proclaiming that athletes must be clean and, if possible,

prevent others from using PEDs: ***“Doping use is a matter of personal responsibility. If you believe that success is the outcome of hard work, then doping is unnecessary”***.

The Adversity: Andreas’ story (Greece)

Andreas is a 38-years-old basketball player. During his long career, he played in the national team for ten years and also won national championships with different teams. Currently, he plays in the third division, mostly as a way to keep in touch with his sport. Following his father's encouragement, his first experience with sports was with martial arts; however at the age of 14 he started playing basketball. At the age of 16 he was almost a professional player, transferring to a premier league team. For almost 18 years, he used to train twice a day, including 1.5 hours morning and 2 hours afternoon sessions, seven days a week, without any breaks. He followed a careful dieting plan and a structured sleep routine: *“Because of the hours spent on training and games, I had no vacations or personal life”* he said.

Although Andreas acknowledges the pressure and demands of competitive sports, he is against the use of illegal performance enhancing drugs. He never felt the pressure to use doping substances, and in the first years of his career, he was unaware of doping, as it was not a widespread practice among basketball players. Also, he thinks that **it is wrong to dope during the competitive season**. He has heard of athletes doing so during the transition phase, but not during the competition one. After all, doping was not so popular at the period he was competing at top level. *‘Now, it is more common’* he thinks.

Competing in top level he had been tested several times. He was shocked when the doping control test revealed prohibited performance-enhancing-drugs in his bloodstream. Because of that, he was banned for two years. He later found out that the nutritional supplements his team were provided with were contaminated with prohibited PEDs. *“They were giving us proteins, vitamins etc. I trusted my team, my team gave me staff didn’t know, including this. I did not notice any difference in my performance”*. At some point, he faced a serious health problem and although supplements do not fully explain his symptoms, Andreas is adamant that his *“health problem was caused by PEDs.”*

Andreas found out the hard way that PEAS – deliberate or incidental - had a detrimental effect on his health and career: *“I used to play for one of the largest basketball teams in Europe, and I lost everything.”* Following his ban, Andreas returned to his sport but became really reluctant to use any substances, avoiding using even painkillers. Ever since, he has been subjected to doping controls over 20 times.

According to Andreas, it is essential to have specific goals and he will always advise athletes to seek for valid information before deciding to use any supplements or substances.

He regrets not discussing this matter earlier with his coaches and knowledgeable healthcare professionals; inadvertent doping cost him more than he could ever imagine.

The Crisis: Vittorio's story (Italy)

Vittorio is a 21-year-old rugby player. He has been practicing rugby for 12 years. He started playing near his house with friends. At the age of 15, he entered in a local sport academy. He says: *"When I realized that I could do well in this sport I decided to invest in this all of myself"*. His days in the sport academy were very demanding: he went to school in the morning, then lunch, and then 2 hours of study and 4 hours of training to finish with dinner and at 11 pm when the lights were turned off.

The sport academy staff provided all players with supplements for recovery. The athletes were housed in a boarding school within a police department. Each room of the boarding school was provided with a box of protein and amino acids. In an initial meeting, the team doctor explained to the players what types of substances were and how to use them. He says: *"At the beginning I did not even know what they were talking about. Then I asked my father and the coach with whom I had more confidence"*.

During this time, Vittorio had his first personal crisis, due to the very rigid lifestyle at the academy, but he pulled through and, in the end, he managed to finish well.

At the age of 17, he was selected for the national sport academy and he moved away from home. He trained before going to school, and all afternoon until dinner time. Here as well, the academy provided all players with legal PAES.

It was during his time at the National Academy that Vittorio started to use creatine, but he didn't tell anyone, only his athletic trainer. He also used muscle mass promoter substances such as protein and creatine and he had quickly increased their muscle, but it had some side effects, he found that he had to pee continuously, and because of this he decided to stop. He says: *"I started taking a mass gainer which contained seven types of creatine and nobody told me anything"*.

Three weeks before the end of the year, Vittorio had a second personal crisis; he could not take it anymore: he wanted to go home, he wanted to be free to go out at night, to do normal things for the boys of his age. Because of this, one evening he decided to smoke some weed, even if he had never used illegal substances. Unfortunately, the following day in random internal doping control Vittorio was **tested positive for cannabis and was kicked out of the national sport academy**. With that his chance of a place in the National Team disappeared. It was a disastrous mistake. About this experience Vittorio says: *"You must be predisposed for the life in academy. [...] That lifestyle has killed me. [...] Definitely served to me [...] but you must be predisposed for that kind of life, because you can become crazy!"*

Before leaving the academy, Vittorio signed with a top team in his town. He currently plays rugby with this team, in the top series, but he lost the chance to play in the national team,

because for them, **when you make an error you are excluded for life**, boys' behavior is very important.

Vittorio thinks that rugby deprived him of his adolescence and took time away from studying and working. On the other side, the sport of rugby made him grow, physically and socially, and has given him a wealth of life experiences. To those who practice rugby, he would recommend that they must be ready for sacrifice, because there will be difficult times.

Vittorio argues that all athletes should tell their stories in the schools, because athletes are powerful role models and young people are more likely to listen and learn from their life experiences.

The Dream: Eleonora's story (Italy 🇮🇹)

Eleonora is a 30 years old ex gymnast. During her long career, she has performed in the national team regularly for ten years and participated in three Olympics Games. She started to practice gymnastics at the age of 5. When she was 10 years old, she was selected for the national junior team. When she was 11 she participated in her first European Championship. She says: *"It all arrived very quickly"*. At that time, her life was very full. About that period Eleonora tells: *"It was very full, I didn't realize it yet but sometimes I simply had to study in the car. It was a busy life for a girl of that age"*.

At the age of 14, she was part of the national senior team and she moved away from home. She trained 8 hours a day, and after the workouts, in the afternoon, teammates took private lessons with teachers in hotels. She says: *"At the beginning was very difficult. [...] They were less hours of school, but they were very intense. [...] When you are face to face it's hard to give up!"*.

In the gymnastics environment there was no mention of PAES. The only cases she has heard of are the use of diuretics to lose weight, for aesthetic reasons. On the contrary, the use of legal PAES was widespread in gymnastic. In intense training periods, girls consumed vitamins, mineral salts and supplements for recovery. Furthermore, **painkillers are very common and widely used in gymnastics**. Eleonora has had many micro-fractures, especially stress micro-fractures. Once, she participated in a competition with a fractured foot. Because of such situations, she and other teammates had become very familiar with the use of painkillers. In fact, at one time, she also overused a fast acting, strong non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug, Aulin, which is used to treat acute pain. She says: *"Often we joked and said that Aulin (i.e. anti-inflammatory) is our dessert [...] because you have to live with pain. [...] You work over the injury every day, so you always have pain and you never heal"*.

For her, however, the biggest problem in gymnastics is to do with eating disorders. The aesthetic aspect is fundamental. Because of this, many girls who were with her had eating disorders and others since stopping their training and the sport, have put on a lot of weight since then.

For Eleonora, gymnastics deprived her of her adolescence, but on the other side, it was what enabled her to realize her life's dream of participating in the Olympics Games. She says: *"There were some difficult times when I said I leave everything and go back home, but achieving important results was a fundamental stimulus. When you're young, the hardest thing is the distance from home, then going on the difficulty is physical and mental fatigue"*.

To those who practice gymnastics, she recommends setting goals that are realistic and achievable and argues that athletes should also tell their own stories in schools, to make

children understand how many sacrifices are necessary to reach one's own goals and emphasize that nothing can be reached immediately without sacrifice.

To promote clean sport, athletes should make a lot of awareness. Eleonora says: *"Today we think more to appear than to be, everyone wants to reach the top without making sacrifices"*. For Eleonora athletes could bring their experiences especially in schools.

The Dedication: Luisa's story (Italy)

Luisa is a 34 years old Brazilian girl who practices Futsal. She has been playing for the national team for many years. She started to practice futsal in the streets of her small town in Brazil and moved on to “organized” futsal when she started attending high school. After that, she played for her city's team, at the amateur level. She was noticed during a tournament and was called from a professional team and, because of that, she moved away from home. Until she lived in her city, a very small city in Brazil, both legal and illegal Performance- and Appearance Enhancing Substances (PAES) were not mentioned.

In the new team, Luisa trained twice a day, and in the evening, she attended a university program. During the intense training, all her teammates consumed mineral salts and supplements for recovery, provided by team entourage. She says: *“Studying at university I started to know about substances and what effects they have. I never wanted to take a prohibited substance, instead I used the legal ones. [...] When there was a tournament that lasted a week and I played every day I took mineral salts or something to recover faster”*.

After 6 years, Luisa decided to play in Italy, looking for new experiences. When she arrived in Italy she decided to seek some personal training, followed by an athletic trainer and she started a specific diet, recommended by a nutritionist in Brazil.

Sometime later, Luisa had an injury that forced her to stay out of training and the sport for three months. During that time, she started to use proteins to maintain and increase muscle mass. About this period, she says: *“I started taking protein because I needed to increase muscle mass and other substances, but always followed by my personal staff”*. In all her career, she never had an anti-doping control test.

Although she has been practicing futsal for many years, she has never had moments of crisis in which she thought she would stop because futsal is something she likes too much. Futsal kept Luisa away from her family and she didn't grow up with her sister. On the other side, she won several World Championships with her national team and a Golden Ball, so she thinks it was worth it.

To those who practice futsal she recommends that participants need to be ready for sacrifices: *“you have to train a lot and it is necessary to have mental power to withstand external pressures related to sport results”*, she says.

Today, at her age, and to continue playing at high level, she uses some legal PAES. She thinks that **if substances are legal and do not hurt the body and the health, is not a problem to take them**. She says: *“Now I'm 34, if I want to play at a high level I also need something to help me, but always within legal substances. If you can use them, and they are good for you, why not?”*

For Luisa, athletes should be an example for the little ones. A professional athlete must always endeavour to be a role model for young athletes so that they can learn how to reach high sport levels in clean ways.

The Resilience: Alan's story (UK)

Alan, aged 26, describes himself as a 'good all round sportsman'. Having tried athletics, triathlon and cycling, he has settled on track cycling, pursuit-individual and team, as his preferred sport, and he is doing very well at it. He says the attraction is *"being aware of progression and seeing an identifiable pathway"* for himself in this most gruelling of velodrome sports.

He describes sport as his life and that it is ***"totally serious and all encompassing with no real social life outside of sport"***.

Alan though is most complimentary about the advantages of being a British cyclist, citing the benefits of UK's advanced training methods, nutrition regimes and technical innovation and support. To all this he attributes his complete resistance to the use of any performance enhancing substances, he is even wary of supplements; *"Better to focus, with your coach, on 'power optimisation'-technical stuff-and psychological factors, technique...guided by the all important power meter"*.

He credits his success to training of course but also *"being constantly critical"* and he is, of himself, but particularly of those on the cycling circuit who respond to inevitable setbacks with Tramadol (a strong opioid pain medication), and/or unreasonably high doses of various medications. *"Yes I've been aware of guys that turn up and seem able to do impossible improvements on previous times and heard of those that over use prescriptions"* but *"for me, it's always been step back to go forward, take a break, and take advice"*.

Alan has no tolerance for those that use proscribed substances and feels **more could be done to challenge those who "progress too fast"** although he suggests that, in cycling anyway, he feels that *"the road is more dirty than the track"* and argues strongly in favour of *"individual ethics"*, high personal standards and proposes that athletes have a responsibility to assure that ***"clean sport means a fair crack at competition"***.

Alan suggests that the incidence of cheating might well be associated with the premium available in some cultures to escape poverty or to achieve favour, notoriety and acclaim through sport. Where other avenues are limited, individuals might be persuaded towards substances in their own interests or be pressured by those under pressure themselves.

In Alan's view, world **organisations have a responsibility to "do their damndest to arrest doping, enforce the rules and educate through harm reduction rather than scare tactics"**. He feels that outside of their own personal ethics **athletes cannot be expected to patrol the system**.

Alan's success has not been without setbacks. He struggles with a bulging disk in his back which he manages with posture, exercise and massage. Diagnosed as asthmatic in his 20's

yet manages with very limited use of an inhaler, His asthma precludes outdoor cycling at certain times of year and in high pollen settings. His attention to this is critical and he has been completely committed to ensuring that inhaler use is within limits.

Alan's commitment to technical advance, physiological science, self-reflection and personal determination are the things that have driven a very successful athlete onwards. Stimulants, pain killers and performance enhancements have not.

His final word? *"I'm not in it to gain anything in particular but love the balance of (competing) my best and then it being all over"*.

The Experience: Margaret's story (UK)

From the age of 11 Margaret, having watched the Atlanta Olympics, had always dreamed of being an athlete. Now aged 44, she looks back on life spent training hard, improving steadily, towards a pinnacle moment competing as a long-distance runner at the Olympics.

As a passionate advocate of 'clean sport' she reflects on *"having lived as the clean athlete"* and argues that **all clean athletes should act assertively as role models and "pass it on"**.

Certainly an advocate for better more accessible education for athletes, Margaret also argues in support of WADA. *"They've a big responsibility to keep pace"* she argues *"they could even be more aggressive, home in on 'micro-dosing', focus on **stronger sanctions for 'enablers' especially coaches, doctors and team managers"*** but she's also realistic, *"Athletes don't have a union, they are vulnerable to exploitation, pawns often upon whom others make money. And then there are also the deep rooted cultural issues like state sponsored interventions-hopefully now the whole world is telling them."* She's wistful about her own experience, *"finishing behind two Chinese, two Kenyans and a Romanian does make me wonder"* she says... and Margaret has every right to be assertive, as she talks about her life the picture emerges of a talented individual utterly committed to the 'hard slog' of working towards a lonely personal goal. The loneliness of the long distance runner perhaps! It's a worthy tale.

She relates her early experiences of being dedicated, quite serious, and of missing out on friendships, driving hard to train through her teen years and on into University *"sport meant everything"* she says and *"I was running twice a day, training at lunchtimes, competing at weekends"*. Yes, significant lifestyle changes, but in those days? *"No"* absolutely no awareness of performance enhancing substances. *"I just had my routines"* she says *"and new friends from the running"*.

Like so many distance runners, she hit a period of stagnation –no progress –and almost gave up. She heard sprinters talking about creatine but was not even tempted. A gap followed, her career took her abroad but at the age of 29 she returned to training, went part time and was soon seeing significant improvement.

"As a distance runner" she says *"the training is very specific, it's all about diet, self-care, massage, ice baths...Very much focussed on lifestyle factors...frankly I was never tempted into using, never pressured, never approached and never worked or trained with anyone, anywhere, where anything was being 'pushed'... I was always so very careful when discussing with doctors any treatments being proposed"*.

Margaret went full time into running in 2006 and watched with interest as the women's 10,000 metres at the European Athletics Championships that year delivered almost

unbelievable personal bests for some in the competition. Perhaps it was this that confirmed her wish to compete at the Marathon distance.

Still she pressed on, training at altitude, taking iron and multi vitamins, fighting bad stomachs and occasional injury and with happily, no surgery, she exemplifies clear headed determination, the benefits of consistent training and a wise, yet pragmatic approach to the excesses that all athletes talk about.

The Pragmatism: Ryan's story (USA 🇺🇸)

People come to competitive sport for many different reasons. Ryan (39) is unusual to say the least, or is he?

Ryan looks back on a career earning money on the American circuit as a 'professional' road racer. He also raced in Europe and it was where he achieved his best results. He talks with enthusiasm and a lugubrious drawl as he muses on his career. *"I don't really enjoy running"* he says, chuckling.. *"Well, not like some guys that just aren't happy unless they are running, always up and running 'cos they love it, that's all they live for.. And I could never get myself into the mileage thing.. like the 5K, 10K guys.. eighty miles a week and all that "*..

"No, for me it was all about the lifestyle" he says wistfully. *"Yes I was pretty good, very good in fact, although never quite good enough to make the 'world teams', only ever fifth or sixth at the Olympic Trials"*.

Nevertheless, Ryan's road running career spanned ten years and at age 39 he now he looks back on what it gave him, what drove him: *"travel"* he says intriguingly. *"I got to be enjoying this terrific lifestyle, I trained, yes, wanted to be at peak and then I'd always try to be able to race in interesting places. The circuit was good to me and I figured that if I'd be able to earn enough to live on, and every time I raced there'd be some interesting town or city to visit, some nice new place to explore, I could be very happy with that"*.

As a youngster he'd started off in triathlon, then a young sport, stuck with it till he was 19, having reached U.S. juniors and been thoroughly demoralised losing out in world team appearance at 16. *"For those years all I did was endlessly train-triathlon-school, and then I quit"*.

But the routine of training, the need to work out and the desire to race remained very strong, soon Ryan was back to try his hand at track and field. *"The aim was to maintain respectable times, train and race all year long- that way I could maintain the lifestyle I wanted.. for a while I stagnated, like every athlete does but I was doing enough, good enough times to hold onto the lifestyle I wanted"*.

Ryan kept to a conventional diet, nothing special and occasionally trained at altitude, maybe supplementing iron, using tech, sometimes vitamin E, B12 and blood cell stimulants, modest interventions *"but actually **the key to maintaining 'peak' was to stay injury free**"* he says.

"I guess doping was happening" he says *"but in the early days we never really knew about that, I never saw it happening. Yes, the coach would do the anti-doping 'talk', but you'd take that as evidence of the fact that (if he thought you were doping) that you were actually running well"*.

But then he says: *“On one occasion man, this runner, who I’d raced before, was like suddenly brutal to keep up with. Well, I was convinced he must be doing something so I followed him into the changing room and when he wasn’t around I searched all through his kit ...didn’t find a thing!”*

However with so much at stake, his only source of income, and that lifestyle, all of that as being from racing, Ryan took to using a synthetic prohibited substance over a period of two and a half years resulting in a two year suspension when a team mate discovered used vials in his jacket pocket and confronted him. Ryan admitted use.

*“It’s like this... during my whole career I was only tested 5 or 6 times and only in competition, never random tested between events.. It might have been easy but **I never raced on dope”**. **I never raced on it, but it’s worked to speed recovery from injury...and that was very desirable..”**.*

Recovery from injury as fast as possible was critical to Ryan: *“it took time off the recovery period, when it didn’t, when I was out though injury, I was really down, the quicker I could get back into training and back on the road, the better”*.

He remembers specific times when he struggled with injuries and sought help from using a prohibited substance: *“one time a torn plantar, resulted in half a year off, just as I was coming back from that I had a bike accident, then one time a hip injury, one time a calf injury.. using it but staying within tight parameters, I figured there was minimal risk”* he says “

Ryan has wrestled with his conscience, argued with his father and others but has **felt duty bound to return a significant amount of the substantial prize money that he won to be redistributed amongst athletes that finished behind him in races**. He’s become outspoken against doping and latterly wouldn’t run for money.

The Faith: Alana's story (UK)

Alana (22) is a very particular athlete in so much as she is a strict observant of the Muslim faith and takes great physical strength from her spiritual belief. In conversation she refers to her observance and to its great importance for her motivation and dedication. Athletes constantly pursue goals with single minded purpose, Alana is grateful for the clarity and vision that her beliefs give her and for the strict observance of a healthy lifestyle that is central to her faith.

The healthy lifestyle is also at the heart of her passion for sport in general and the contact sport of Tai Kwando in particular. It is to Tai Kwando that she has dedicated herself. Strict observance keeps her 'lean' she says and a highly focussed training scheme keeps her strong and flexible enough for the rigours of this exacting, short burst, high energy contact sport.

Alana is shy and reserved and she feels no need to self promote or to relish in her achievements like some athletes do, even though her achievements in the sport have been substantial, including representing her country, Great Britain at European level.

She believes strongly that she has been gifted, and to a large extent that hers is a destined, determined path. One wonders how many other competitive athletes feel this way, but hers is a strong ethical position that completely excludes any consideration of performance enhancing substances, for hers, as she sees it, **is a duty – simply - to be the best**. This is an interesting perspective an appeal to higher order values and a belief beyond the individual.

Alana has known little else, starting into the sport at five years old she says, and sustaining her "*full on regime*" through her teenage years, as part of a Muslim sports club, and on into University.

Her training focus was always on stretching, conditioning, stamina work, as well as combat technique of course, and she has, in adult life, earned a living as a personal trainer; passing on her enthusiasm and know-how to others.

By the time she got to University and joined the Tai Kwando Club she was well ahead of the others, it was all too basic and she was more experienced. Nevertheless, she valued the University's Sports training programme and trained every day with one very strong training session per week. Her mind was set on competing at a higher level and she was soon to be selected. Professional coaching took over.

Nevertheless, as with so many athletes, injury nearly put an end to all this. She's had hip, knee and ankle injury problems and made the mistake of competing with a bad knee. A 'rock bottom' period followed, one step at a time back to recovery, but she never even considered any chemical interventions. Her position has been consistent, one of dedication

to purity and a **deep belief that “god has provided”** and hence that she has no need for **external earthly interventions.**

Her motivation and dedication is internal, her approach to the challenges of sport, whatever those may be, one of destiny, and as such she has no use for, nor has ever been in contact with, any of these substances. In such a hyper-mobile sport, where speed and agility count so much she argues *“it’s all down to determination and training and being driven forward”* ...Alana has drive alright, coming she says from ‘a higher place’.

The Determination: Ali's story (UK - true 🇬🇧)

Ali is a para-athlete and at the age of 29 he has already hit the heights of a world title and an Olympic silver medal. Ali is a passionate advocate for clean sport and extremely successful in a sport renowned for doping abuse. Ali's life is a story of perseverance and devotion.

Ali says that seeing Michael Johnson when he was a small boy was his inspiration: knowing straight away that as soon as he could he wanted to be a successful world class athlete. His first love was judo and he was good at it, but judo lacked a competitive class for those with physical impairment; no amputee class. This might not have been an absolute obstacle but a friend forced him to go to the gym one day and having got there he stunned those around him with the weight he lifted, there and then, that first day.

"Everyone looked at me, they were shocked and then someone said 'go and get the coach' well, I thought that I was in trouble, thought I'd done something wrong" he says. In fact the coach realised an innate talent and a new direction, a new career was born. *"Anyone your age who can lift 100 kilos right off like that ought to be in competition"* said the coach. Ben was 13 years old and describes himself as *"a chubby Arabic kid"*.

It is fair to say that Ali was never very worried about his own appearance but he admits that quite quickly the move from judo and into the exercise, diet and training regime for power-lifting soon had him leaner and more defined. Nevertheless the judo that he loved still stayed with him and the individualism of power-lifting took some getting used to.

"It's all about you" Ben says ***"all about your choices, your mental attitude, your strength of purpose and so if you get it right you feel great, if you get it wrong you've only got yourself to blame"***.

On his 19th birthday Ali qualified for the Beijing Olympics, but not without a struggle.

"It was a mental block really, I couldn't get past 170 kilos and the qualifying weight was 180 and we were four weeks away" he relates this as the biggest setback in his career. It was the coach who unlocked it and pushed him through the zone. *"That's power lifting!"*

Ali is adamant that he never has nor never will use performance enhancers. He recalls the coach sitting him down at age 16 *"in ten years you could be on the podium"* he'd said ***"best clean athlete in the world?"***

"That idea, that phrase had stuck with me, in my chosen field, that's all I wanted to be".

Ali remains powerfully anti-doping. Yes he has been aware of the substances some lifters use, mostly anabolic steroids and yes he's seen needles fall out of competitors sports bags and yes he's open minded about an 'untested federation' in one strand of the sport.

“You can’t tell people what to do, only educate, make people aware of the risks and as long as they don’t come over into my mainstream and lie and cheat their way to success that’s fine by me, although it does irritate me to know that some countries are much more lax.. We’re tested all the time”.

Like so many other athletes, Ali recognises the sacrifices he has made, giving up on college outings, nights out and weekends away with friends and reduced time with his family. He also tells of **the pressure, the move from enthusiastic amateur to coached elite para-athlete and all the science behind the training.**

Ali’s advice to others? *“Stay patient, get a good coach and listen, and don’t make too many silly mistakes early on.”* He is also dedicated to a rigorous regime of training and diet.

Ali’s career nearly ended in 2009 when he was diagnosed with Crohn’s disease, a condition that not only had him away from the game for months but also had him on medication which side effects included muscle wastage and fatigue, so bad for his power-lifting ambitions. He has fought back through dedication, a controlled diet and self-monitoring his training to avoid flare ups. It is an on-going struggle.

Over the years, his attitude to doping has hardened. He welcomes greater facility for anonymous reporting and urges all athletes to do more to expose the use of performance enhancing substances and argues for stronger penalties and more rigorous testing.

“It’s the voice of the athlete that’s so important, not the administrators and the adjudicators-athletes need to speak up for clean sport” Ali argues.

The Medicalisation: Andrew's story (UK)

Andrew describes himself as a 'pro-International', he's been a beneficiary of funding from his national athletics council and he, like others at his level benefits from appearance fees. At the age of 29 his life has been dominated by athletics and running in particular. Although in his pre-teenage years he lacked the build to be a serious contender and has always had to work to bulk his physique being naturally rather skinny – 'like a bean pole' at one point he admits. His parents didn't push him, he says, but supported him and helped him to transfer from casual football playing teenager to a more serious middle distance runner.

As he reflects on his childhood he says: *"I think the first big championship I went to was Athens 2004, we went and watched ...a week of that.. I used to love it when I was young and I think from then I'd always wanted to be a runner as my job...it's what I wanted to do and you probably don't realise how hard that is going to be but in the environment I grew up in I was pretty well-conditioned to liking sport".*

The period as a day pupil at a sport focussed boarding school had him at school from 8.00a.m. till 9.00p.m. at night, so weekends and breaks were times when the athletics group was his social life too. Light in weight and young for his years he started to get very competitive. Andrew was delighted when he won a bronze medal at the age of 17.

Thinking back, he reflects on his heroes and the use of substances: *"I think the first time I was aware of it was when Dwain Chambers got banned because he was a pretty big name in British sprinting so for a British athlete to be done like that burst the bubble a little bit because it was like actually if he's cheating then who else is..."*.

Andrew pressed on and arriving at university he soon realised that other runners were working a lot harder than he had been. It was time to sharpen up his ambition as a runner or focus on his degree in chemistry and having a good time or settle for a career outside of sport. *"We used to do drills at like 6am on a Monday, because it would always have to be before or after uni and then it would be a run and then weights... chucked in there and taught by other athletes how to lift, which was so dangerous...it was the first time I'd done weights ...and it bulked me up way too much. We'd do assessments Tuesday evening and I wouldn't run that morning, then a run Wednesday, circuits in the evening, Thursday would be drills again and a run, Friday rest, do another run, Saturday like a grass session, and then Sunday a long run that would be my week pretty much. I got shin splints but from growing I think because I was still growing at that point".*

Andrew started to appear on the National Athletics' radar and began to pick up funding to support his progress, he was extremely lucky to be afforded an opportunity to go to Morocco to train at altitude, but it turned out to be a disaster and really set him back. Laid

low by stomach problems and altitude sickness He was terribly ill and returned demoralised and over-stretched.

He was prepared now to give everything to athletics, completely focussed through his second year at university, training hard but now faced with the greatest struggle to get back on form. His iron level was so low that he decided to opt for a transfusion, and his coach was not pleased. His coach's view was that opting for this intervention might be considered as compromising a cherished position on 'clean sport' but Andrew was determined to go on and the doctors agreed. Andrew's coach was not happy.

Andrew says *"he believes that everything you should be able to get should come from food, if not that, then an off the shelf supplement like a little iron tablet, but it was because it was the quickest way and the best way to top (my iron) up so yeah he accepted it because I think he knew that it was mid-season so if I wanted a big improvement straightaway or just to get back to where I was then that was the best way to go about it.. but that's the only time"*.

He was soon back running and achieving impressive times, referring on occasion to 'perfect runs': that moment when everything comes together: the conditions, the mental attitude, the muscles, the stamina. And then it happened...

*"I was warming down and I got this massive stitch in my chest and I thought I'd pulled something in my back and every time I tried to run I couldn't because the stitch would come ...and then they gave me inhalers and I took them and it went straightaway.. **So since then I've had inhalers.. I've almost become reliant.** I don't think I need it throughout the year, I think there are periods where maybe it's cold or there's high pollen or something.. But if you looked within athletics, it's almost as if every funded athlete has an inhaler....does everyone have asthma? I don't like taking mine obviously, so I always like crouch down and take it which is bad because it's not banned and it's something that I've been given because I had a problem.., but you still feel a bit dodgy"...*

Andrew has been regularly tested on the circuit for doping and for physiological monitoring, giving blood samples and he remains healthy.

When asked if he'd transfuse again he says: ***"I think you have to probably accept that if you want to be able to compete at the top level, you do have to allow these sort of things sometimes but not become reliant on them.. if your iron is low that's the quickest way to get it back up... it's weird because I would never had said that probably before I'd had the opportunity to have that.. but because it's there, obviously you are going to, if it's not banned, if it's not something you're not allowed to do then I don't see why you wouldn't do that to get yourself back to where you should be"***.

He's also expressing a view shared by many when he says of other athletes. *"I think they utilise everything they've got. They give supplements for vitamin D, iron, I think that's the norm, athletes are still taking stuff like that and some used to get vitamins injected and*

that's.. .Just because you can'.. I don't think you should because if you were seen with little needle marks, it just throws up questions that shouldn't really have to be asked".

He talks at length about the controversial use of an inhaler. *"The brown one is 'maintenance' I don't really take that that much because I wouldn't want to take an inhaler every day, you just don't want to bring medication into your body every day. The blue one's Salbutamol, which is such a taboo- you only need two puffs. Yes, other athletes have been accused of taking a ridiculous amount of puffs. If you know what the limit is and you know how much the doctors are telling you to take, that's all you need, why are you trying to take more?"*

Andrew feels that his reason for using inhalers is genuine because he had a problem and inhalers solved it. But today, it more in his head: *"without it, would that problem come back ? I get a tight chest, yet since I've started taking my inhalers that's gone.. So that made me think has my body almost become reliant on taking them? I've changed the way my body works a bit?...but, I take it only in instances where I feel like I need to dig deep within my breathing so I don't want anything to restrict that ...that's probably the thing I'd say when people question my running ..But apart from that I wouldn't like to think I could be questioned for anything else."*

In legal terms Andrew is a clean athlete, no evidence of doping, clean in all the tests and yet his history of medical interventions, it could be argued, have given him an advantage over the purely natural athlete; assuming such a person exists. He describes his dependence on the inhaler, how it's changed his body perhaps and he's pragmatic about medical intervention for the fixing of problems.

"I speak like it's bad when I say how everyone's got inhalers...in fact, everyone might have their reasons, but they might not be the same as mine...surely, when there's a medical professional there giving you a cure to a problem that you have, you are going to take it and as long as you know you are taking it for the right reasons, I think it's alright."

It's if you are taking it having no symptoms but doing it purely as a performance booster, that's where I think the difference comes. However, whatever you say, people are always going to question your intentions for taking it".

Nevertheless, Andrew is a strong supporter of clean sport, keen to support the work of WADA in chasing offenders, and positive towards those who provide the intelligence to capture all the ingenious ways that athletes might seek to avoid capture and scornful of those who argue *"everyone's doing it, why shouldn't I"*.

Andrew concludes by turning it back on the individual *"just how would you live with yourself knowing you were getting medals from athletes that were clean when you are doing stuff you shouldn't be, it's so wrong isn't it ?"*

The Transformation: Susie's story (UK – true 🇬🇧)

Susie (44) came to running quite late in life, started running at the age of 35, and enjoys ultra marathons, especially ultra marathons in challenging climates. Susie is especially fond of the jungle and the desert and trains regularly in a heat chamber at 34 degrees and with 85% humidity.

Running in isolation and running in unfamiliar, often wild locations requires a special kind of person, her colleagues say Susie is 'one of a kind'. She cheerfully recounts tales of her straight out of an extreme action movie, or else she's in a chamber on a treadmill for hours on end setting records and sweating!

Whilst she's a very serious athlete working very hard with early morning training, twenty-four-hour sessions and gruelling distances under her belt, she says **she is not in it for the glory of competing or gaining top placement, her motivation is very much around personal best, a personal challenge.**

Susie admits that in her view, *"most people at the start line of an ultra marathon will have some painkillers in their bag. It's just a kit check thing"* she says, but it is only ibuprofen. Yet she is aware of others whose overuse, especially in extreme heat has led to health problems and trauma so she aims to keep away from this as much as possible. She argues that *"people might not be aware of what the effects are of ibuprofen, if they're doing this extreme exercise or too much caffeine, for example. I think people don't quite know themselves. They're not that well educated to make these decisions. If they see people around them, in those situations, taking them, then they think it's okay and they wouldn't know"*. Personally, she tries to minimise the risks by using a safer formulation: *"I didn't want to take the ibuprofen but I thought the gel might be okay. I thought, 'It's not going anywhere near my kidneys. It's going straight on my legs,' which was my forte at the time"* she explains.

On the use of inhalers her knowledge is limited, probably in her ultra marathons stamina, steady breathing and mental attitude trumps quick burst speed, short term benefits and she is not aware of the use or abuse in her experience that we have registered recently in other sports. In discussion of this issue she is clear that with the use of inhalers without genuine medical need, **no matter if they are within the rules, a moral line is crossed**, a tricky compromise on behalf of those with real asthma need that is likely to be exploited by those who see possible advantage.

Susie seems to favour closer controls on the substances that athletes might use but also only alongside better education and advice. Her own history involved a thyroid problem and a possible compromise of the rules through lack of information. In her case a surgery, that involved taking thyroxin afterwards, that might have caused concern if testing had been

applied. *"I did not know..."*. In fact testing of the sort experienced by track athletes and cyclists is rare in her events.

Susie is a strong advocate for clean sport. She promotes much better education, widespread and easy availability of information on substances and appropriate risk assessment by appropriate bodies. Knowing what to use and when and what to avoid, but admits to the challenges both financial and regulatory in doing so.

Susie regularly offers herself to researchers on the effects of heat and humidity on body functions and mental stresses during endurance: her own journey has involved truly scientific analysis, and a strong bond with those researching sports science. Susie is frequently to be found in the sports science lab for lengthy stretches under simulated conditions, monitored and analysed in pursuit of better understanding and further support to others.

It is true to say that scientific curiosity has a lot to do with Susie's chosen path, as a researcher and athlete, as one who sets herself the most extreme goals and standards and as one who advocates for better information, clarity and risk assessment in all matters to do with performance enhancing substances. Hers is very much a personal stance and she believes in the importance of individual and informed choice, interrogating fellow athletes and posing dilemmas for them in a manner which challenges them to think for themselves.

The Passion: Robbie's story (UK – true 🇬🇧)

Robbie is a 24 hour endurance runner for Great Britain – that means, as he put it, that he “runs round in circles for 24 hours, to see how far he can go, against a bunch of people from around the world who also see how far they can go”. He also runs up and down mountains and competes in ultra-marathons.

Robbie has done anti-doping training and works as a coach advising other athletes in endurance pursuits. Robbie has a strong presence on social media and regularly sparks debates about doping. “Part of the problem is that there isn't enough discussion” he says “I talk a lot and I do it on social media, talking as a coach and as athlete to athlete.. **if you don't talk about it, people make assumptions**”.

Robbie had done well in Britain, thought he was really good and entered against European competition quite naively. He reflects back on this now, “you get ‘bigged up’ on social media, makes you think you're a superstar”. At the European level, he found to his dismay that everyone was a lot better. In European competition he says “a good result for me was top 50.. that to me was a big shock”.

Robbie is cautious in suggesting that this might affect others who might then wish to cut corners in order to live up to these expectations. The very presence of doping in any sport makes for performance targets unattainable for those wish to avoid doping for whatever reasons. But then Robbie is alert to the fact that training and discipline and sheer determination can produce results that would have been unheard of but a few years ago. Whether or not there is doping going on, the debates in Robbie's sport are often about painkillers and as with so many discussions amongst athletes the opinions vary widely and the anecdotes are revealing. “When I started sure, people ahead of me and people around me taking painkillers and I didn't think anything of it.. but ...you're taking a drug, its enhancing your performance.. if it's hurting and you know it's going to block that fatigue.. and you're going to run better because of it.. **you're taking a drug; it's enhancing your performance.**”

Of course, Robbie is actually only talking about paracetamol, caffeine, stuff that's well within WADA rules, but where do you draw the line? “My line is drawn way before there. **If I can't buy it Sainsbury's on the side of a shelf where a kid can reach it, then that's bad**” says Robbie but adds immediately that in other countries, for example in Poland, Tramadol (which is a strong opioid painkiller) is widely available, in the UK it's a prescription-only medication, so how does an international ruling cope with that? For some competitors at European level it can be bought freely for others only when professionally prescribed. Another issue arises with abuse of painkillers, Robbie speaks of an Athlete who took four Ibuprofen ahead of a 100K race and, coupled with dehydration and muscle breakdown; it

ended him up in intensive care. Perhaps it's a taboo subject, the use of painkillers in endurance; probably it should be talked about much more.

Robbie also talks about Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUEs), which may present grey areas and probable negative effects. In response to widely publicised suggestions of abuse - particularly the excessive use of permitted asthma inhalers - Robbie has this to say *"there's a stigma attached now.. and ..it might stop athletes that previously would have been (legitimate users) inhaling to be able just to do the sport they love...feeling guilt even for applying for it."*

Once again the issue here is to do with the wider psychological effects of a practice on up and coming athletes and those working hard to better themselves in a competitive environment. Robbie has strong views too on the whole issue of doping controls and management.

"I finished third in the world at the 24 hour championship which was like a 'break out' performance for me...for the last three and a half hours I was hammering it. I was on another level, no one else there... and (when it was over) I said come on, test me.. they didn't." Robbie was disappointed. Even though he was clean, he would have liked it to be proven and he would have liked the re-assurance so that no one was in any doubt, no assumptions!

In other competitions he's seen testing hardly enforced at all. But then 24 hour endurance and mountain running are sports whose associations do not have the money or the infrastructure to support a sophisticated testing regime – and many sports are like this.

So is education the key? *"A lot of education was based around use of supplements and stopping people accidentally failing tests"* says Robbie but education for young athletes is seen as an important aspect of his perspective, *"and being a role model"*.

Robbie's also up for confronting those who have cut corners but he also has a degree of compassion for the individual athletes and argues that they hold important information that can help anti-doping. *"If we're not talking to these people.. the ones that truly understand why someone makes that decision than how can we ever understand it and how can we stop it?"*

"Every athlete is someone who starts out just to go for a run because they enjoy running, no one starts out saying I want to cheat the system..." says Robbie, and where is the line that makes people move from one to the other. *"Everyone has got that line"* he says. But Robbie thinks that where the line is should be the role of the governing body *"we have to have trust in that"* and that's what makes some of the publicised state doping scandals so difficult. *"In Russia many people are coming out of poverty, Kenya too, I think we're very quick to throw scorn on athletes and people making these decisions.. maybe in the same context we might have made the same decisions"*.

Robbie adds a great deal to the debate about doping in his own practice and in the many ways he contributes to the wider debates. He is still not where he wants to be but is prepared to work hard at it and not cut corners. *“I want to be the best I can and I want to find out how far I can go clean... I want to compete at the highest level and I want to spend the rest of... well, a really long time. I’m quite young for 24-hour racing. So I’ll figure out, over the next 20 years... I firmly believe I can win a World Championship within my sport”* he says and works to be a role model in this most gruelling of endeavours.

The Integrity: Jade's story (UK – true)

Jade (38) is a retired English track and field athlete, specializing in long jump. Now a mother of a two-year-old boy, Jade lives in London. She has remained involved in anti-doping as a spokesperson and as a researcher, and strong advocate of clean sport and athletes' rights. . In 2009, she took part in BBC show Strictly Come Dancing where she suffered a knee injury serious enough to cause her withdrawing from the dancing competition.

“My coach came through the 70's 80's and 90's when doping must have been rife, but me maybe due to my confidence or maybe naively, thinking about it, I felt like, I'm talented enough - I can beat them... I was determined to achieve success without doping; I was determined to be a clean athlete” so says Jade, former long jumper, reflecting on a career that led on to great things and appearances at both the 2004 and the 2008 Olympics.

She's also fired up; critical about it all, bitter *“I was second at the European Champions so I got silver.. the girl that won it came out in 2013.. to be 'positive'.. so I should have been a gold medallist! In 2003.. she got the silver.. I came fourth, so I should have had the bronze. In 2004 three Russians won and I came sixth so I'm in fourth place at the moment.. but I should have had bronze”*.

Jade had become increasingly suspicious of Russian athletes in particular and the widespread incidence of doping in general. She recalls, *“by the time I'd gone through the Olympic stuff and got to the Olympics I was in the best shape of my life, I jumped really well. I jumped a personal best.. but still only ended up 7th in the Olympic final...but then Marion Jones.. got her stuff stripped off her which bumped me up to six.. and (subsequently) two or three other athletes have been banned and so I'm currently in fourth place.”*

She is bitter on the grounds that the whole situation affected her, and not unreasonably she became mentally very consumed by the injustice of it all. What followed was a period where she found focus difficult, terrible mental stress, tension and a period plagued by injury: injury after injury. And then a change, *“so much of it is mental”* she says *“I needed to change”*, worked hard, made it to the Olympics but then was beaten by a Brazilian who had just come back after two suspensions and a doping ban. At the time Jade was interviewed by the BBC and remembers saying ***“I feel really mad that a cheater has come back from a two year ban and just won the Olympic gold medal”***. In fact, on this occasion Jade only came 6th but wanted to speak out for the athlete who came fourth, who might have had bronze.

Jade, retired from sport, as a mum with a small baby lives modestly in a small flat, if she had been decorated Olympic Bronze or better and been able to access the funding and the sponsorships and so on, life might have been very different.

There's no doubt in Jade's mind that the mental effect of others doping, and of her being often suspicious, sometimes actually certain, really damaged her preparation *"it's like the girls that were jumping consistently well in every competition were the drug takers.. so we never felt that it was OK to jump 7 metres and be clean.. It hits people on so many levels that (others) don't understand"*.

Equally the muddled response from appropriate agencies *"the whole Rio thing, when you don't have IAAF, IOC and WADA on the same page when it comes to doping, a week before, a day before, during..what does that do to an athlete's mental approach?"*

Clearly Jade has a position and it's interesting, that physically many athletes at her level were the same or very similar in terms of their achievement potential and yet mental preparation was what made the difference for clean athletes, so the whole doping thing was doubly disadvantageous, affecting the physical achievement gap but at the same time undermining clean athletes psychologically.

Is this a black and white issue?

Jade is outspoken. *"I'll make it clear, there are no circumstances in which doping is OK" she says. "If you're an adult.. even in East Germany", or what about Russian State sponsored doping how many other athletes spoke out against that? I guess it's hard.. if your dream is to go to the Olympics and (the nation-state) says 'if you don't do this you're not part of the team' But then in her day she says, citing the controversy around Lance Armstrong as an example "sometimes the clean athletes that spoke out were just seen as bitter".. An athlete, any athlete, who is speaking out can get a backlash, be seen as controversial, draw attention to themselves and when the margins are so close, anything that causes mental anxiety can derail a candidate's performance.*

As well as being critical of, but sympathetic to other athletes, Jade returns to the issue of irregularities and conflicts in the governing bodies and monitoring organisations, another source of real concern during her period in the elite athletic spotlight. *"There needs to be strict (rules), across the board, all countries, and what WADA says goes" she exclaims, "the fact is that if you take drugs and it's in your system, you're responsible, done!"*

Jade argues that rules need to be more strictly enforced too and sport needs to be taken back for clean athletes. Winning is critical of course and Jade admits that that is all about ego, where there is this and money, and glory and national interests too; it is always going to be difficult to control.

She argues that there is certainly a role for elite athletes once they retire and argues that the whole of sport would benefit from more of these people both mentoring young up and coming athletes and taking senior positions in the regulatory bodies. Some additional support mechanisms would also help, sponsorship money better channelled to benefit

athletes, better doping education and finance to support athletes injured or temporarily disadvantaged.

Jade also suggests that *“maybe one of the reasons they take drugs is because ..their career could end at any time ..and they’re scared.. you’re always in a fearful place.. let’s set something up that cares about the athlete and the future rather than (just) catch athletes test them and ban them.. Whatever sport it is, athletes should have as much say and control as the head people..at the moment athletes are just seen as commodities”*.

Jade has managed a very successful career as a jumper and through a period where she missed out on glittering prizes due to others doping. Her reflections offer a great deal worth considering, the mental effects of playing on an unequal field, the material and psychological effects of being out smarted, and her criticism of the ways athletics has been run and monitored. Yet she offers a thoughtful understanding of athlete’s motivation and suggests ways in which, researchers and athletes working together across countries and with tighter controls properly enforced could improve athletics in the future. Along the way she reflects too on corruption, poor management of sport by the ‘wrong people’ money mis-spent and national priorities that trump Athletes own importance.

At the end of the day her message is one of defiance and the primacy of individual integrity and clean choices.