

CHAPTER 9

DEVIANT BEHAVIOR AND SPORT¹

D. Scott Waltemyer

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Define and discuss different forms of deviant behavior.
2. Understand deviant-related issues in sport, such as cheating and violence.
3. Discuss the consequences of deviant behavior, and formulate possible ways of controlling it.

INTRODUCTION

“To play this game you have to have that fire within you, and nothing stokes that fire like hate.” – Vince Lombardi, Hall of Fame NFL coach

“Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard for all the rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence; in other words, it is war minus the shooting.”
– George Orwell, author

“I went to a fight the other night and a hockey game broke out.” – Rodney Dangerfield, Comedian

American society places a great deal of importance on values such as competition and success, as portrayed in the aforementioned quotes. In fact, some of the most famous quotes from Green Bay Packers legendary coach Vince Lombardi reference, in some way, success and winning. Sports that emphasize these values receive considerable attention from both the media and the public, and play an important role in defining what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviors in sport. People within society, and specific social groups (e.g., sports teams), are expected to conform to and obey rules and norms related to what is acceptable behavior. The actions of those involved in sport, whether good or bad, receive generous amounts of media coverage, and those behaviors reflect back, not only on the individual, but also on the group or organization with which the individual belongs. And as the pressure to win is put on athletes and coaches, the pressure to perform to elite standards dramatically influences their actions and behaviors. The use of performance-enhancing substances, unsportsmanlike penalties, fines, recruiting violations, and improper relationships are among the many news stories covered by the media. These are the images and messages with which society is presented on a daily basis, and because many people believe that sports build character, every case of deviance in sports leads them to be disappointed (Coakley, 2007). Athletes and coaches engage in outrageous behaviors, searching for ways to gain a competitive advantage; all the while the media and fans glorify these behaviors (Eitzen, 2009).

DEFINING DEVIANCE

People who do not conform to social norms, or unquestionably accept them (often to extreme levels), may be labeled as deviant. Deviant behavior refers to actions “departing from an accepted social norm” (Woods, 2011, p. 318). Coakley notes that, “Deviance involves a departure from cultural ideals: the greater the departure, the more disruptive the action, the greater the deviance. Deviance always involves violating a norm” (p. 155). In other words, deviant behavior occurs when individuals, knowingly or not, act in ways

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that go against, are different from, or involve extreme adherence to, generally accepted appropriate behavior within a group or society.

Underconformity and Overconformity to Social Norms

Although most actions fall into a normally accepted range of behaviors, deviance can occur in two different forms: overconformity and underconformity. Underconformity occurs when social norms are ignored or rejected (Coakley, 2007). Many researchers study deviant behavior from the perspective of actions and behaviors that do not conform to normal societal standards (Woods, 2011). Actions that break the law (e.g., assault, stealing, speeding) or break other societal norms and policies (e.g., cutting in line at the store, using employer resources for personal benefit) are considered deviant underconformity. Examples of deviant underconformity in sport include breaking official rules, an illegal hit on an opponent, and taking banned performance-enhancing substances. On the other end of the spectrum is deviant overconformity, or extreme, unquestioned acceptance of social norms (Coakley, 2007). Examples of deviant overconformity in sport include an athlete following a coach's orders even if they are against the rules, coaches and managers spending every waking hour watching film on their opponents, athletes playing through pain (and sometimes even injury), and athletes going through extreme measures to lose weight for competition. Although deviant underconformity often receives more attention and media exposure than deviant overconformity, Hughes and Coakley (1991) suggest that most athlete-related deviance is related to overconformity. They propose that deviant underconformity actions, such as cheating and taking illegal substances, is due to the underlying extreme dedication and striving for distinction and success, that is the mindset of many elite athletes.

Coaches and teammates often encourage elite athletes to overconform to norms and high standards of training and competition (Donnelly, 1996; Howe, 2004; Waldron & Krane, 2005). In a study of competitive bodybuilding and distance running, Ewald and Jiobu (1985) found that men showed many of the extreme characteristics of unquestioned overconformity. Other research has revealed that many elite athletes, including cyclists, gymnasts, and wrestlers, have also shown characteristics of overconformity, such as self-injurious overtraining, unhealthy eating habits, and training and playing sports with serious pain and injury (Coakley, 2007).

Athletes and coaches who underconform to sport norms are typically punished or reprimanded for their actions. However, when athletes and coaches overconform to sport norms, they are often praised and treated as heroes. Most elite and performance sports encourage extreme actions among athletes. The old saying, "no pain, no gain," is a wonderful example of this, in which coaches and trainers motivate athletes to go above and beyond normal limits in their training and competition. The excessive conforming by athletes and coaches, due to placing such a high priority on competition and winning, can put considerable pressure on other social relationships outside of sport (e.g., friends and family), which may result in the unintentional sacrifice of these relationships and other responsibilities.

Issues with Studying Deviant Behavior in Sport

One problem in the analysis of deviance is that so many different actions and behaviors can be defined as deviant, no single sociological theory can explain them all (Coakley, 2007). When sociologists study issues in sport, such as athletes using performance-enhancing substances, off-field violence involving athletes, or coaches violating recruiting rules, they can be examined by a number of different approaches and perspectives, with no clear right or wrong answer.

Another problem is that some actions and behaviors that are acceptable within the realm of sport would be considered deviant in other social realms, and some actions and behaviors that are acceptable outside of sport may be considered deviant within sport. What is normal in sport is often different than what is normal in other social realms. The same type of fights that occur on the ice during a hockey game would not be acceptable in a bar or restaurant. Athletes are often labeled as heroes and tough when they put their physical health on the line during competitions, or play through pain, but teachers who go to work sick are

instructed to go home. However, when athletes and coaches break rules or engage in other deviant behaviors because of an extreme acceptance of sporting norms, the line between underconformity and overconformity can be blurred. Because deviance in sports often involves an unquestioned acceptance of norms, this can lead to a rejection of the same norms.

EXPLANATIONS FOR DEVIANT BEHAVIOR

Hughes and Coakley (1991) found four norms that were especially important to elite athletes, which they call the “sport ethic.” These include: (a) extreme sacrifice and dedication to the game, (b) striving for distinction, (c) risk taking and playing through pain, and (d) challenging personal limits in the pursuit of possibilities. With a mindset like this, many athletes are motivated to do whatever it takes to be successful in competition. As Freeman (1998) notes, “You have to be selfish, getting ready for a game that only a handful of people understand. It’s tough on the people around you. It’s the most unspoken, but powerful, part of the game, that deep seated desire to be better at all costs, even if it means alienating your family and friends” (p. 1).

Legendary NFL head coach Vince Lombardi once said, “Winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing.” For many involved in sport, especially elite sports, the ultimate goal is to win, and as the value of winning increases, the temptation to put moral thoughts aside becomes very seductive (Woods, 2011). As the importance of winning increases among athletes and coaches, due to public praise, status and promotion, and great financial rewards, violence and other deviant behaviors will ultimately ensue in an effort to gain an advantage over the opponent. Lombardi is also credited with making the statement, “Second place is the first loser,” and if this is true, and all of the praise and rewards go to the winner, then some in sports will do whatever it takes to be first. Athletes may take performance-enhancing drugs, coaches may illegally scout or recruit athletes, and administrators may alter transcripts so a student-athlete is eligible (Eitzen, 2009). Winning demands commitment and loyalty to goals, and an attitude of “by any means necessary.”

This emphasis on competition and success can lead those involved to do whatever it takes to be successful. Lumpkin et al. (2003) suggest, “Often people defend violent and ethically questionable conduct on the premise that ‘everyone else does it.’ That is, an athlete may believe a violent behavior is justified if opponents are engaged in violent behaviors or cheating” (p. 70). A good example of this mindset can be found in a quote from former Major League Baseball (MLB) player Ken Caminiti, who once said, “It’s no secret what’s going on in baseball. At least half the guys are using steroids. They talk about it. They joke about it with each other... At first I felt like a cheater. But I looked around, and everybody was doing it” (Verducci, 2002). With such a heavy emphasis on winning in the sporting realm, many athletes (especially elite athletes) struggle with the choice of winning at all costs versus demonstrating good sportsmanship (Woods, 2011). Lance Armstrong went from being the 7-time Tour de France champion to being banned for life from competitive cycling for doping (Associated Press, 2018). Coaches of elite sports, at both the college and professional level, are rewarded handsomely for winning, and because of that, the temptation to break the rules is constantly present (Eitzen, 2009). When national television coverage, conference championships, all-star selections, and million-dollar contracts and endorsement deals are on the line athletes, coaches and administrators are often tempted to do whatever it takes to succeed. Recently, multiple former Adidas employees were convicted in a “pay-for-play” scheme related to the recruitment of many high-profile college basketball recruits, involving numerous big-time college basketball programs and coaches (Schlabach, 2019). And many administrators and managers simply ignore, or overlook, overconformity and rules violations because they benefit from these deviant behaviors.

Coaches place such an emphasis on winning, that many times they will push their athletes to the edge physically, take them out of classes to focus on their sport, and even encourage the use of performance-enhancing substances (Eitzen, 2009). Coaches will also use both verbal and physical abuse to motivate and push players. One example is former Rutgers University men’s basketball coach, who was fired after video showing both verbal and physical abuse surfaced (Jones, 2013). Also, because of their authoritative position, coaches can intimidate players, just as many supervisors may be intimidating to their employees

(Lumpkin et al., 2003). Playing through pain or injury is often seen as heroic and a badge of honor within competitive athletics. Eitzen (2009) suggests five reasons why athletes may insist on playing with pain: (a) athletes are socialized to accept pain and injury as part of the game; (b) fear of losing a starting position, or even a spot on the team; (c) wanting to prolong their career as long as possible; (d) pressure from coaches and teammates to play; and (e) wanting to sacrifice themselves for the good of the team.

Administrators, coaches, parents, and elite athletes who engage in deviant behavior are poor role models for young athletes. Whether they choose to be or not, professional and other elite athletes are role models for young athletes, and when kids see behaviors such as trash talking and cheating by their favorite players, it is only natural for them to try and emulate them when they play sports.

TYPES OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOR IN SPORT

Cheating and Rule Breaking as a Competitive Strategy

On-field deviant behavior can take many different forms, but primarily occurs when players and coaches break the rules of the game. Some examples of on-field deviance include corking a bat in baseball, a goalie using illegal pads in hockey, faking an injury, and holding in football. Players and fans view many of these occurrences as strategies rather than cheating (Eitzen, 2009). Rather than attempt to match opponents' skill and strategy, coaches and players spend time and effort on seeking ways to "bend the rules" in order to gain an advantage without being penalized (Lumpkin et al., 2003). Whether motivated by external rewards, or laziness, many athletes and coaches will look for ways around the rules to gain a competitive advantage. Shields and Bredemeier (1995) noted that many athletes and coaches interpret rules very loosely during competitions and create their own informal norms or rationalizations, which often bend or break official rules. As athletes reach more elite levels of sport, they have typically been playing for several years, honing their skills and learning the rules, and as they move up the competitive ladder, the action is faster, players are more skilled, and some rules become looser (Woods, 2011). There is evidence that on-field deviance occurs more often in power and performance sports, such as "good fouls" and "cheating when you can get away with it," because these athletes and coaches use cheating and on-field violence as a strategy during competition (Pilz, 1996; Shields et al., 1995). Although more common in the power and performance sports, cheating as a strategy also occurs in endurance sports. In 2019, three Chinese runners were accused of cheating before (falsifying qualifying times), and during (exchanging bib numbers) the Boston Marathon, and were subsequently banned from competing in China by the Chinese Athletic Association (Sweeney & Ellement, 2019).

In sport, there are written and "unwritten" rules. The written rules are the officially published rules for a sport, while the unwritten rules are informal norms that are generally known by athletes and coaches. For example, an unwritten rule in baseball is that if the opposing pitcher hits a team's star player with a pitch, the star player on the other team should expect to be hit on his next at-bat. In hockey, a skater should never intentionally spray ice into the face of the opposing goalie. Athletes will often adapt to what the officials are calling or allowing during the course of a competition, incorporating deviant behavior as a calculated strategy. This might include a player using her hockey stick to slow down an opponent, an offensive lineman in football subtly holding a rushing linebacker, or a basketball player using her hands or physical contact to disrupt an opponent.

One unwritten rule that seems to be broken on a regular basis is faking an injury as a strategy to gain an advantage. In soccer, players fall down holding their head or leg in agony, even if the opposing player did not touch them. Watch the World Cup or a Major League Soccer game, and you will see players "acting" in this way; one can observe similar instances in football, basketball, tennis, and the like. There are written rules against this type of behavior (e.g., delay of game, poor conduct), but if "acting" is not absolutely clear, the referees have no choice but to rule on the side of caution, because they do not know if the player is really injured or not. Most players would say that this form of cheating and rule breaking to gain an advantage goes against the integrity of the game, yet if in the same position, many seemingly choose the advantage.

As an illustrative example, in a 2010 game against the Tampa Bay Rays, New York Yankee star Derek Jeter was awarded first base by the umpire because the umpire thought the pitch had hit Jeter. Replay clearly showed that the ball actually hit the bat, it rolled into fair territory, and Jeter was thrown out. But because of Jeter's acting (waving his hand and holding it like it was hurt), which also involved the trainer for the Yankees to come out onto the field and evaluate Jeter, the umpire gave Jeter the free base. Jeter went on to score; however, the Yankees lost the game. After the game, Jeter made the following comment, "He (referring to the umpire) told me to go to first base. I'm not going to tell him, 'I'm not going to first base.' It's my job to get on base" (Smith, 2010). If players are rewarded, and rarely punished, for cheating behaviors in an attempt to gain an advantage, many will continue to do so.

Off-field Cheating

The use of performance-enhancing drugs is one of the most widely seen form of off-field cheating (although the purpose for this behavior is for on-field performance). We will discuss this later in the chapter. However, when it comes to other forms of off-field cheating, one of the most common places that we see this type of deviance is in the area of intercollegiate athletics. We often hear about colleges and universities getting in trouble with the NCAA for rules infractions or violations, with some of the most common violations being related to academics, amateurism, and recruiting. The University of Minnesota men's basketball program was put on probation by the NCAA for violations related to an academic advisor writing papers for at least 18 basketball players from 1994 to 1998 (Drape, 2000). Florida State University was also penalized by the NCAA for academic fraud (Dinich, 2009), and the University of North Carolina made headlines for sponsoring "fake classes" which benefited student-athletes (primarily men's basketball and football players) by helping them remain academically eligible (Bauer-Wolf, 2017). More recently, the University of Oregon (Caron, 2018) and the University of Missouri (Fornelli, 2019) were hit with NCAA penalties stemming from academic misconduct and impermissible staff participation in coaching and recruiting activities. When you take a deeper look, all of these actions were done to gain a competitive advantage, which would hopefully lead to on-field success.

On-Field Violence within Competition

Violence was practically nonexistent in early sport, when sport was played informally for fun and recreational purposes, but as sport has become more competitive and structured, deviant behavior by coaches and players rose dramatically. As sport became more competitive, and an emphasis was placed on winning, violence became a tool that could be used to intimidate opponents. Athletes use intimidation in an attempt to scare the opponent in an effort to gain an advantage, and it can be a strong motivator for engaging in deviant behavior. Violent behaviors are often learned, and imitated, by athletes based on what they view in the media (Lumpkin et al., 2003). They may not do this with the intent to cause a serious injury, but in an effort to gain a physical or psychological advantage over the opponent. Violence in sport is also often praised in the sport media as "entertainment" (Rowe, 2004), as a hit in football that knocks another player off his feet (often referred to as a "de-cleater") can be re-played over and over. As another example, the fight between NHL superstar Alex Ovechkin and rookie Andrei Svechnikov during the 2019 NHL Stanley Cup Play-offs was re-played for a week on many sport media networks. This behavior is something that does not happen within the norms of most other workplaces. Deviance has become part of the entertainment package that sports brings to fans, often giving consumers the opportunity to vicariously live out the deviant actions without any of the risks or consequences (Blackshaw & Crabbe, 2004).

In non-contact sports, players are rarely rewarded for violent actions; however, this does not mean that violence is not used as a strategy. A tennis player might slam her racquet or yell at an opponent in an attempt to intimidate them. A baseball pitcher might use a "brush back" pitch to scare a batter from standing too close to home plate. However, the use of violence was taken to an extreme level when figure skater Tonya Harding was implicated in an off-ice attack against rival Nancy Kerrigan, during the 1994 U.S. Figure Skating Championships. Kerrigan was unable to continue in that particular competition, but was given a spot on the Olympic team, and came home with a silver medal.

In many contact and collision sports (e.g., boxing, football, ice hockey, lacrosse), players have used violence as deviant overconformity for years. Many performance sports like these demand aggressive and violent actions, such as body checking, blocking, and tackling (Eitzen, 2009). Violence in many of the contact and collision sports is often highly visible, and even celebrated. The media replays hard hits in football and hockey, bench-clearing brawls in baseball, and other aggressive and violent plays over and over. Violent on-field behavior can also validate the self-worth of an athlete or reaffirm an athlete's identity. Hard and violent hits (whether within, or outside, the rules of play) can also be used as a form of intimidation against an opponent. However, the place of violence in sport becomes unclear when actions go beyond the rules of play, but are generally accepted by the players (Woods, 2011). Athletes like Baltimore Ravens' Ray Lewis are renowned for their aggressive on-field play. Hines Ward, wide receiver for the Pittsburgh Steelers, known for his physical play and hard-hitting blocks against defenders, was voted by his peers as the NFL's "Dirtiest Player" in 2009. Ward took this as a compliment, but responded to being called "dirty" by commenting, "When I go over the middle, those guys aren't going to tackle me softly and lay me down to the ground. That's not football. I find it ironic that now you see a receiver delivering blows, and it's an issue" (Deitsch, 2009).

Injuries and pain are part of sport. In fact, sprains, strains, broken bones, and concussions are a regular occurrence in heavy contact and collision sports. This constant physical abuse can have long-term consequences. Athletes participating in contact and collision sports not only risk their current health, but often the outcome of years of physical abuse to their bodies, resulting in lifelong injuries and disabilities. A 1990 survey of 870 retired NFL players found that nearly two-thirds had a permanent disability from playing football (Nack, 2001). In another study of nearly 200 NCAA student-athletes (both male and female from 18 varsity sports), over 75% of the student-athletes reported sustaining a significant injury from competition, and over 45% experienced long-term effects from those injuries (Nixon, 1993). Intensive training programs and violent physical contact in sports have detrimental effects for all athletes involved (Eitzen, 2009). In many cases, athletes playing football, hockey, and other heavy contact and collision sports risk their long-term health for short-term rewards.

Aggressive behaviors and violence in these sports is expected, and often encouraged. Defensive players in football are taught to make the opponent's offensive players "pay the price" for making a play. In 1997, a Kansas City Chiefs player said on live radio that head coach Marty Schottenheimer once offered to pay the fines any of his players incurred for injuring any Denver Broncos player (Schefter, 1997). Research has shown that athletes, particularly male athletes in high-performance contact sports, readily accept certain forms of aggression and violence, even if it results in rule-violating behaviors (Pilz, 1996; Shields & Bredemeier, 1995; White & Young, 1997). For example, in professional ice hockey, players known as "enforcers" are a regular part of the game. Almost every team has a player (or two) who act as the team "bodyguard," and if the star player on their team is physically harassed, the enforcer will go after the violating opponent. In fact, former NHL player Marty McSorley made his living as Wayne Gretzky's personal bodyguard, playing with Gretzky in Edmonton and then following him to Los Angeles when "The Great One" was traded in 1988.

Even the courts often side with sport when it comes to the acceptance of on-field deviant behavior. They frequently rule that athletes who compete in contact and collision sports are voluntarily and knowingly putting their own health at risk, and even deviant behaviors, such as an illegal hit in football or a fight in hockey, are considered an assumed risk. Only when an act is so criminal that it goes above and beyond the assumed risks of a sport have athletes and coaches been charged by outside law enforcement agencies. Two examples of this in the National Hockey League (NHL) are Marty McSorley's high-sticking slash across the head of Donald Brashear in 2000, and Todd Bertuzzi's blindsided sucker punch to the back of Steve Moore's head in 2004. While Donald Brashear was fortunate enough to come back and play after his incident, Steve Moore was not as lucky, as his professional hockey career ended that fateful day. However, over the past century of play for both professional football and ice hockey, one will only find a handful of

criminal charges for on-field deviant actions. Following these incidents, in 2005, the NHL adopted new rules regarding fair play and fight instigation. More recently, in a response to the number of head injuries and an increase awareness of concussions, the NHL has adopted even stricter rules and harsher penalties for blind-sided hits and intentional hits to the head of opponents.

Professional athletes in contact and collision sports knowingly subject themselves to risks of their sports; however, the consequences for participating in these sports are not limited to the athlete's career. The average length of an NFL career is around 3-4 years; yet, players may face physical and mental problems for the rest of their lives. Former players suffer from a number of issues including being permanently disabled, wheelchair bound, cognitive problems, depression, dementia, and anger (Woods, 2011).

Use of Performance-Enhancing Substances

In recent years, one of the most common deviant behaviors discussed in sport has been that of the use of performance-enhancing substances, which are defined as any substance taken to aid and/or help bring about a better performance or outcome, whether the substance is within the rules of play or not. Athletes taking substances to help improve performance is nothing new. As far back as the ancient Olympic Games, athletes have used substances in an attempt to improve their performance (Woods, 2011). What is new is the amount of media attention given to performance-enhancing substances, governing bodies becoming more aware of the use and implementing more aggressive testing procedures, and athletes and scientists developing more sophisticated substances and methods that cannot be detected or that can mask their use (Woods, 2011).

Athletes have taken everything from herbal remedies and vitamins to synthetic drugs. Athletes use and abuse substances for a number of reasons: playing with pain or an injury, a fear of being cut from the team, a need to improve personal performance, and a desire to help the team win, among others. Because of this "do whatever it takes" mindset of many athletes, the temptation to use performance-enhancing substances is even greater, even to the detriment of their own long-term health. Athletes use drugs such as alcohol, marijuana, painkillers and anti-inflammatories to help them mask or overcome injuries, and some use other drugs such as cocaine and amphetamines to give them energy or deal with the anxiety and stress of competition. The culture of performance sports encourages players to "play hurt" or play with injury because it is for the greater good of the team. Coaches and trainers only compound this problem when they allow players to "pop a few pills" in order to minimize pain and get back on the field (Eitzen, 2009).

Another issue related to performance-enhancing drugs is how different teams, leagues, and sports define what is legal and what is not. Many organizations would agree that synthetic steroids and amphetamines should be banned substances, but what about natural supplements and vitamins? What about caffeine and energy drinks? Further, over-the-counter and prescription medications are used on a daily basis by athletes, for reasons ranging from getting over a cold and congestion, to pain relief. Athletes who play with constant pain, and take pain killers to help them function, can be at-risk for becoming addicted to these drugs, as admitted by Pro-Bowl quarterback, Brett Favre in an interview with *Sports Illustrated's* Peter King (King, 1996). Athletes have taken stimulants for years in an attempt to focus or have more energy. The use of amphetamines, or "greenies," was rampant in Major League Baseball during the 1970's and 1980's. Players played 162 regular season games over the course of six months, meaning players were constantly on the road and, in many cases, playing games six or seven days of the week. They were not getting proper rest and needed help getting ready for games, so they would take greenies to give them the energy and focus needed to play such a demanding schedule. Nowadays, athletes at all levels can buy and use caffeine and energy drinks, although some international governing bodies ban them as well. The use of stimulants is nothing new.

Although the use of steroids is often credited with beginning by being used by former Soviet and Eastern European athletes, North American athletes have been found guilty as well (Woods, 2011). One of the most famous cases was Canadian sprinter, Ben Johnson, who was stripped of his gold medal after testing

positive for anabolic steroids at the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul. American sprinters Marion Jones and Tim Montgomery were also thrown under a cloud of suspicion and eventually stripped of Olympic medals for their implication in the investigation into BALCO Laboratories in California. BALCO founder, Victor Conte, pleaded guilty to distributing illegal steroids and admitted to supplying performance-enhancing substances to other Olympic and professional athletes, including Barry Bonds (Woods, 2011). Although officially Barry Bonds holds the Major League Baseball single season homerun record (after hitting 73 in 2001), it is marred by controversy because of his relationship with BALCO and alleged use of “clear” and “cream” steroids. And more recently, Lance Armstrong, after years of denial, admitted to doping and using performance-enhancing substances during his cycling career, helping him to win the prestigious Tour de France a record seven times (Goldman, 2013; Macur, 2013).

Industry norms help explain why many athletes believe they need to take steroids. As Canadian weightlifter Jacques Demers noted, “To go to international competitions, you have to meet international standards and those based on what the Russians and Bulgarians do. They are the best weightlifters in the world, and they take steroids. So, if I go to the Olympics, I must take steroids.” (Rozin, 1995). In fact, a 1995 poll of U.S. Olympians and aspiring Olympians (Bamberger & Yaeger, 1997) asked the following questions, and illustrated the extreme overconformity of many elite athletes:

Scenario One: You are offered a banned performance-enhancing substance, with two guarantees: (1) You will not get caught; (2) You will win. Would you take the substance?

- 195 said yes, 3 said no

Scenario Two: You are offered a banned performance-enhancing substance with two guarantees: (1) You will not be caught, (2) You will win every competition you enter for the next five years, and then you will die from the side effects of the substance. Would you take the substance?

- Still, more than half the athletes said yes

And the use of performance-enhancing substances is not just restricted to elite athletes. A 2001 survey commissioned by Blue Cross/Blue Shield Insurance Company found that approximately one million adolescent athletes between the ages of 12 and 17 were taking some form of dietary supplement or performance-enhancing drug to make them better athletes (Deam, 2001).

Testing for performance-enhancing substances remains a difficult challenge (Keating, 2005) from both a technological perspective and also a financial perspective. Because different organizations have different lists of banned substances and different policies, it can bring to light many of the issues related to the testing for drug and performance-enhancing substances. For example, MLB and the NFL have instituted strict drug testing policies, and test both during the season and in the off-season; however, the NBA and NHL only test during the season, which leaves the door open for players to use performance-enhancing substances in the off-season when they are training for the upcoming season (Woods, 2011). When it comes to performance-enhancing substances, such as doping, human growth hormone, and steroids, with increasingly better technology comes better performance-enhancing substances (both natural and artificial). This makes it more difficult for drug testing procedures to detect the presence of performance-enhancing substances in an athlete’s body, creating what Coakley (2007) refers to as “a seemingly endless game of scientific hide and seek” (p. 180).

Off-Field Violence and Deviant Behavior

In addition to deviance that takes place during athletic competition, there are cases of off-field deviant behavior. This takes several forms, including off-field violence, hazing, and eating disorders.

Off-Field Violence

Many people believe that it can be difficult for athletes who engage in aggressive and violent behaviors within their sport to just “shut it off” when they leave the field. Former NFL player John Niland once

made the comment, “Any athlete who thinks he can be as violent as you can be playing football, and leave it all on the field, is kidding himself” (Falk, 1995, p. 12). Some argue that the use of certain performance-enhancing substances (such as anabolic steroids) can lead to an increase in aggression. In fact, researchers have shown that increased aggression and a heightened sexual drive are side effects of the use of certain performance-enhancing substances, specifically anabolic steroids (Levy, 1993). Others believe that athlete off-field violence is a problem, and suggest that athletes who choose to play contact sports may already be pre-disposed to violent behavior.

In recent years a number of high-profile athletes and coaches have gained public attention for off-field deviant actions. In 1992, boxing sensation Mike Tyson was found guilty of rape and sentenced to prison time. NFL player Adam “Pacman” Jones was implicated in a 2007 shooting in Las Vegas. Former St. Louis Cardinals manager Tony LaRussa was arrested for DUI in 2007. Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger was charged in 2010 with sexual assault of woman in a Georgia bar. Former Penn State football defensive coordinator Jerry Sandusky was charged for sexual molestation of young boys in 2011. Baltimore Ravens star running back Ray Rice was suspended by the NFL after a video surfaced of him assaulting his (at the time) fiancée (Rosenthal, 2014). He was subsequently released by the Ravens, and never played another down in the NFL.

Eitzen (2009) suggests three reasons why male athletes are more likely than non-athletes to engage in deviant behavior off the field of play: (a) elite male athletes, because of the natural selection process of sports to select those who are more aggressive, dominant, and take risks, are different from their non-athlete peers; (b) athletic teams foster a spirit of exclusivity and solidarity, which encourages exaggerated male bonding and overconformity to fit in with the group; and (c) the celebrity status of athletes results in differential and preferential treatment, resulting in a sense of entitlement. Others, including Woods (2011), also suggest that athletes who go out in public and hang out at bars become the targets for “tough guys,” and athletes who must be violent on the field have a difficult time not responding with physical force when they feel their “manhood” is being challenged.

Research examining off-field violence (e.g., violent crimes including assault and rape) involving athletes and coaches compared to the general population is scarce; however, the evidence suggests that although highly publicized, athletes do not commit these crimes as often as the general population (Coakley, 2007). Benedict and Yaeger (1998) found in a sample of NFL players that approximately 21% had been arrested for something more serious than just a minor crime (e.g., traffic violation) at least once since beginning college. In a related study, Blumstein and Benedict (1999) found that about 23% of males living in cities of 250,000 or more people are arrested for a serious crime during their lifetime, suggesting to the authors that the rates of athlete off-field violence are comparable to the general male population. The study also found evidence that the annual arrest rate of NFL players was less than half that of males in the general population. In a Sports Illustrated/CBS special investigation of college football programs, Benedict and Keteyian (2011) found that, of the 2,837 student-athletes on NCAA Division-I (FBS) top 25 teams, 7% of players had a criminal record, and nearly 40% of the 277 criminal incidents uncovered involved serious offenses (e.g., assault, battery, domestic violence, sexual offenses). These incidents can also affect how fans feel about their schools and teams recruiting athletes with a criminal past. Turick, Darwin, and Bopp (2018) found that off-field deviant behavior (e.g. drug use, physical assault) committed by prospective student-athletes negatively impacted fan support for the recruitment of that athlete. Although the number of off-field criminal incidents involving college and professional athletes may be alarming, the research does show that the majority of athletes who compete in contact and collision sports are good citizens and do not continue their aggressive behavior off the field (Woods, 2011).

Though athletes and non-athletes appear to engage in similar levels of off-field violence, media attention related to the behaviors varies. The celebrity status of many athletes means that the media is more likely to report on their criminal activity. As illustrative examples, sexual assault charges against Kobe Bryant in 2004, and the Thanksgiving 2009 outing of Tiger Woods’ infidelity garnered a great deal of national media

attention; however, these same issues occur on a daily basis in our society, they just are not made public or played out in the media.

Off-field violence is not just an athlete problem. Spectators and fans can become violent as well. Often, students will “rush the field” at the conclusion of their team winning a big game. This creates a very dangerous environment, in which people may be injured, or even killed, during these mob stampedes. This was the case at the end of the 2011 “Bedlam” football game between the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University. At the conclusion of the game, OSU fans rushed the field after their team beat OU for the first time since 2002, and during the chaos and attempt to tear down the goalposts, over a dozen people were injured, some critically. That same year, fans of the Vancouver Canucks rioted in the streets of Vancouver after their hometown hockey team lost game 7 of the Stanley Cup Finals. Philadelphia Eagle fans are notoriously known for throwing objects at opposing players, including beer, or a battery hidden in a snowball.

Hazing

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), which publishes rules for 17 different sports and oversees numerous scholastic extra-curricular activities, defines hazing as, “any action or activity which inflicts physical or mental harm or anxiety, or which demeans, degrades or disgraces a person, regardless of location, intent or consent of participants” (NFHS, 2006). Hazing is often a ritual, or rite of passage, for new members of a group in order to be accepted by the rest of the group. Activities can be dangerous, and even deadly.

Athletes, like many other tight-knit social groups (e.g., fraternities, work groups), form strong bonds because they know exactly what each other go through on a daily basis and what it takes to perform at a high level. Due to a want and need for acceptance, new members to sports teams will often overconform and do whatever it takes to be accepted by teammates. Many teams will have some type of initiation, which often involves hazing, in which rookies will overconform and obey the veterans, even to demeaning and painful levels (Alfred University, 1999b; Woods, 2011). As defined by the NFHS and NCAA, hazing activities can include, but are not limited to, excessive consumption of alcohol, excessive physical punishment, food and sleep deprivation, engaging in sexual acts, vandalism, and other violent behaviors (Woods, 2011). Even after performing embarrassing and demeaning acts, many rookies will not report being hazed because of the need for acceptance and approval from veterans.

After a hazing incident involving the Alfred University football team, the university conducted studies of both high school student-athletes and college student-athletes regarding hazing. The studies (Alfred 1999a, 1999b) found:

Both male and female student-athletes (at both levels) are at risk for hazing, but male student-athletes are at the highest risk.

For high school student-athletes:

- Approximately 48% said they had been subjected to hazing activities, as defined by the survey; however, only 14% considered it hazing.
- 30% said they were required to perform an illegal act as part of initiation.
- 71% reported negative consequences as a result of the hazing,

For college student-athletes:

- Approximately 80% said they had been subjected to hazing activities.
- Overall, 49% reported alcohol being involved in initiation activities.
- The three sports most likely to be involved in hazing activities are lacrosse, soccer, and swimming/diving teams.

- Although men, in general, were subjected to more dangerous, unacceptable initiation activities, women, more often, reported the use of alcohol.

A few university athletic programs have made national news, including the cancellation of the 2000 Vermont men's hockey season and the suspension of the 2006 Northwestern women's soccer season, after hazing scandals were brought to the attention of the universities' athletic administrations. Consequences of hazing can be embarrassment, physical injury, and even death. The death of Alfred University student Chuck Stenzel in 1978, was part of the catalyst for the university's 1999 hazing study, and has stimulated national attention and research into hazing. As of 2011, 45 states have some form of ban on hazing, according to the website stophazing.com.

In another study of hazing in colleges, Allan and Madden (2008) found that 74% of varsity student-athletes, 64% of club sport athletes, and 49% of intramural athletes reported being hazed, typically as an "initiation" activity.

Dietary Dangers and Eating Disorders

Elite athletes are highly competitive and often put their bodies through extreme measures to maximize their chances of success. Coaches and parents can often encourage this. If losing weight or maintaining a more culturally accepted body figure will help athletes' performance, they are likely to do whatever it takes to achieve this end (Woods, 2011). Eating disorders developed by many athletes is the result of deviant overconformity. Athletes in sports that focus on weight limits or physical appearance, such as cheerleaders, gymnasts, figure skaters, and wrestlers, are generally at the greatest risk for developing an eating disorder. Three of the most common eating disorders among athletes are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and compulsive or excessive exercise. Anorexia occurs when people starve themselves and greatly limit their food intake in an effort to achieve or maintain an ideal body image or weight. Bulimia is exhibited by binge eating followed by purging. Excessive or compulsive exercise is characterized by people exercising to the point of over-exercising, all in an effort to lose weight or maintain a certain body image (Woods, 2011).

A 1992 University of Washington study found that approximately one-third of female college athletes practiced some form of deviant weight control, and among female college gymnasts, the rate was almost two-thirds (Ryan, 1995). Although eating disorders are more prevalent among female athletes, male athletes do suffer from eating disorders as well (Sundgot-Borgen & Torstveit, 2004). Male wrestlers trying to make a specific weight class perform some of the most extreme weight control methods. University of Michigan wrestler Jeff Reese died after shedding seventeen pounds in two days, by limiting his fluid and caloric intake and wearing a rubber suit while riding a stationary bike in a "sweat room" which had been heated to ninety-two degrees (Fleming, 1998). Although these extreme measures to lose weight by wrestlers has long been the "norm" within the sport, after the death of multiple college wrestlers, the NCAA quickly implemented rule changes related to weight loss methods and the weight-in process before a meet (Eitzen, 2009).

On the flip side, for some athletes, overeating in an attempt to gain weight can be just as much of an issue. This issue is very common in football, especially with offensive and defensive linemen. As the average weight of an American goes up, so too does the weight of athletes. In fact, there were only three players over 300 pounds playing in the NFL in 1980. Jump forward thirty years, and there were 532 players over 300 pounds at NFL training camps in 2010 (Longman, 2011). Coaches encourage lineman to gain weight because being bigger in the trenches can often give a team a distinct advantage. Though this may be an advantage on the field, if weight is not controlled after retirement, it can pose numerous health threats to these athletes. Although research is equivocal, some studies have found that retired NFL players are at a greater risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, and stroke, and have a higher mortality rate than the general population (Longman, 2011). Jerry Kramer, a former All-Pro lineman for the Green Bay Packers, once said, "Fat doesn't make you strong and quick. It makes you heavy. We've gotten enamored with the 300-pounder, but give me an offensive guard who's in great shape at 270 or 275 and understands leverage and positioning, and I'll bet he'll whip the fat guy every time" (Longman, 2011, p. 1D). In fact, the

weight issue has even spread to high schools, where some studies suggest that over half of high school linemen are overweight (Longman, 2011). If more coaches had the same mindset as Jerry Kramer, the overeating problem among football players may be curbed.

Eating disorders are dangerous, and can even be deadly, especially among athletes, who need ample fluids and nutrients. Coaches and parents need to understand these dangers, and aid athletes in proper eating and weight control methods, whether an attempt to gain or lose weight.

CURBING DEVIANT BEHAVIOR

As long as athletes and coaches emphasize performance and winning and accept the use of performance-enhancing substances as a means to an end, these values will promote risk taking and self-sacrifice in the pursuit of individual and team goals (Coakley, 2007). Owners, administrators, coaches, sponsors, and other stakeholders often benefit from athlete overconformity, so why would they want things to change? Even in other societal realms, such as business and medicine, those individuals who put in the time and hard work are often praised and rewarded, so why should sport be any different? Because of this, controlling deviant behavior, especially overconformity, can be very difficult, and although deviant underconformity seems to be much easier to identify and punish, it still poses problems to controlling it.

Although rule breaking continues to persist in sports, many believe that improved officiating, clearer rules, and video replay will help curb cheating as a strategy (Dunning, 1999). Rulebooks for some sport organizations are hundreds, or even thousands, of pages long. Organizations like the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), and the NCAA continue to add new policies and rules every year to address deviant behavior. As new rules are added each year, the penalties for deviant behavior are becoming more severe. At the high school and college levels, player suspensions are more common (and longer in length); and at the professional level players may face fines of thousands of dollars and possible suspensions. Coaches have been fined, suspended, and even fired for deviant behavior and violating rules. Schools and athletic programs can lose out on huge financial rewards if caught violating the rules (Woods, 2011). Punishment for deviant professional athletes has been the subject of much media attention. Fining a NFL player (who makes millions) \$10,000 for an illegal hit will not necessarily discourage the deviant behavior. However, handing down suspensions, and therefore prohibiting their ability to participate in the sport they love, might have a more immediate impact on future behaviors.

The leadership and behavior of the coach is paramount for change to occur when it comes to deviant behavior in sport (Bredemeier & Shields, 2006). Those in authority and leadership positions (e.g., administrators, coaches, parents) need to place limits on athletes, especially children and adolescents. Questions need to be raised about the goals and purpose of sport and its meaning in our society. Coaches should place less emphasis on winning and more emphasis on enjoyment and skill development (especially with younger athletes). Resolving drug issues lies with parents, coaches, managers, and other leaders in sport. A new attitude and creative solutions must emerge for any real changes to occur (Woods, 2011). Administrators and coaches also need to educate athletes and parents about the different forms of deviant behavior, the consequences of such behavior, and develop policies to help control and restrict deviant behavior.

Coakley (2007) suggests a few strategies for controlling deviant behavior in sport:

- Critically examine the deep hypocrisy involved in elite power and performance sport.
- Establish rules indicating clearly that certain risks are undesirable and unnecessary in sports.
- Establish rules stating that injured athletes are not allowed to play until certified as “well” by independent doctors.
- Create clear and harsh punishment for managers, coaches, and athletes who engage in deviant behavior.
- Establish educational programs for athletes, coaches, administrators, and parents on deviant behavior and its consequences.
- By adopting these steps, sport managers can help to curb deviance in their sport contexts.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The nature of competitive sport requires commitment and dedication in order to be successful. Athletes and coaches throughout history have looked for ways to gain an advantage over an opponent, and sometimes this dedication results in deviant behavior. Deviant behavior is condoned, taught, and even rewarded because of the value placed on winning in competitive sport. The expected norm in sport is to push the rules and officials as far as possible, and live on the edge of risk and reward, in order to win. Although the majority of sport-related actions fall within normal ranges of acceptable behavior, when athletes and coaches do engage in deviant behavior, it can take the form of overconformity, or underconformity, to sport and social norms. Whether it is in-game cheating as a strategy or the taking of performance-enhancing substances during training, deviant behaviors in sport will continue unless those who control sport re-examine their motives and reflect on the purpose and meaning of sport in society.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What would you define as “deviant behavior”? Do you think that the range of acceptable behavior changes over time? Why or why not?
2. Do you believe that certain types of deviant behavior are worse than others? If yes, give some examples and explain why. If no, why not?
3. Coaches are teachers, and are often looked up to as parental figures. What lessons are coaches teaching if they ask their players to cheat?
4. Should intimidation be taught, and used, as a strategy to win? How far is too far?
5. What suggestions do you have for sport organizations and governing bodies when it comes to controlling deviant behavior, such as cheating and rule breaking, using violence as a strategy, taking performance-enhancing substances, or engaging in extreme dietary measures?

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Margolis, J. A. (1999). *Violence in sports: Victory at what price?* Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow Publishers. (This book examines how violence in many of today’s sports is seen as just part of the game, even if those actions would get you arrested if performed outside of sport. It discusses the influence that parents, coaches and the media have on athletes, reasons for violence within our sporting culture today, and how we as a society need to re-examine our attitudes and values.)
- McCloskey, J., & Bailes, J. E. (2005). *When winning costs too much: Steroids, supplements, and scandal in today’s sports.* Boulder, CO: Taylor Trade Publishing. (This book examines the issue, and place, of performance-enhancing drugs in today’s sports. It takes a look at why many coaches encourage the use of performance-enhancing substances, why many athletes are prone to use them, and how much of this motivation is created by our culture placing such a high value on winning. The authors also present possible solutions to the issue of performance-enhancing drug use in sports.)

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