

Appointment with Pohlman Taking Steroids



By Ralph Pohlman

In 1912 an American athlete went to Stockholm to compete in the Olympics and won two gold medals. When the King of Sweden presented him with a medal, the King said, "You, sir, are the greatest athlete in the world."

That athlete's name was Jim Thorpe. But not long after, it was discovered that he had once accepted \$25 to play baseball. As a result, his Olympic medals were confiscated, the records and his name erased. You see, he was ousted for being contaminated as a professional.

This rule continued for many years, as you may recall, firmly enforced by the then Olympic czar, Avery Brundage. No professionals of any kind, thank you. No Basketball Dream Team from the USA, no hockey players from the NHL, nobody who had ever stooped so low as to play for money.

Also, for many years, until the 70's in fact, in order to play in the world's major tennis tournaments you had to be an "amateur". Rod Laver, one of the all time greats, won the Grand Slam in the early 60's. He won Wimbledon, the Australian, the French and the U.S. Opens in the same year. Then he turned pro, sort of disappeared, and mostly played exhibitions and wasn't allowed to play in the tournaments for around 10 years, until they got rid of that rule. Then he did it again. I wonder how many records he might have set if he had not been branded a pariah for being a pro.

Now, of course, nobody cares.

We now have tennis racquets of graphite with a huge hitting surface. Who remembers the old wood-

en racquet that Jack Kramer or Rod Laver wielded?

I remember when my father played golf with "woods" that were actually made of...wait for it...wood!

I'm told there is even a new kind of curling broom that will be a more efficient sweeper. It records the speed of the ice, the broom, the fitness of the sweeper and a bunch of other stuff I can't remember. The America's Cup winning boat devised a more efficient keel. Swimmers shave all their hair off to get rid of even that tiny bit of drag and gain a fraction of a second.

So, what's the point of all this?

Well, I guess you would lump all this stuff under the heading of "changing rules and advanced technology", along with nutrition studies, training methods, vitamins, and psychological motivation. Anything that will allow us to go faster, further, higher, or stretch the limit of human ability and endurance.

So, here's the point:

Like you, I've been reading all this stuff in the papers about athletes taking steroids. Guys like Barry Bonds, Rafael Palmeiro, Mark McGwire, and lots of others are accused of it, or tests show it in their urine, going all the way back to Ben Johnson in the Olympics. When was that, anyway? 1988?

Now they have been having those hearings by some U.S. congressional committee, threatening to pass laws and take over the monitoring of major league baseball. As if the U.S. government didn't have anything better to do, what with Iraq turning

into an endless mess.

But, I digress. Back to the steroids. I am going to tell you right up front what I think about athletes taking steroids. I DON'T CARE.

Agreed, it may not be good for them in the long run. But that is a different issue. If you want to ban them for the good of athletes' health, fine. But that's not what this is all about. The current view is that by taking steroids they are perceived as cheating (sort of like being a "professional" in the last millennium).

Everybody, we are told, should be competing on an even field. What hogwash! There will never be an even field. Every athlete looks to find an edge that the other guy doesn't have. And so they should. Whether it's technique, nutrition or the Fosbury Flop (Remember that? It revolutionized high jumping).

When I was in medical school, back in the middle of the last century, when the earth was still cooling, I occasionally used to study all night. I actually used to take Dexedrine to help me do that and to stay awake. "My God," you say, "that's cheating." I was actually using "drugs" to enhance my performance. I should have my M.D. taken away from me.

How about performers that may take an anti-anxiety pill before they go on stage? Are they cheating? Poker players; bridge players; musicians; wing-walkers; gamblers; Canadian-Idol competitors; preachers; arm wrestlers; high wire circus folk; bowlers.

Whadya say? Let them take whatever they like and stop all this B.S.



Connor McDonald, Emily McDonald, Hannah Champion, Abby Champion and Megan Zarudny show off their works in progress at the Snow Globes Workshop at Latcham Gallery Jan. 3. The workshop was one of eight offered over the Christmas break, and all of them were sold out.

- Newsflash 1871 - Stouffville population likely to double

Stouffville--Markham township. A village situated on the town line of Markham and Whitchurch and a station on the Toronto and Nipissing Railway. First settled about 1800 by Abraham Stouffer. This village has, for several years, been a thriving business place, and will probably double its population, which now amounts to about 700, in a few years. Stouffville owes its prosperity chiefly to the business enterprise of Edward Wheler, Esq., J.P., Reeve, (Whitchurch). Distant from Toronto 28 miles.

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