CITIUS, ALTIUS, FORTIUS: A CRITICAL AND EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF SPORT AND DRUGS DISCOURSES IN AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that the thesis comprises only my original work; due acknowledgement has been made in the text to allow all other material used; the thesis is 13, 500 words in length, exclusive of in-text citations, footnotes and references.
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ABSTRACT

Performance enhancing drugs in sport typically evokes a strong negative response. To make sense of this response and the drug policies it spurns this thesis undertakes a critical exploratory analysis of the discourses which surround illicit drugs and sport and the intersections between them. It looks at the globalisation of these discourses, assessing its manifestations in the World Anti-Doping Agency. A review of the literature finds that the strong desire to prohibit performance enhancing drugs stems from the global recognition of the cultural import of sport as a conduit for collective representation. Drugs and their symbolic associations with deviance and boundary violation are interpreted as a direct threat to this cultural role and so are vociferously fought. However, this emotionally driven response distracts from the task of addressing the pressures within the competitive sporting world.

An analysis of the global impact of these discourses on local context follows. A contextual analysis finds that the Australian Football League, can consume, resist and transform global discourses on drugs and sport. A content analysis of the press news looks at this process at work in a recent scandal of caffeine as a performance enhancing drug. It concludes that rather than simply accepting the direction of the WADA, the debate reflected that the Australian context both magnified the symbolism of drugs in sport and contradictorily attracted increased criticism of it.
CONTENTS:

Declaration i.

Acknowledgments ii.

Abstract iii

Acronyms vi

Introduction: Regulating Drugs in Sport: A Global Movement. 1

Current Approaches to Drugs in Sport. 2
Problems with Current Approaches to Drugs in Sport 3
Global/Local Tensions over Drug Policies in Sport. 4
Research Questions and Aims. 5
Chapter Outlines. 7

1. Methodology. 8

Interpretative Framework: 8

Exploratory Analysis. 8
Critical Analysis. 9
Discourses Analysis. 10

Application of Interpretative Framework: 11

Literature Review. 11
Case Study:
   Contextual Analysis. 12
   Content Analysis. 12
Sample Characteristics of Content Analysis. 13

Limitations of Research. 14

2. Literature Review. 15

Sport as a Conduit for Collective Representation. 15
   The ‘Amateur Ideal VS. the Professionalisation of Sport. 17
Drugs as ‘Matter out of Place’. 20
   Debating Drugs in Sport and in Society. 20
   Drugs: A Symbolic Violation of Sacred Boundaries. 21
   Performance Enhancing Drugs in Sport as “Matter out of Place” 22
Drug Policy: The Desire to Prohibit and Managing Risk in the Neo-Liberal Era. 25
   Implications of the Desire to Prohibit on Drugs Policy in Sport. 26

Contextual Analysis:

Australian Sport: Striving to be Independent.
“A Game of our Own”: Australian Rules Football has Something for Everyone.
Governing the AFL: Balancing Culture and Commerce.
Footy Talk and Irreverent Play: Making Room for Debate.

Content Analysis:

The Issue.
Battling the Aesthetics of Caffeine as a Performance Enhancing Drug.
Arguments Against the use of Caffeine as a Performance Enhancing Drug.
Arguments For Caffeine as a Normal, Safe Performance Maximiser.
Debating Caffeine: The Struggle to Balance Culture and Commerce.
Global and Local Interdependencies: WADA Weighs in.
A Lesson in Compromise.: AFL Bans Caffeine at Junior Level Football.

4. Conclusion.

References.

Primary Resources.
Secondary Resources.
ACRONYMS:

AFL: Australian Football League.
AMA: Australian Medical Association.
ASDA: Australian Sport Drug Agency.
HGH: Human Growth Hormone.
IOC: International Olympic Committee.
MLB: American Major League Baseball.
PEDs: Performance Enhancing Drugs.
TGC: Therapeutic Goods Committee.
VFL: Victorian Football League.
INTRODUCTION:

REGULATING DRUGS IN SPORT: A GLOBAL MOVEMENT.

There are perhaps no greater controversies in sport than those which involve drugs. The issue of performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) in sport is a media favourite, the most common theme being the spectacle of a fallen hero. By comparison, academic inquiry into this issue has been sporadic at best. The problem with this lack of research is that the debate continues to be couched in highly emotive terms, which, in turn, risks engendering counterproductive policies. To develop a greater understanding of the nature and intensity of feeling against PEDs a closer look at the symbolic meaning attached to sport and drugs is needed. This thesis seeks to broaden debate by undertaking a critical exploratory analysis of discourses surrounding illicit drugs and sport and developing a richer understanding of the intersections between them. This analysis will highlight the rationale behind the desire to prohibit doping in sport and assess its tangible impact on policy formation.

This will be achieved by examining the globalisation of sport and drug discourses and by highlighting the interdependencies between local and global approaches to drugs in sport. It will call attention to the extent to which particular discourses support the World-Anti Doping Agency (WADA) in its mission to achieve the international harmonisation of anti-doping rules in all sports and all countries. The translation of this global movement into the local environment will then be demonstrated by a content analysis of a recent PEDs scandal in Australian Football League (AFL). This final analysis will examine how sport and drug discourses are consumed, resisted and transformed as they move between the global and local context. This introductory chapter outlines the WADA approach to drugs in sport, the problems with these predominantly reactive responses and therefore the necessity of research work such as this.
CURRENT APPROACHES TO DRUGS IN SPORT:

Drugs in sport are commonly met with a strong moral condemnation. In a survey carried out by the United Kingdom’s Sports Council (cited in Waddington, 2000) in 1994 to ascertain public opinion on doping in sport, over half of those questioned felt that those who used steroids should be given life bans from sport. (96) Coakley (cited in Waddington, 2000) explains that journalists, policy makers, sports administrators and academics bemoan the use of PEDs in sport as an “evil” fundamentally at odds with the virtues of sport, which include being physically and morally beneficial, bringing communities together and fair play. (91)

These sentiments have found their ultimate expression in the formation of an international anti-doping regime, the WADA. WADA was the product of an urgency felt by nearly all international and national sporting bodies to eradicate doping following the near collapse of the 1998 Tour de France which unveiled widespread doping. (Houilhan, 2004) WADA was introduced to aide the progression of strict uniform rules and regulations across all sports and all countries. WADA pushes an exclusively prohibitionist framework; its priorities lie in conducting random unannounced testing of elite athletes in and out of season. It also funds scientific research into the development of new detection methods. The reach of WADA is extended by organising and monitoring the work of National Anti-Doping Organisations in countries signatory to the World Anti-Doping Code. (WADA, 2006)

This code includes an extensive list of banned substances, which include prescription, non-prescription (such as anabolic steroids and stimulants) and recreational drugs (for example marijuana and heroin). (WADA, 2003)

The code (2003) also explains the central “mission” of WADA. The purpose of the code is “to protect the Athlete’s fundamental right to participate in doping-free sport and thus promote health, fairness and equality for Athletes worldwide”. (15) This is done with the aim of preserving what is “intrinsic value” of sport, which is referred to as the “spirit of sport”. All athletes who compete in countries which are signatory to the code are bound to comply with the anti-doping rules. (7) The code enforces a “strict liability” policy on athletes for findings of drug use and issues
mandatory sentences for up to two years for a first time offence. (9) WADA also provides educational programs for all athletes on the contents of the WADA code in order to ensure compliance.

WADA has made considerable gains in its mission to achieve the global harmonisation of its drug policies. In 2003, 101 nations unanimously ratified the World- Anti Doping Treaty, which for the first time harmonised doping rules in all sports and all countries. (WADA, 2003:1) This success stems in no small part from the prominent role of sport in demonstrating national power in international politics. The popularity of international events like the Olympic Games and the Federation Internationale de Football (FIFA) World Cup has ensured these events have become a heated battleground for competing state ideologies. Sporting achievement has come symbolise “the quality of life in the country concerned”. (Caldwell, 1982: 1833) The increased state intervention in the development sporting programs reflects sports status as a premier form of global diplomacy. Houlihan (2004) traces this development and the formation of WADA as an international anti-doping regime which maintains the integrity of sports cultural role.

PROBLEMS WITH CURRENT APPROACHES TO DRUGS IN SPORT:

The moral opprobrium and condemnation that meets drugs in sport reflects an uncritical acceptance of the inherent ‘virtues’ of sport. The institutionalisation of these assumptions through WADA acts to further insulate them from criticism. Thus, little effort is expended on understanding more about the context of drug use in sport. The impact of a hyper-competitive and professionalised industry is not addressed. In failing to acknowledge that there exists a demand for PEDs – and instead labelling this behaviour as ‘deviant’ or ‘exceptional’ – drug policies in sport fall well short of the mark. (Waddington, 2000)

The highly emotionally-charged environment which surrounds drugs in sport is not conducive to formulating rationally-based policies, but, rather, limited and inflexible ones. While prohibitionist policies can be emotionally satisfying, recent
research on their effectiveness in sport questions their capacity to reduce drug use.¹ (Dinglestead et al., 1996; Waddington, 2000) Devising new and better testing regimes to catch out and punish guilty athletes is proving to be a self-defeating enterprise, since medical advances and scientific “entrepreneurs” continue to create new and more undetectable drugs. (Coomber, 1999) This is in response to the market created by the increasing competitiveness of modern sport. Citius, Altius, Fortius, (Faster, Higher, Stronger) is more than just the inspirational catch cry of the Olympic Games it’s a business ethos.

Further, the justification behind the prohibition of PEDs - that they are dangerous and contrary to the spirit of fair play - lacks explanatory power. There are other methods of cheating, like ‘taking out’ key players in football, which do not result in the same levels of public castigation. Performance enhancement can be gained through a host of factors in sport, including coaching, equipment, genetic, funding etc. to which not all competitors have equal access. There also other kinds of drug use that are condoned, like anti-inflammatory medication, which have risks comparable to, if not exceeding, those of PEDs. The fierce preoccupation with PEDs deflects attention from why drug taking has been singled out for prohibition and produces contradictory policies. (Coomber, 1999)

GLOBAL/LOCAL TENSIONS OVER DRUG POLICIES IN SPORT.

It is important to note, though, that the current harmonisation policies of WADA have not come about easily. Rather, they have been built up reluctantly and usually as a defensive measure by nations battling scandal.² The growing

¹ While one to two percent of athletes test positive to banned substances, informed observers conservatively estimate that actual use as ten times higher than this (Dinglestead et al., 1996:1832). Waddington’s (2000) review of numerous surveys of professional athletes and other sporting insiders suggests a much greater number, with banned PED’s use in some sports like track and field and wrestling being as high as fifty percent, while in other sports like cycling users are in the significant majority.

² For example, Houlihan (2004) demonstrates how the Australian government was so hurt by its own doping scandals in the early nineties, which involved a number of important figures from its peak sporting body the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), it committed significant resources to successfully redefine itself as a world leader in anti-doping efforts. The Sydney Olympic Games was considered a triumph of synchronisation between the Australian Sport Drug Agency (ASDA) and the WADA.
geographical mobility of athletes and their increasing financial capacity to challenge
incompatible regulations meant the mutual suspicion and tension between local,
national and international sporting federations has given way to a willingness to
enforce complementary regulations.

This is not to suggest that WADA has had unimpeded success in ensuring
international compliance to its anti-doping regulations, but to direct attention to the
way it, and the drugs and sport discourses which support it, constrains other
approaches to drugs in sport. WADA exerts considerable influence on local initiatives
towards drug use in sport in signatory countries. Dissent has been expressed,
particularly from professional sports, like soccer, baseball, football etc. Their
powerful commercial interests act to temper the strong symbolism of PEDs and reflect
a practical approach to their use and an unwillingness to enforce the minimum two-
year ban which would effectively end the careers of its stars. (Houlihan, 2004)
However, in most cases political and public pressure have meant that this interests has
had to be forsaken if not fully, then substantially³

RESEARCH AIMS & QUESTIONS:

For some critics the solution to the problems which are created by the
overzealous commitment to the prohibition of doping in sport is to legalise and
regulate. (e.g. Mulhall 2006, Coomber 1999, Black and Pape 1997).³ While such
suggestions seem practical, they fail to appreciate the deeper symbolic issues at stake.

³ For example, the American Major League Baseball (MLB) refuses to become signatory with the
WADA code. (AFP, May 18 2005) Baseball commissioner Bud Selig had argued that collective
bargaining between management and labour would best suit the “unique and distinct” qualities of
baseball. (AFP, May 18 2005) Baseball union boss Don Fehr further claims that “solutions devised by
the parties in the workplace are more likely to be workable and enduring” and that the one size fits all
policy of the WADA meant it “is under no obligation even to consider the views or concerns of the
leagues or players in the United States”. (AFP, May 18 2005: 2) However, American congressional
pressure has since meant that while MLB has had to enforce a much stricter “three strikes and your
out” policy for the 2006 season. (AFP, November 17 2005)³ Selig explained that this new policy would
remove “the integrity cloud that the use of steroids and other performance-enhancing substances has
cased the game.” (AFP, November 17 2005)

³ Black and Pape (1997), for example, propose that by legalising all drugs in sport a fairer competition
will ensue, since all athletes will have access to the same drugs and be able to choose the best and most
appropriate technique. (85) The health of athletes would be safeguarded by the usual requirements of
the pharmaceutical industry and a greater knowledge about safe dosage and side effects would become
available. (89) Black and Pape also contend that if drugs in sport where legalised they would become
normalised, a natural part of the same cost-benefit analysis any profession seeking an edge makes.
Australian criminologists James and Sutton (2000), commenting on similar debates calling to legalise recreational drugs in society, also saw the potential advantages of legalising drugs. They cogently argue, however, that, “banning the consumption of various products has many long religious, cultural and social histories; the enduring symbolic importance of defining oneself, one’s group and one’s culture by identifying unacceptable consumption among “others” is ignored by anti-prohibitionists at the peril of their project.” (258)

It is in the spirit of James and Sutton’s warning that this thesis has been undertaken. There is a crucial need for research to more fully explore the historical and cultural processes and rationales that define sport and drugs in order to explain the desire to prohibit drugs in sport. Only by undertaking such an exercise can alternative and feasible approaches be advanced. As such, this thesis seeks to answer the following research questions:

**What is the rationale behind the desire to prohibit drugs in sport? What are the global implications of this rationale on drug policy formation and its execution? How is this reflected locally in recent developments in the AFL?**

A similar line of enquiry is followed by British sociologist Ivan Waddington, in his book, *Sport, Health and Drugs: A Critical Sociological Perspective*. However, like many other critical researchers on drugs in sport (such as Coomber 1999, Blake and Pape 1997, Houlihan 2004, Mulhall 2006) Waddington takes the drugs/deviance nexus for granted. The question of what it is specifically about drugs that makes them contrary to the spirit of sport is not explored. Madgalinski’s article “Performance Technologies: Drugs and Fastskin at the Sydney 2000 Olympics” presents an excellent understanding of drug discourses in sport, particularly how drugs are presented as an “unnatural” and deviant form of body enhancement, yet it does not fully explore the implications of these drug discourses on sport policy either globally or locally. This thesis will fill these gaps by critically exploring both sport and drug discourses, the intersection of these discourses and the global and local impact of these discourses. More uniquely, the debate about drugs in sport will be applied to the AFL.
CHAPTER OUTLINES:

The format of this thesis is designed to answer the research questions consecutively. The Methodology chapter which follows will explain what a critical exploratory discourse analysis and a content analysis entail. Chapter Two forms not just a literature review of the topic but will also seek to provide answers to the first two research questions. It will present a broad look at the sport and drug discourses which have contributed to the desire to prohibit PEDs and which have led to the success of the global anti-doping agency WADA. It will suggest that sport serves a socialising function and cannot accommodate the transgressive aesthetics of PEDs. The need for this socialising function is becoming increasingly essential in uncertain times and prohibition acts to allay these anxieties. Chapter Three will trace these themes in press reports on the furore over the legal use of caffeine tablets by AFL footballers for performance enhancement in the 2005 football season. However, in so doing, it will demonstrate the unique characteristics of Australian sport and of the AFL, which helped to create a fierce and very polarised debate over what is otherwise regarded as a legal drug.
1. METHODOLOGY:

As has been stated elsewhere, the issue of doping in sport has been subjected to little critical analysis. This has resulted in the continued proliferation of research and public policy built on erroneous and highly symbolic assumptions about the role of drugs in sport. This thesis undertakes an exploratory and critical analysis of discourses relating to sphere of social life in order to develop a more accurate understanding of it. Through content analysis of print news, these discourses will be explored in a recent doping scandal in the AFL.

INTERPRETATIVE FRAMEWORK:

EXPLORATORY RESEARCH:

For writers on methodological principles in social science research, such as Blumer (1978) and Neuman (1991), the function of exploratory research is to develop well-rounded ideas about new topics or under-researched areas, which can form the basis for further, more systematic and extensive inquiries. Following Neuman’s (1991) definition of exploratory research, this thesis is the result of a flexible investigation into an array of information sources and ideas (19). It is the product of interrogating and synthesising academic, media and policy records in order to present tentative conjectures as to the rationales behind current approaches to drugs in sport.

The function of exploratory research to shed light on “what’s going on” means that, as an inductive process, its greatest strength is the ability to generate theory as determined by the data rather than have ungrounded assumptions determine how data is approached. The difficulty for the social researcher is the potential likelihood of “exampling” or the selection of data to suit the researcher’s desired direction for the study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:5). To this end I argue the merit of emulating Waddington’s (2000) “relatively detached” analysis of the complex relationship between drugs and sport. Waddington, building on the work of Elias, argued that the tendency to treat “objectivity” and “subjectivity” as mutually exclusive categories and
to give greater credence to research seemingly based on the former of these, masks the undeniable fact that such clear distinctions cannot exist (2). Rather, Waddington argues for scales of detachment, with a higher degree of detachment allowing a less emotionally distorted or more reality-congruent view of a social phenomenon (3). This thesis seeks to present a relatively detached perspective, by striving to be both reflective and fair towards the different positions that debates over drugs in sport bring to fore.

While the structure of this thesis presents a literature review before that of the case studies, this is for ease of reading rather than a reflecting a succession of theoretical leaps. This format does not mean that I first identified important concepts which surround drugs in sport and then applied these concepts to a “real” situation. In fact the research for this thesis has been strongly cyclical, the identification of drug issues in the AFL being read alongside and thus informing the identification drug issues in sport and society more globally and vice versa. From this process some general conclusions about drugs in sport have been reached. This way I can claim that my approach to data has been both inductive and grounded.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS:

The necessary corollary of offering a relatively detached perspective of the relationships between society, drugs and sport is to subject these linkages and the ideologies which sustain them to critical analysis. Critical analysis marries particularly well with exploratory research as it can simultaneously apply several approaches to data, such as neo-Marxism, cultural studies and feminism (Thompson, 2004: 23). The critical paradigm “focuses on the critique and transformation of current structures, relationships and conditions that shape and constrain the development of organisations and communities, through examining them within their historical, social, cultural and political contexts” (Fossey et al. 2002:720). Thus a critical analysis of doping in sport will demonstrate the ways certain social values and institutions interact with local contexts to produce particular understandings of PEDs in sport and inspire often punitive ineffectual responses. Perhaps, in “lifting the veil that obscure or hide what is going on” this work can inspire a rethink of ideas and a
reformulation of approaches towards doping in sport and illicit drugs in society (Blumer, 1978: 38).

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS:

This thesis will refer to Foucault’s approach to the concept of discourse as discrete ‘bodies of knowledge’. For Foucault, discourse analysis is about identifying the rules and techniques of “what can be said” and “what can be thought” in any given historical period. (McHoul & Grace, 1998:31) Thus according to McHoul and Grace’s introduction to Foucault’s work in A Foucault Primer: Discourse Power and the Subject (1998):

“in any given historical period we can write, speak or think about a given social object or practice (madness for example) only in certain specific ways and not others. A discourse would be whatever constrains - but also enables – writing, speaking and thinking within such historical limits”. (31)

Looking for the ‘what can be said’ and ‘what can be thought’ in the separate discourses of sport and drugs, as well as the intersection between the two can illuminate the drive behind current approaches to drugs in sport.

It is also important to emphasise at this point discourses are far from definitive and immobile. Rather, according to Foucault, discourses occur as part of power relations. (McHoul & Grace, 1998: 39 -41) Foucault did not follow a simple top down model of power where power was exercised by the privileged in pursuit of a ruthless domination of those weaker. Instead, power was considered as relations of force, where levels of reciprocity exist and vary depending on local and historical conditions. Discourses then, like power relations, are not fixed but rather can be reflected upon and transformed as conditions change.

This idea that power can be both productive as well as repressive is also reflected in recent work on globalisation and sport. Prolific writers on global processes Guilianotti and Robertson (2004) argue that globalisation has been wrongly viewed as the homogenisation of the globe. They assert, rather, that two closely
connected processes are at play. On the one hand, social actors have a greater sense of “globality” a “heightened awareness of the world as a single place”. (546) This global connectivity is intensified by telecommunications and international travel. On the other hand local cultures are marked by a process of ‘glocalisation’, whereby they “adapt and redefine any global cultural product to suit their particular needs, beliefs and customs”. 5 (546)

APPLICATION OF INTERPRETATIVE FRAMEWORK:

LITERATURE REVIEW.

The literature review that forms Chapter Two identifies and explores in depth three important themes that arise from a broad and global critical exploratory analysis of sport and drug discourses. These three themes explain the ‘what can be said’ and ‘what can be thought’ about PEDs. As such, they explain the rationale behind the desire to prohibit PEDs and that the global implication of this can be seen in the rise of WADA. These themes are as follows:

1. Sport as a Conduit for Collective Representation.
2. Drugs as “Matter out of Place”.

CASE STUDY.

I have undertaken a study of a recent PED scandal in the AFL, which pays attention to a recent ‘scandal’ over the use of caffeine to enhance players’ performance on match day. This particular case study was chosen to address the gap in the literature concerning the cultural role of the AFL in Australia and also because the caffeine debate is uniquely illuminating of the complex meanings attached to sport and drug discourses. As a legal, commonplace drug, the transformation of caffeine by the debate into a dangerous PED perfectly reflects the troubling aesthetics often

5 See also Maguire (1994) for a similar analysis explained as “diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties”.

18
associated with drugs and drug users. It also demonstrates the essential role that sport, particularly Australian Football, performs in Australian life. I argue that the overwhelming desire to preserve this role was so strong that the use of caffeine as a PED became a scandal here and nowhere else in world.

**Contextual Analysis.**

Chapter Three will be an assessment of how local contexts ‘adapt and redefine’ the global themes in sport and drug discourses identified in Chapter Two. To do so, Chapter Three has been broken into two parts. The first part draws from a variety of historical and contemporary research and identifies the specific features of the local which interacted with the caffeine debate to give it its shape and direction. These features include:

1. The cultural role of Australian sport and Australian Rules Football
2. The commercial and professional interests of the AFL
3. The tendency of the excessive engagement with ‘footy talk’ to encourage acute scepticism.

This will be followed by a content analysis of the press coverage on an AFL scandal over the use of caffeine tablets for performance enhancement.

**Content Analysis:**

A qualitative approach to content analysis is particularly relevant for a critical exploration of discourses. In *Criminological Research: Understanding Qualitative Methods* Noaks and Wincup define content analysis as “exploring documentary materials for cultural meanings and insights that the text can provide.” (Noaks and Wincup, 2004:113) Wykes argues the usefulness of a content analysis of media sources in her book, *News Crime and Culture* and explains crime news as the “site of our national conscience and moral codes.” (cited in Noakes & Wincup, 2004:128)

The press news can play a powerful role in the development of drug policies. (Lawerence et al., 2000; Watts, 2003) Barak (1994) writes that “mass news
representations in the “information age” have become the most significant communication by which the average person comes to know the world outside his or her immediate experience”. (3) Australian criminologist Watts (2003) is particularly critical of this role arguing that the press media “constitute reality” using a relatively closed discursive framework. The press produce not “news” but “olds”. (72) Press reporting on heroin use, for example, reflects traditional moral narratives which pit “good against evil”. (72) Heroin users are invariably described as ‘junkies’, ‘criminal’, ‘evil’, ‘immoral’, ‘dirty’, ‘dangerous’ and ‘diseased’. (74) While, journalists do engage with the more evolving concepts of policy experts and professionals attempting to seek new and better ways to regulate the ‘problem’ of drug use, Watts (2003) argues that old stereotypes prevail and policy changes very little.

**Sample Characteristics of Content Analysis:**

Press clippings from the period of the scandal, roughly the 30th April 2005 till 29th May 2005, were compiled using the academic search engine Lexis Nexis. A simple search can be carried out using the terms “caffeine and AFL”, which elicited 125 of the most relevant articles from newspapers across Australia. No limitation was placed on the type of article to be analysed (e.g. news, editorials, opinion pieces, interviews). There was also no limitation placed on the type of newspaper analysed in order to demonstrate the nation-wide nature of the debate.

It is worth reiterating that the approach to analysing the articles, like all the resources used in this thesis, has been inductive and that the three themes that explain the desire to prohibit have been drawn out of this approach. The content analysis identifies the quotations and actions of key stakeholders which are representative of an engagement with these global themes. However, these statements and actions also demonstrate how local features consume, resist and transform these global themes. I have been mindful to maintain a ‘relatively detached’ and critical analysis and to be reflective and fair to the different stances and themes in the debate. Further, as the focus of this thesis has been exploring and presenting important themes in the debate over drugs in sport it precludes the need for any quantitative measurement of thematic frequency. This is something for further research.
RESEARCH LIMITATIONS:

There are limitations with this research. Only tentative assumptions can be drawn about the impact of the discursive practices identified or about how audiences might engage with such discourses. It is also arguable that as a very specific look at how local contexts transform global discourses this analysis will not make possible analytic generalisations. However, case studies can allow for a deeper understanding of the implications of these global discourses and have resonance in other similar cases. (Flyvbjerg, 2001)
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.

The purpose of this chapter is to present some possible answers to the first two research questions outlined in the Introduction:

1. What is the rationale behind the desire to prohibit drugs in sport?
2. What are the global implications of this rationale on drug policy formation and its execution?

To achieve this, an array of literature has been drawn upon to illuminate the global discourses surrounding sport and drugs. It will demonstrate that WADA stems from an international commitment to the value of sport as a conduit for collective representation. In sport, drugs and their strong associations with the violation of sacred boundaries, threaten this cultural role. This threat has become heightened in neo-liberal times where the need to find structure and identify those who cannot be trusted heightens the importance of drugs as cultural marker for dangerousness and sport as a cultural marker for good. The urgent need to control drugs translates into WADA’s myopic approach to prohibition. This approach seeks, punishes and blames athletes for their transgressions without seeking to address the pressures that stem from a hugely professional, commercial and political enterprise, which may make these drugs seem essential.

SPORT: A CONDUIT FOR COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATION.

This section will demonstrate that sport as a conduit for collective representation attracts considerable emotional investment and universal support. The use of PEDs reflects that sport has moved away from this traditional cultural role into the realm of a professionalised industry. By prohibiting PEDs WADA acts to quash this anxiety and maintain the legitimacy and popularity of sport in cultural life.

Goodger and Goodger’s (1989) article “Excitement and Representation: Toward a Sociological Explanation of the Significance of Sport in Modern Society” demonstrates how sport is used as a vehicle for collective representation and so offers
a useful treatise for understanding the drive behind dispelling that which threatens this role. Drawing strongly on Durkheim’s theories on the process of collective representation, particularly as outlined in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1915), Goodger and Goodger (1989) demonstrate how the elements of culture, like sport, represent accessible knowledge about complex social structures and relationships. As Goodger and Goodger (1989) explain, these “collective representations” are imbued with profound importance. They have “intimate associations with ideas, objects, occasions, places, and people may invest them with special, set apart significance or “sacred” significance.” (264)

Goodger and Goodger (1989) make a theoretical bridge between Durkheim’s work on collective representation and Elias and Dunning’s (cited in Goodger and Gooder, 1989) work on excitement in sport. Elias and Dunning argued that society has undergone a process of “civilisation” whereby societies have increasingly implemented new and tighter standards of behavioural control. One particular downside of “civilisation” is the denigration of emotional outbursts, of “spontaneous, elementary, unreflected types of excitement.” (256) Sport has since become an essential and popular means through which to express our basic desires for excitement.

The characteristics of sport that bring about such feelings are its tension aspects, the uncertainty of the outcome, skill and risks involved. Elias and Dunning (cited in Goodger and Gooder, 1989) argue that vicarious pleasure is derived from displays of sporting success, where spectators “bask in the reflected glories of successful others” and enhance their own feeling of self-worth. (259) Bringing in Durkheim, Goodger and Goodger (1989) suggest that the capacity of sport to generate excitement and therefore attract mass interest ensures its use as a vehicle for symbolically representing the “social identity, nature and relations of the collectivities which generate them.” (267)

Exactly what sports say about the structures of society is open to contention, since Durkheim has been accused of being irrelevant in modern western
heterogeneous societies. (Goodger and Goodger, 1989: 265) Durkheim theories were devised with non-industrial and relatively homogenous groups in mind. Within these groups collective representation served to maintain the integration and cohesion that they needed, something he called ‘mechanical solidarity’. (265) Goodger and Goodger (1989) argue that representations of common experiences and values are still sought in modern western societies, which is best classified as large scale, more individualistic and hence more diversified than in times past.

Goodger and Goodger (1989) go on to demonstrate how specific sports like boxing teach moral virtues like physical courage, toughness and the fighting spirit which are shared across many social groups. Thus, sport is a conduit for collective representation, which inspires intense emotional commitment. It is through this concept that we can appreciate how sport can be endowed with certain universal attributes which the use of drugs breach (just how they do will be explored in the next section) and therefore explain the consensus that WADA has achieved.

THE AMATEUR IDEAL VS. THE PROFESSIONALISATION OF SPORT.

Sport is imbued with certain universal attributes. The rise and diffusion of modern sport owes much to a British creation, the ‘amatuer ideal’. (Bryson, 1990; Crotty, 2000; Dunning and Waddington, 2003; Maguire, 1994) Bryson’s (1999) examination of the historical significance of sport demonstrates that in the late 19th and early and middle 20th centuries the traditional male role was undergoing rapid transformation due to the emergence of capitalist-urban-industrial nation state and women’s suffrage. Sport was developed in public schools to ensure that “true manliness” could still be instilled in boys by men and would prepare them for their later professional life. (139) To achieve this balance sport was imbied with the values of discipline, co-operation and sobriety. Dunning and Waddington (2003) similar analysis shows that sport became increasing codified at this time and its rules became “more precise, more explicit and more differentiated while at the same time, supervision of the observance of those rules also became more efficient”. (355) Through this format sport and physical education lessons fostered the amateur ideal, which is a combination of fair play with the mens sana in corpore sano ethos (healthy mind, healthy body)
Both Bryson (1990) and Maguire (1994) in his analysis of the globalisation of sport argue that these attributes were actively embraced universally. Maguire (1994) writes that sport is a “carrier of deep culture and structure” and that the diffusion of sport has meant the transfer of a Western masculine culture. Bryson (1990) argues that it was these attributes of sport that attracted Frenchmen Baron de Coubertin, founder of International Olympic Committee (IOC), to inaugurate the modern Olympics in 1896, which was to mark the beginning of the internationalism of sport. He believed that sport could be a springboard for “moral energy” and pursued the idea that the Games would be a symbolic means “to inspire male youth, particularly French youth, both in athletics and in the service of country”. (142)

Greenfield and Williams (2000) explain further that for participants and spectators the universal attraction to sport is that it presents the myth of natural justice, for its rule-governed nature seemingly unveils a “clear and truthful ranking” of competing individuals, groups and nations. (49) The uniformity of the rules ensures that all competitors have an equal chance of winning so that only virtue or even fate differentiates them. Concomitantly, winning in sport has become the means by which status can be conferred upon these social units. As Greenfield and William’s (2000) point out, sport is unique in that it offers a site where the outcome is unambiguous, which is quite unlike most situations in life where we never quite sure whether we are winning or losing. Quoting from Barthes, they argue that instead of the frustrations that come with “constitutive ambiguity or everyday situations” sport seems to offer a “site of certainty”. (49) Sport as a conduit for collective representation is quite explicit here, since national and local identities find reaffirmation through sporting success.

Bryson (1990) and Waddington (2000) both argue there is a flipside to this global investment in these interrelated attributes of sport, the amateur ideal and fair play. Post-modern sport is now dominated by professionalism, commercialism and political interests from which the use of PEDs is a logical progression. Winning has become everything. For Bryson (1990), sports have moved away from its didactic roots and now represent a “triumph of rationality or instrumental reason”. (143) PEDs in sport exists alongside other “scientifically devised training, dietary and psychological regimes elite athletes pursue today.” (143) Waddington (2000)
demonstrates how the relationship between politics and sport has become stronger since the Second World War. Government’s role in shaping their nation’s sport federations has substantially increased in a bid to harness national pride and unity via sporting success. (127) Athletes have become demigods, reaping the considerable financial rewards and glory that come with winning. (128) There exists now considerable incentives for sports people to pursue all available means to increase performance and a sports medicine industry which is able to help them do it.

However, in order to maintain its appeal the traditional values of sport have not been jettisoned and continue to be influential. Instead these values sit uncomfortably alongside the political and economic realities of sport. Bryson (1990) argues that the anger towards PEDs in sport stems from it as an overt expression that sport is no longer driven by traditional values. PEDs have come to be construed as giving an unfair advantage, endangering the health of athletes and so against the true “spirit of sport”. PEDs are the ultimate compromise to the mystical quality of sport as the truest form of natural justice, a threat to its credibility to judge the best. (Dinglestead et al., 1996: 1833)

The implication for drug policy is prohibition. While the use of drugs in sport does not contradict the lucrative and political business that sport has become the WADA will pursue the “value” problem of drugs to maintain the legitimacy and popularity of sports ability to achieve natural justice and as morally and physically beneficial. This is because sport is a conduit for collective representation, a symbolic representation of what is ideal about a given society and within wider society drugs have strong associations with “anti-social” and “dangerous” criminal behaviour. As Waddington (2000) pointed out, drug use “has come to have a whole variety of negative connotations which have little to do directly with sport but have undoubtedly contaminated public attitudes and sporting policy.” (112)

Just why drugs have been associated in this way and its impact on drug policy in sport needs closer attention than is offered by the above authors and will be focus of the next section.
DRUGS: ‘MATTER OUT OF PLACE’.

The place of illegal drugs within our society is hotly debated. Addressing the “problems” with drugs continue to confound the areas of criminal justice, public health and social policy, as arguments rage about the direction of policy, especially the primacy of prohibition. Yet, as Dinglestead et al. (1996) point out, very rarely in the voluminous array of academic and popular literature on drugs does the discussion move past a critique of the merits of these arguments. The question of why drugs are problematic is seldom addressed. (1829) After all, the concepts of “drug” and “drug dependence” are not scientific, they are socially constructed. It is possible of course to note the risks and dangers with the toxicity of substances, but not all these substances are labelled as drugs and subjected to sanctions. (Dinglestead et al, 1996) As Ruggiero (1999) explains the word ‘drug’ is “not descriptive but evaluative” and is the product of cultural, historical and moral norms which promote interdiction. In order to understand more fully the rationale behind the desire to prohibit PEDs and the implications of this rationale on policy we need to delve more deeply into the drugs discourse and ask why and how certain drugs can come to be a “password automatically implying prohibition.” (Ruggiero, 1999: 123, emphasis in original)

DEBATING DRUGS IN SPORT AND IN SOCIETY:

In an excellent critique of the drug controls in sport Coomber (1999) interrogates the naturalistic assumption that PEDs violate the “spirit of sport”. There is a long history of PED use in sport, yet the desire to prohibit is very recent. While the death of Danish cyclist Knud Jensen at the 1960 Rome Olympics is often cited as the impetus for drug control in sport, with the International Federation of Sports Medicine lobbying for an introduction of control, this action gained momentum due to increasing concerns with recreational drugs in wider society. (104) Hamilton (2001) traces rising political and social anxieties with recreational drugs in the sixties at time that was experiencing rapid social change. Drug use quickly became associated with deviant youth subcultures, who challenged dominant social conventions by radically reinventing their approach to music, fashion and relationships. (103) Countries like
Australia, under the guidance of the United States, responded to this threat by increasingly ratified international treaties, promising the tackle the illicit trade, increase police powers and seek harsher penalties for drug related offences. (105) Sport does not exist in a political vacuum and it makes sense that as an “unambiguously wholesome and healthy activity both in the physical and moral sense” it should seek to represent this changing ethos. (emphasis added, Dunning and Waddington, 2003: 358) It is for this reason the recreational drugs, which have no performance enhancing attributes are also prohibited under the World Anti-Doping Code. (Waddington, 2000: 109)

DRUGS: A SYMBOLIC VIOLATION OF SACRED BOUNDARIES.

While both Waddington (2000) and Coomber (1999) persuasively argue that drugs policies in sport have been ‘contaminated’ by concerns with illicit drugs generally, they do not fully explain what it is about drugs that are so troubling and warrant its strict policing in sport. Manderson’s (1995) seminal article “Metamorphoses: Clashing Symbols in the Social Construction of Drugs” offers some answers about why illicit drugs matter so much that can also be applied to sport. Manderson, who has written extensively in the field of drug history and politics argues that drive behind the “war on drugs” stems from the symbolic association with boundary violation that is made in response to the aesthetics of illegal drug use.

Manderson (1995) uses the supports his case with an historical look at the aesthetic criteria for drug use as deviance. He refers to later 20th century media reports on Chinese opium use in Australia. The Australian Bulletin described opium dens in such terms as “aggressive stinks”, “polluted premises” and referred to the “disgusting habits” of its Chinamen users. (cited in Manderson, 1995: 802). Manderson (1995) writes the reference to smell is the particularly involving part of the description and immediately impinges upon the personal boundaries of the observer. (802) The communal nature of smell already has connotations of “invasion and contagion” and by attributing a strange and polluted smell to the already racially vilified Chinese was to ensure a message of boundary violation and dangerousness was imparted. (802)
This message of boundary violation and dangerousness invites prohibition. Using Mary Douglas (1966) work on pollution rituals and taboos Manderson argues that like pollution, drugs visually represent “matter out of place” and by extension users are “polluted”. (801) Thus, the aesthetics of illegal drug use arouses anxiety because they reflect the transgression of sacred social boundaries which separate the normal and the safe from the deviant. (802) Prohibition is a “literalising of this symbolic realm” and reflects the extreme lengths undertaken to affirm boundaries we want secure, for “ambiguity is danger”. (802) It is for this reason that solvent sniffing, which uses products like glue, petrol and disinfectant, is so disconcerting, because it transforms safe and domestic products into something dangerous.

**PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUGS IN SPORT AS “MATTER OUT OF PLACE”.

The argument that recreational drug use demonstrates “matter out of place” and can equally be applied the ban of PEDs in sport. Magdalinski’s (2000) article, “Performance Technologies: Drugs and Fastskin at the Sydney 2000 Olympics” explains the contradiction between prohibiting PEDs over other forms of performance technologies, like the fastskin body suit in swimming. Media depictions of PEDs are connotative of a transgression of the body’s natural ability and forms, whereas performance technologies are not deemed intrusive.

It is because of their ambiguous nature that PEDs are deemed a violation of the “spirit of sport”. Like Bryson (1990), Magdalinski (2000) argues the “amateur ideal” is still influential in modern sport and that demands are made for talent, vigilance and hard work. (64) PEDs are deemed to contravene this ideal and the spirit of “fair play” by creating “short cuts” and making the body capable of something it would not otherwise be (64). Performance technologies, like weightless running shoes, also create “short cuts” but are not deemed problematic. This is because these technologies are visibly transient, something which maximises rather than creates performance. Talent and discipline are still called for. The affects of PED on the other hand are ambiguous and seem to work the body in invisible and unnatural ways. PEDs “symbolise a fear of the hyper-human, the cyborg, the half-human/half-machine
that confound the basic precepts of sport". Therefore, performance technologies are acceptable “for they are a temporary physical modification that does not contaminate the natural body, or transgress it borders”. (65)

Madgalinski (2000) argues that the media educate their audience to identify performances and bodies relying on artificial enhancement as those which exceed physical norms, but how these expectations are closely aligned to gender and nationalistic discourses. Cairstairs (2003) analysis of the media and public response to Chinese breastroker Yuan Yuan further illustrates this point. Attending the 1998 World Swimming Championships in Australia Yuan Yuan was caught by customs officials with 13 vials of a synthetic of Human Growth Hormone (HGH). (266) Subsequent tests of the rest of the female Chinese swim team produced four positive tests for a diuretic, a common masking agent. (266) There was an uproar in the Australian and international press. (267) The entire Chinese team was marked guilty and the Australian, American, Canadian, New Zealand and Dutch teams announced they would boycott the next International Swimming Federation meet in China. (267) Cairstairs (2003) argues that these easy presumptions of guilt stem from racist and anti-communist sentiment, a remnant from the Cold War after the East Germans were revealed to have deliberated an extensive doping program. This history enabled an ideological leap to be made between Chinese drugs use and the “Big Red Machine”. (267) The demonisation of the Chinese team is striking when compared with the IOC failure to address evidence of a doping cover-up in the American Track and Field Association. (268)

The use of HGH by Chinese women swimmers was also demonised in the press for its gender-bending effects. Australian journalist Patrick Smith commented on the media fascination with Chinese swimmer Le Jingyi’s back wrote:

“This is the back that has been described as “hulking”. It is said that she must haul it out of the water. This is the back the clad in a black bathing costume, is so often shown when television sports programmes run stories about steroid use in China.

7 For a further discussion on the troubling aesthetics of cyborg athletes see Miah (2003).
It is the back that has come to mean: “China’s swimmers are cheating”. (cited in Cairstairs, 2003: 268)

This fascination and assumption of guilt is without basis in fact, Le Jingyi has never returned a positive test for any drug. (Cairstairs, 2003: 268) In contrast in the media treatment of Katrin Krabbe who tested positive in 1992 for Clenbuterol, a muscle binding drug not commonly associated with masculinising effects. Krabbe was a media darling, being described as “tall, willowy and fair and blue eyed and fast…the Grace Kelly of the Track and Field”. (Lock, 2003: 407) Despite being caught tampering with her sample and later testing positive to a PED her exemplary racial and feminine performance pushed aside issues of cheating in the press. (Lock, 2003: 407)

We can see from the above examples that assigning guilt and denigrating athletes for the use of PEDs is a subjective exercise, rather than a simple matter of health or cheating. It is done in an effort to alleviate the fear of the unknown, whether that be the affect of drugs, hyper expressions of gender or other nations and their different cultures.

The general affect of the combined discourses of drug and sport is a strong emotive response, which limits regulation to a punitive and prohibitionist direction. As was argued in the previous section, sports strong dramatic and ritualistic elements legitimate and perpetuate hegemonic ideologies about the nature of society. Hargreaves (1982) maintains that sporting rituals play:

A cognitive role, rendering intelligible society and social relationships, serving to organise people’s knowledge of the past and present and their future.

The implication PEDs in sport is clear, since these drugs are connotative of deviance and ambiguity they cannot be accommodated within the essentially socialising function of sport. Given this combined symbolism about drugs and sport a singularly prohibitionist approach is a natural progression. Because of the international nature of sport this combined symbolism necessitates a global response and WADA is just this.
DRUG POLICY: THE DESIRE TO PROHIBIT AND MANAGING RISK IN THE NEO-LIBERAL ERA.

The above section demonstrates how those who use illicit drugs, including banned PED’s, are demonised as dangerous “others”. In *Drugs and Dangerousness: Perception and Management of Risk in the Neo-Liberal Era* Sutton (2000) adds to this analysis by demonstrating how the recent shift towards neo-liberal modes of governance has rendered this symbolism particularly important. Sutton’s central argument is that neo-liberalism and its broad promotion of “governance of the self” has resulted in new “fears and uncertainties” whereby the need to exclude those who “cannot be trusted” has assumed greater significance. In this context the continued, indeed increased, prohibition of illicit drugs reflects its position as an important cultural marker for dangerousness.

Neo-liberal modes of governance emphasises individual choice and ‘care of self’ practices. State interventionism has decline and the responsibility for social control and risk management has been moved on to individuals and communities. For Sutton (2000) the continued prohibition of drugs in an era which is marked by high levels of consumption and competition is a glaring contradiction. (165) To further emphasise this contradiction, Sutton draws on John Pratt’s work on the relations between concepts of dangerousness with economies of power and systems of control. (167) Pratts work demonstrates that neo-liberalism has renewed discourses on dangerousness whereby there is increased focus on crimes like theft, sexual and violent offending, which violate “individual rights to self-governance, choice and participation in the ‘new economy of bodily pleasures’”. (167)

Rather than ‘control at a distance’ the guiding principle of most Western drug policies is direct police and state intervention. To explain the persistence of drug prohibition in the neo-liberal era Sutton (2000) extends another part of Pratt’s thesis on dangerousness, which explains that the marked increase in punitiveness in most Western countries, is an attempt to allay new insecurities and reaffirm traditional social structures in the face of the overwhelming array of choice that neo-liberalism promotes. (167) Using, Manderson (1995) Sutton argues that drugs and its long history as a metaphor for dangerousness and boundary violation becomes more
pronounced in this environment. Sutton further develops upon Mary Douglas’s work on ‘matter out of place’ and writes that concepts of pollution and danger become more acute in situations of “intra-societal conflict: when a system is ‘at war with itself’”.

(173) The conclusion Sutton reaches is that late capitalism is a system at war with itself and the continued desire to prohibit drugs is symptomatic of this conflict. Persisting with old stereotypes of “the addict”, whose lives represent all that is haphazard and diseased, offers stability by both marking potential ‘threats to order’ and offering a social lesson about the right ways to balance “social roles, responsibilities and pleasures”. (176)

We can extend Sutton’s analysis to the problem of PEDs in sport. Firstly, if neo-liberalism’s ‘infinite possibilities’ has created unique stresses, the role of sport as a conduit for collective representation becomes increasingly important. Sport and athletes are significant cultural signposts for ‘good’ social behaviour. Secondly, post-modern sport itself also reflects a ‘system at war with itself’, with the professionalisation of the sport undermining the traditional amateur ideal. In this environment the pressures to remain competitive may make PEDs seem essential, but this exists in tension with general anxieties about how they transgress natural boundaries. The desire to prohibit PEDs in sport reflects the desire to maintain these boundaries, to reaffirm its traditional cultural role in uncertain times. The uncompromising ‘mission’ of the WADA is the ultimate expression of this desire.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE DESIRE TO PROHIBIT.

However, while the operational needs of neo-liberalism enhance the desire to prohibit, the problem with ‘literalising the symbolic realm’ is that it distracts from what is truly at stake. Manderson (1995) argues that fixating on our fears about how drugs violate body, mind and social boundaries conceal the real problems this use expresses and impedes the creation of workable solutions. He writes that contemporary drug legislation:

“ignores the natural desires which drug use expresses, whether for intimacy, community, liberation, discovery or transcendence. It ignores the serious problems which drug use may express, whether of poverty or oppression and there, too, sees
only the secondary manifestation of those problems – needles, powders and weeds.” (810)

In sport this means that the site of contention has been levelled at the athlete. Drug use by athletes is labelled as deviant, the pressures from within the sporting world itself are ignored. To accept that drug use is the result from these pressures would be to challenge the notion that sport is inherently morally ‘good’.

That the athlete is the site of contention in drug policy is made quite clear by WADA’s strict liability policy and mandatory sentences. The World Anti-Doping Code stipulates that:

Following the discovery of prohibited substances the Code is clear that an anti-doping rule violation has occurred. Section 2.1.1 of the Code states: It is each Athletes personal duty of care to ensure that no Prohibited Substances enters his or her body. Athletes are responsible for any Prohibited Substances or its Metabolites or Markers found to be present in their bodily specimens. Accordingly it is not necessary that intent, fault, negligence or knowing Use on the Athletes part be demonstrated in order to establish an anti-doping violation. (emphasis in original, 9)

Madgalinski and Warren (2004) argue this immediate presumption of guilt is “fraught with unfairness” and a distinct breach of athletes “civil liberties”. (95) Absent from consideration is the common prerequisite for a criminal conviction, that of intention and motive. (95) A positive test will see athletes stripped of their titles and their livelihood, with limited access to a fair trial and the ability to challenge the “scientific, bureaucratic and highly discretionary decision making policies” of WADA. (95)

Further Morgan (2006) writes that recently WADA has reduced the standard of proof from the criminal standard ‘beyond a reasonable doubt’ to ‘comfortable satisfaction’. (189) This change allows athletes to be charged with breaching anti-doping rules where evidence exists they are or have been in possession of banned substances, rather than having to rely on evidence of actual use through a positive sample. (189) Morgan does not object to the “mission” of the WADA to catch out
drug users but argues that this allowance of circumstantial evidence is morally objectionable on the grounds of basic fairness. (190) Sports scientists Rushall and Jones (2006) also critique WADA as a purely symbolic enterprise, demonstrating that its claims that banned substances like anabolic steroids are performance enhancing lacks scientific evidence, rather is based on popular misconceptions. They argue WADA has become a law unto itself that as an essentially private organisation it does not have answer to any independent or higher authority and so has no process of peer-review which can provide checks and balances.

The implication for the discourses surrounding sports and drugs is a myopic approach to prohibition. To protect the increasingly important cultural role of sport from the troubling aesthetics of drugs WADA has been developed, and it singles out and pursues ‘deviant’ athletes. It does not accept ‘motive or incentive’, because to do so would be to admit that sport is no longer the same.
3. STORM IN A COFFEE CUP: THE ‘SCANDAL’ OF CAFFEINE AS A PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUG IN AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL.

The previous chapter provided some answers as to the rationale behind the desire to prohibit PEDs in sport and the global implications of this rationale. Drawing on an array of literature it proposed that the mass attraction to sport stems from its essential cultural role in uncertain times and PEDs, with their strong transgressive aesthetics challenge this role. The global implication of this rationale is the unrelenting ‘mission’ of WADA, which acts to send a symbolic message that sport continues to be a reliable cultural signpost of ‘good’ social behaviour. WADA pursues a myopic approach to prohibition by pursuing ‘deviant’ renegade athletes, without addressing the professional, commercial and political pressures from which PED use stems.

The final research question asks how the globalisation of sport and drug discourses, which is epitomised by WADA, impacts the local context. Following Guillanotti and Robertson (2004) globalisation is not a simple process of homogenisation. Rather local contexts consume, resist and transform global product. This chapter assesses this process by looking at the similarities and the differences between WADA’s and the AFL’s approach to PEDs. It will look at a recent scandal over the use of caffeine tablets by AFL players to boost performance. This scandal is an illuminating example of sport and drug discourses in action since this use of caffeine tablets was not in breach of WADA code. Caffeine is widely available and popular product, so its transformation by the debate into a PED is particularly suggestive of the symbolism attached to drugs and to sport. Also, the fierce debate which ensued over its use in the AFL points to unique factors surrounding Australian sport and the AFL that do not correspond simply with a strict adherence to the ‘mission’ of the WADA. These factors both enhance the symbolism attached to sport and to drugs and conflictingly attracts criticism to this very symbolism.

A context analysis of Australian sport and the AFL will demonstrate the factors which gave the debate its particular gravitas. An historical and contemporary look at the significance of Australian sport and Australian football will be undertaken.
to make sense of the polarised response to caffeine. The three themes identified in the previous chapter, which direct current thinking and action on drugs in sport is reflected in this analysis but with some important deviations. Sport in general and Australian Rules football are particularly essential features in the cultural fabric of Australian life. The threat that is attached to drug symbolism is enhanced in this environment, which is why caffeine, framed as a PED, was able to become a contentious issue here. However, adding a further dimension to the debate is the delicate act of governing in the AFL, whereby the need be sensitive to the cultural needs of supporters (and ensure an important revenue source for the game) exists in tension with the realities of preparing a competitive and professional team. Further, the incessant engagement with footy talk in all forms of media allows for a lively interaction of different ideas and opinions, which allows for all the tensions in the debate to come to the fore.

A content analysis of press news on the scandal follows and it will trace how these global and local themes steered the direction and conclusion of the debate. The press has been chosen above other mediums that communicate cultural meaning because of its extensive daily engagement with football news. The press has also been noted for its capacity to impact on policy direction. (eg. Barak, 1994; Lawerence et al., 2000; Watts, 2003) The articles referenced come from major newspapers across Australia to demonstrate the wide reach of the debate and the statements and actions of important figures have been included. These stakeholders have been chosen for their capacity to influence the debate and include representatives of major sporting and medical institutions, WADA, the AFL, senior coaches and players in the AFL, journalists and politicians.

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS:

AUSTRALIAN SPORT: STRIVING TO BE DISTINCT.

三季度sport is as available to Australians – and as necessary – as meat pies, kangaroos and Holden Cars. (Mckay 1994: 1)
In Australia sports capacity to achieve a natural justice is of special significance. Caldwell (1982) writes that sporting success propelled the formation of Australian national identity and culture away from British colonial domination since the early nineteenth century. For a young Australia seeking to find its feet, sport and war were two of the earliest and easiest ways to demonstrate prowess on national and international stages. Caldwell contends that sport served as “as a sign of the quality of life in the country concerned is prevalent in countries where the regime has a kind of inferiority complex in some direction”. (174) Australian participation in cricket, for example, became especially symbolic of national character since as a game created by and played against the British it proved the greatest opportunity to psychologically break away from them and take heart in its own capabilities. Success in cricket was:

“hailed as showing on both the narrow stage of cricket itself and by extension, on the wider arena of national physical and moral development, Australians had nothing to fear from either their origins or their location south of the line”. (Mandle cited in Caldwell, 1982:175)

The Australian desire for independence also had implications for the type of identity pursued and is in many ways in opposition to the British. Thus, while the British were traditionally inclined to rigid formalities and social segregation, sport for Australians is often cited as the exemplar of its egalitarian nature. (Mckay, 1994: 1)

For Mckay (1994), Australia has sought to be characterised as:

England minus the upper class; a working man’s paradise; a place where Jack is as good as his master and tall poppies are cut down; a land devoid of social classes; a country full of anti-authoritarian battlers, who are pragmatic and utilitarian about politics; and a nation with governments that provide the greatest happiness for the greatest good”. (1)

Born from struggles to gain recognition on the world stage sport has become arguably the most important context in which this ideal vision of Australia can be expressed. In this Australia, sport is available to everyone, success is dependant on hard work alone and that despite competition from world superpowers this “gutsy underdog” will and can have its day. (Greenfield and Williams, 2000: 49) Australians continue to invest a
considerable amount emotionally and financially into sport, such that we readily embrace the title the “greatest sporting nation in the world”.

It is because of this strong commitment to the attributes of sport, particularly ‘fair play’, that the Australian Sport Drug Agency (ASDA) has developed an especially close working relationship with WADA. Australia prides itself on having one of the most vigilant testing programmes in the world. (Cairstairs, 2003; Houlihan, 2004) Given this commitment it is unsurprising that all potential performance enhancing drugs would be put under particular scrutiny here.

“A GAME OF OUR OWN”: AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL HAS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE.

It can be said without argument that Australian Football is an integral part of the cultural life of many Australians. While the code was dominated by Melbourne for its first century, it has become the most popular and passionately supported pastime in every state. It is the only sport which is indigenous to Australia and is important in helping to develop many Australian’s sense of identity. Football is “more than a game” as it “provides an intense world of meaningful play for large numbers of players and larger numbers of spectators”.⑧ (Alomes, 1998: 1) The debate over caffeine as a PED was essentially driven by the desire to preserve this role.

Australian historian Robin Grow (1998) writes in From Gum Trees to Goalposts that from its beginning the founders of football were keen to create a distinctly Australian game. It was Thomas Wentworth Wills, a prominent Australian cricketer who proposed in Melbourne’s leading sporting paper Bells Life that cricketers form a football or rifle club to keep fit during the winter months. (8) Wills was part of a sports mad fraternity who had largely been educated in England. (9) The game was formulated to include various aspects of this early schooling and has

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⑧ Weighing up total revenues, number of spectators, value of broadcast rights and merchandising Cornell (Australian Financial Review, 2005: 19) argues that Australian Football is the most popular Australian Football Code. It also ranks highly in participation, although does not do as well as soccer on this front. Despite this lack of participation Andrews (2000) writes that in 1998 90% of Australian households tuned into an AFL match on television at some point. (245) Total attendances at matches reached a record high in 2005 with nearly six million fronting despite reduced access to seating due to renovations. (Cornell, The Australian Financial Review, 2005: 19)
aspects of Eton rugby and Gaelic football, but also Aboriginal football. These moves reflected a recurring theme in colonial sports to breakaway and be better than the ‘mother country’. Tom Wills famously advised his friends to “work on a game of our own” and he is credited by the MCC as the founder of Australian Football. (Blainey, 2003: 212) Further, in 1860 J.B Thomson wrote in the *Victorian Cricketer’s Guide* that they wanted a code could not be compared to the British games but would “combine the merits while exclude the vices”. (Grow, 1998: 11)

Early Australian football would act as a social anodyne, solving questions of meaning and identity in a new society, particularly a dominant male society. Football would carry on the masculinising traditions of the British and Olympic games. Hess (2000) like Bryson (1990) argues that football, with its physical and aggressive nature, would allow for displays of the supposedly superior masculine traits of discipline, courage, loyalty and bravery. (124) Moroney (1998) is particularly critical of the role of football in supporting male hegemony, writing that its facilitates the “initiation of boys into traditions which men have shared and from which they have prospered economically, politically and socially” and promotes male violence off field.  

From its beginnings Football acted and continues to act as a symbolic and ideal form of collective representation. This representation bears similarities in structure to its British forebears. However, the Australian game did not place the same restrictions on who could play like their British counterparts and is unique in its inclusive nature. (Grow, 1998: 8, Hess and Stewart, 1998: 256) As the game became increasingly popular and codified the character of clubs became more representative of Australia’s different local communities. Grow (1998) argues that clubs were essential for social interaction and identity formation and that:

“in a colony of recent immigrants that was undergoing rapid social change, membership of a club provided a sense of belonging. Players gravitated to certain clubs because they lived near by, or because the club catered for

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9 H.C.A Harrison provides a illustrative example of the inner workings of the masculinising principle in football. In 1870 he was criticised in the press for deliberately taking out a star opponent. Harrison defended his actions by stating that, “football is essentially a rough game all the world over, and it is not suitable for men-poodles and milksocks” and that while there were many “fine manly fellows” in the game there were also a few “old women in disguise”. (cited in Grow, 1998: 25).
people of their own class, ethnic or religious affiliations…Gradually the clubs
developed their own characteristic symbols such as colours, uniforms, mottoes,
nicknames and songs.”(17)

Members, supporters and spectators where drawn from all social strata and
reinforced through fierce inter-club rivalries. It was this general inclusiveness that
ensured Australian Football was embraced by the masses and become intrinsic to
the cultural fabric of Melbourne for ‘a close and often fanatical identification of the
football clubs and their local communities’ quickly developed. (Hess, 1998: 111)

Following the further formalisation of the game through the establishment
of the Victorian Football League (VFL) in 1897 and later the AFL in 1989 there
has been an almost “evangelical fervour” to promote the indigenous game and
ensure its spread in popularity. (Hess, 2000: 123) This is no doubt aided
considerably by the press, with all mediums devoting considerable time and space
to the coverage of football. Though it is not an altogether altruistic drive, it has
meant that football’s appeal transcends gender, class and ethnic descriptions.
Football is not simply about the celebration of male culture and society, although
this is certainly at its axis.10 As Alomes (1994), an Australian cultural and political
historian, writes in Tales of Dreamtime: Australian Football as a Secular Religion
while the “football hero as idealised role model appeals initially to most boys,
young and old” the social permeation of the game is such that this idol worship
encapsulates nearly everyone. (56)

Australian Rules Football has something for everyone. For Alomes (1994) this
is essentially because football offers the possibility of transcendence over routine and

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10 One illuminating example of the wide reaching popularity of Australian football is the
unprecedented number of women who follow the game and comprise around 40 percent of supporters.
(Hess, 2000: 115) By comparison, in soccer women comprise 12-13% of supporters and even less in
Rugby. (Hess, 2000: 115) Alomes (1994) writes how women’s attraction to the game is varied, from
“aesthetic sexual”, a fascination with “tight shorts and tight thighs”; to an aesthetic which is social-
cultural-political. (57) In support he cites Oriel Gray, a leftist writer and playwright, who explained her
loyalty to South Melbourne as the “‘Theatricals’ team, the actors favourite, appealing because, ‘the
Bloods were the eternal losers to Fate, as Theatricals were the eternal losers to Management in the days
would justify his love for Fitzroy, as the “team of the stylish, beautiful losers, the team for battlers,
actors and disillusioned intellectuals, promising so much against the odds but never quite realising it.”
(Gray, 1988 cited in Alomes, 1994: 57)
everyday frustration’s. This may in the bliss and ecstasy of the ‘high mark’ and experiencing the comfort of the collective community of the team and its supporters regardless of whether these shared feelings are that of “self-satisfaction – ‘we were brilliant!’ or, with a sense of injustice of the world – ‘we were crucified!’” (53) Football is both an inspiration and an opiate for the masses.

However, there has been since the advent of the National League a public fear that economic rationalism is undermining cultural function of the game. (Alomes, 1994: 55) The morphing of the game from a 12 team semi professional Victorian phenomenon into a 16 team fully professional and commercialised National League was initially met with considerable resistance. Despite intense protest South Melbourne was relocated to Sydney in 1987 and Fitzroy was merged with the Brisbane Bears to form the Brisbane Lions in 1996. Only St Kilda and the Footscray ‘Bulldogs’ (now the Western ‘Bulldogs’ to reflect and maintain the breadth of the support base that saved them) were able to stage successful fightbacks. (Andrews, 2000: 242) Alomes (1994) explains this reaction as a tribal lament for the loss of simpler worlds, an Australian version of resistance to the transition from “Gemeinschaft of idealised local community to the material Gesellschaft of mass society”. (58)

Sutton’s (2000) argument that the desire to prohibit drugs stems from the need for cultural structure in uncertain times is evident in this lament for Australian football. The public outcry during caffeine debate reflects the continued presence of anxiety over the loss of grass roots spirituality and community. The “otherness” of performance enhancing drugs are perceived as a further reflection of the corruption of the game by economic interests. Symbolically PEDs like caffeine are in direct opposition to the kinds of identity the game is suppose to inspire. It transgresses the proper bounds of masculinity the game seeks to inculcate. As a form of cheating it does not allow for the natural justice and the reaffirmation collectivities are seeking, something which is particularly essential in the Australian context.
GOVERNING THE AFL: BALANCING CULTURE AND COMMERCE.

The dispute over caffeine can be viewed in terms of a conflict between cultural expectations of Australian football and its professional requirements. However, this clear demarcation between the AFL and the rest of society is simplistic and does not account for the conflicting viewpoints expressed within the AFL itself. Instead, governance in the AFL reflects a dual character, one that seeks to balance its cultural role and its popularity with building upon its commercial viability. (Andrews, 2000, Capling and Marjoribanks, 2004) The AFL is now firmly entrenched in the sports entertainment industry. In an insightful review on governance in AFL clubs sociologists Capling and Marjoribanks (2004) argue that whilst AFL clubs increasingly view themselves in business terms and are adopting corporate models of governance this has not entailed a loss of football’s social and cultural capital. Rather, clubs are developing “hybrid identities” that encompass features of commerce and culture.

The financial viability of the game is closely tied to capitalising on its cultural relevance. Members are still important to the way the game is governed. AFL clubs continue to be non-profit and member-based, where the board of directors is responsible to its members. (Capling, 2004; Frost, 2003.) This continued connection means that the old adage in Australian football that “members are the life-blood of the club” still rings true.11 (Capling, 2004: 49) Membership subscriptions still dominate all other income streams for clubs, this includes corporate sponsorship, gate receipts, the AFL dividend and merchandising. In addition the vision of a strong support base makes the club more attractive to corporate sponsors.12 (49) Thus, maintaining membership approval is strategic element of ensuring the prosperity of the game.

11 Capling (2004) offers an excellent example of how supporters can quite literally save their club. In 1996 Hawthorn was saved from a near death experience by embarking on deliberate campaign to recruit new members. It was able to increase its support base from 12,500 in 1996 to 27, 000 in 1997 and now maintains an average of 30, 000 supporters. Significantly, most of the recruiting was down via the vigilant tele-marketing of volunteers eager to save their clubs. (49)
12 For this reason the AFL is also very active in promoting participation at the grass roots level. New programs like Auskick, which sends coaches into primary schools has increased total player numbers from 390,000 to just under 460,000 in the last five years. This program has attracted sponsorship from the National Australia Bank for $20 million. (Cornell, The Australian Financial Review, 17 September 2005)
This is not to suggest that the anxieties over the loss of grass roots spirituality are unfounded. Business practice in the AFL means that:

“corporate sponsors are favoured over members and supporters, television audiences over game goers, and stadium owners over clubs. The AFL has seen the expansion of corporate hospitality and executive boxes, rationalisation of playing venues and the closure of suburban grounds, the broadcasting of games ‘against the gate’ and, in the case of at least one stadium tenancy deals which favour the landlords over the clubs.” (Capling, 2004: 47)

Andrews (2000) argues that the game has transformed from being “primarily bound up with culture, including the structure of identity to one that is primarily driven by the economic imperative.” (249)

But, it is also an economic imperative for the AFL to maintain hybrid identities and seek to balance commerce and culture. This progression has been essential for survival in the commercial and increasingly competitive environment in which they operate. They demonstrate one of the ways clubs balance commerce and culture by engaging in “strategic philanthropy”. (72) For example, the Western Bulldogs, have established a separate non-profit division of the club called SpiritWest a number of community services and education programs in which players are closely involved. The Bulldogs stress the need to be “socially responsible” and that these programs are “giving back to the community”. (73) However, there is also a strategic element behind this community work whereby programs need to be “credible”, with “clearly define positive outcomes so that it is a win-win situation for the participants and also for the image of the club and the image of the west as well. And it cant be a drain on resources…We are not a philanthropic organisation or a charity or anything else like that”. (73)

13 SpiritWest is nationally accredited to deliver a range of education and community programs. In partnership with a range of corporate, government and community figures SpiritWest delivers programs for adults in English as a Second Language, language and literacy, computer skills programs and even work-for-dole scheme. Also, like at many clubs players are closely involved in programs with disadvantaged kids to promote confidence and build self-esteem. (Capling and Marjoribanks, 2004: 73)
The variety in the AFL’s response to the caffeine debate reflects its struggle to balance commerce and culture. On the one hand the use of caffeine reflects the normal practice of clubs seeking to maximise performance in the competitive world of sports entertainment. On the other the aesthetic of a commonplace substance used as a performance enhancing “drug” runs counter to the cultural role of the AFL, the preservation of which ensures its continued financial success.

**FOOTY TALK AND IRREVERENT PLAY: MAKING ROOM FOR DEBATE.**

Another factor which influenced the character of caffeine debate is the capacity of ‘footy talk’ to generate acute skepticism. Trail’s (2004) insightful analysis of football discourses, argues that football’s handle on many different sites for the production of meaning may act to entrench passionate identification with and belief in its representations, but conversely encourages discernment. Due to its popularity many sites comprise football discourse, each employing different styles of commentary and expression including:

“barracking, informal sports chatter, coaching, the on-field calls of players and umpires, the Australian Football League tribunal, print media analysis, television and radio commentary, media interviews with coaches, players and other key figures, advertising, betting, books – player biographies, club histories and so on; football entertainment shows, their games and banter, jokes, skits and quizzes, Internet sites, the activities of social clubs, the machinations of local football clubs and the little league…” (Trail, 2004: 11)

Trail’s argument is that these seemingly distinct sites for the production of meaning are mutually reinforcing and reflect similar views on the place of football in society, yet they are also potentially transgressive. Thus, despite their “different styles of expression, their differences in intent and social function [these sites] nevertheless interpermeate, borrow from, recycle and transform each other’s conventions.” (11)

Trail, like Goodger and Goodger (1992), supports the idea of football’s power to convey individual and collective representations but digresses with an emphasis on its transformative element. She writes that incessant footy talk can cause:
“the ‘irreverent’ unsettling of the authority of its conventions…[so that], as well as being a cultural arena in which the most passionate and skillful sympathetic magic is practiced, football discourse is simultaneously an arena of great and acutely observed skepticism.”

In this respect we can begin to appreciate that the debates over caffeine do not simply reflect a conflict between the culture and commerce, but reflects a general trend in football discourse toward emotional detachment and rational analysis.

CONTENT ANALYSIS:

The debate over the use of caffeine tablets by AFL players for performance enhancement reflects how local contexts can consume, resist and transform global sport and drug discourses. Caffeine should not have been an issue since it is not banned by the WADA except at very high doses. The AFL has always been in full agreement with WADA in regards to PEDs and would not have expected to find itself embroiled in a drugs row over a legal substance. This content analysis attempts to make sense of this anomaly. It will demonstrate how the issue gained impetus from both the overzealous belief in and need for the socialising role of sport and depictions of caffeine conflating it with the same symbolism of boundary violation and dangerousness attached to other prohibited PEDs. However, there were those who argued for the practical use of caffeine in the AFL and who sought to diffuse this emotional imagery and reframe it as a safe and standard practice of preparing a competitive team. This conflict reflects the difficulties of governing in the AFL and of balancing cultural expectations of the game with commercial need, as well as the tendency of ‘footy talk’ to generate acute scepticism. Further, the interdependencies of global and local approaches to drugs in sport became explicit with a symbolic threat of action and show of authority from the international anti-doping watchdog itself, WADA. Amidst mounting criticism, legitimised by the WADA, the AFL devised a solution which proved to be a perfect balance of culture and commerce.
The issue:

It started innocently enough. In the sixth round of the AFL season for 2005 St Kilda confirmed that some of its players had been using caffeine tablets called No-Doz before games. At this stage the AFL expressed “no concerns” with St Kilda players taking the substance because it was not banned. (The Australian, 30th April 2005, 55) Fremantle’s Matthew Pavlich conceded in a television interview following his teams sensational win over Melbourne that caffeine had boosted Fremantle performance and helped them win, saying “we have a couple of caffeine tablets equivalent to your body weight, so I think we have been doing that all year”. (Law and Pierik, Herald Sun, 1st May 2005: 49) It was these widely publicised comments that would embroil the AFL in a drugs row.

In the press, debates over caffeine use raged between key figures within the AFL and from the wider worlds of sport, medicine and politics nearly everyday for a month. Players at over half the teams in the League admitted to using the tablets as part of the pre match routine. (Gleeson and Wilson, The Age, 30th April, 3; Videneiks and Duffield, The West Australian, 2nd May 2005: 3) A very public spat broke out between an anti-caffeine Richmond coach Terry Wallace and the pro-caffeine Fremantle coach Chris Connolly, which served to attract greater attention to the issue. (Conn and Krupka, The Australian, 11th May 2005: 54; Duffield et al., The Age, 12th May: 3) Essentially the debate revolved around two sides, those who believed ‘popping pills’ for performance enhancement was a bad image for the AFL and ‘sent the wrong message’ to young aspiring footballers and those who saw caffeine use as a natural progression of a competitive environment. The climax of the debate was reached when the WADA issued a statement that it would reconsider the prohibition of caffeine. The AFL responded by prohibiting caffeine at junior level football.
BATTLING THE AESTHETICS OF CAFFEINE AS A PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUG.

Arguments Against the use of Caffeine as a Performance Enhancing Drug:

Those who argued against the use of caffeine made close reference to global discourses on sport and drugs. Heightening the significance and urgency behind this reference was the special significance of sport and AFL in Australia. Caffeine was depicted using iconic drug imagery, allowing associations with its use to be made with the violation of sacred boundaries. In this case being framed as a PED meant these boundaries where those of the natural ‘masculine’ sporting body in pursuit of the amateur ideal. This is evident in the constant reference made to the dire impact of AFL stars confessions of drug use on the moral and physical development of young (male) players.

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) was quick to weigh in on the debate, saying Pavlich was “irresponsible” by publicly admitting using the stimulants and that it sent the wrong message to juniors. The AMA stressed the important socialising role AFL players have in communicating ideas about identity and gender, that they were putting “young players who emulated their sporting hero’s at risk”.\footnote{14 This opinion also expressed by The National Drug and Alcohol Research. (The Advertiser, 13\textsuperscript{th} May 2005: 117)} Peter Skerritt, president of the Western Australia division of the AMA was more specific about these risks drawing on anxieties about the ‘unnaturalness’ of PEDs in sport, which negates from its didactic role and its lessons of courage and discipline. As Skerritt put it, “for kids there is a potential harm, psychologically, in that you take pills to play sport, I mean how ridiculous is that message, that your sporting ability is linked to the type of pill you take.” (Videneiks and Duffield, *The West Australian*, 2\textsuperscript{nd} May 2005: 3)

The anti No-Doz lobby framed caffeine use in similar terms to other demonised illicit drugs. An early headline in *The Age*, “Players Experiment with Caffeine Hit’, made an implicit connection between caffeine and other problematic
drug addictions. (Gleeson and Wilson, 30th April, 3) Another more explicit and alarmist headline came from Australia’s most popular paper the Herald Sun titled, “Player’s using ‘speed’ drug” in reference to the combination of legally available drugs caffeine and pseudoephedrine. (Barrett, 23rd May 2005: 37). The ambiguous term “popping pills” was also regularly used15. Following Manderson (1993) and his ‘ambiguity is danger’ thesis we can appreciate how by focussing on its “pill” status caffeine could be transformed from familiar, everyday substance into something dangerous. For many, this ambiguity must aroused questions and fears about what the tablets were for and how it acted on the body.

This transformation of caffeine into a dangerous drug and the ambiguous terms used to describe it allowed for the conflation of caffeine tablets with prohibited PEDs. There were strong suggestions that allowing caffeine use would promote a ‘short cut’ mentality and lead to seeking other more effective performance enhancers. Rebecca Wilson (The Daily Telegraph, 21st May: 96) a leading sports journalist wrote, “the anti-No Doz lobby reckon players telling us they take the caffeine tablets will make all of the junior players out there reach for the nearest bottle of pills. What they really believe is that the player’s admission that they use tablets of any kind before and during a match will actively encourage the use of performance enhancers across the board”.16

Perhaps the clearest expression of fear about the transgressive potential of caffeine tablets as PED and its impact on the development of young male players comes from Collingwood coach Mick Malthouse. Malthouse felt:

“bitterly opposed to any stimulant whatsoever that can affect the body’s systems, whether it be now or in the future…We’ve seen all those Eastern Bloc countries, that the athletes are now are horribly affected by the drug use in the 60’s and

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15 For a pertinent example of this see Costello (Sydney Morning Herald, 18th May 2005). Federal Treasurer Peter Costello told ABC Radio, “I cant understand how clubs would allow it myself. They might say, ‘well it’s a legal drug and there’s nothing wrong with taking it’, but gee it sends a bad example doesn’t it when you down pills like that”.
16 See for example, Armstrong and Stubbs, The Mercury, 11th May 2005: 60. Former Tasmanian footballer Matthew Armstrong expressed his opinion that caffeine may not be a banned substance but by allowing players to seek a “lift” they would be tempted to go the next step and take a banned performance enhancing substance.
70’s…I must say, I might be old school, but I just can’t live with it” (Gleeson, The Age, 14th May 2005: 4)

It is this last allusion to the ‘amateur ideal’ and the disgust at the hyper human aesthetics of well known banned PEDs like steroids that prompted Malthouse, like Wallace, to advocate caffeine use be banned. This would then protect the traditional socialising role of sport. He said, “We have a massive responsibility and I would hate to think young players would look at this and say, ‘Well, that’s how you win games of footy and that’s how you can be better”. (Gleeson, The Age, 14th May 2005: 4)

**Arguments For Caffeine as a Normal, Safe Performance Maximiser:**

In contrast those who argued for the use of caffeine attempted to rework the aesthetics of PED attached to caffeine. Most notably this included demystifying the effects of caffeine and bringing it back within the realm of other acceptable and safe forms of performance enhancement. The need to remain competitive was also stressed but not at the expense of the socialising role of sport and the amateur ideal. Rather the professionalisation of the game was explained as an extension of the amateur ideal, requiring hard work and discipline.

Brisbane Lion Jason Akermanis (4th May, 2005), in a rare instance where his comments did not later call for an apology, wrote in Queensland’s Courier Mail that he thought the media furore over Pavlich comments was “way over the top”. (50) In his article, titled “Hard work not drugs guided us to the finals” he explained that a successful team depended on the “incredibly good management of our team and our bodies, hard work and the willingness to do the extras”. He wrote that the Lions have “never stopped looking for an advantage”. Akermanis then outlined his own regime for improvement, which includes:

“time everyday on an electro-magnetic mat which stimulates blood flow and speeds recovery from training and game. I also have used an hypoxicator, a breathing device which helps improve lung capacity…As well as eating
correctly, we all take supplements of some kind or other. But all, and I stress all, are legal and are prescribed by our club dietician”

The realities of working in a professional team sport is seeking a myriad of ways to improve performances over and above opponents. For Akermanis the use of caffeine does not negate from the cultural role of sport, since “hard work” and commitment was still called for. He challenged the troubling aesthetics of caffeine as a PED saying “caffeine is not a banned substance so the players are well within their rights. What’s the fuss? A player taking a tablet is no different than someone having a couple of cups of coffee or a can of Red Bull”.

Senior coaches also sought to frame caffeine use as a legitimate and safe means to seeking the edge in competition. West Coast coach John Worsfold and Sydney coach Paul Roos both insisted they did not know if their players were using caffeine, but both (initially) supported their use if they were proven safe and effective. (Townsville Sun, 2nd May 2005: 27) Worsfold said, “My view is if our doctors and our sports science people say this is for us, I don’t care what other clubs do – if they thought it was the same as taking a multivitamin, in that there’s no health risk and its extremely safe and its allowed, then I think we should be considering it”. Melbourne coach Neal Daniher also said of the debate was a problem with the aesthetics of drugs rather than its actual properties “Let’s understand this is a legal substance at the moment and the issue is a perception issue. Guys have been taking powders and Musashi for 10 or 20 years…Popping tablets is not a great perception for young kids.” (emphasis added. Duffield et al., The Age, 12th May 2005: 3)

Thus who did not see caffeine tablets as problematic attempted to disassociate caffeine with the symbolism of PED’s and reframe it as safe, natural and not all that performance enhancing. The Swans club doctor Nathan Gibbs revealed that No-Doz tablets are readily available to players before each game, but that it was tightly controlled to ensure that its use was not counterproductive to performance. Gibbs explained that “caffeine is going to make you more alert, but if you take too much you can get the shakes. So you don’t take to much and the effect over the course of a
football game in terms of getting a lift would be slight at best”. (Prichard, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13th May 2005: 31)

The debate then was fought very much around the symbolic imagery of “matter out of place” which is attached to drugs. In an article for *The Australian* Dr Louise Burke, head of sports nutrition at the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) is quoted referring to the debate as a “storm in a coffee cup”. (Jeffery and Smith, *The Australian*, 19th May: 36) Burke, who had written a fact sheet explaining the performance enhancing benefits of caffeine, identified the debate as one over the imagery of athletes using drugs rather than its performance enhancing effects. Caffeine as a performance booster or a pick me up is recognised by many people who include it their morning rituals. However, caffeine in pill form has different connotations. Burke was bemused how “people have different moral feelings about things. Having a cup of espresso is okay, but having a couple of No-Doz is naughty when it can have an identical (effect)”.17 (Jeffery and Smith, *The Australian*, 19th May: 36)

**DEBATING CAFFEINE: THE STRUGGLE TO BALANCE CULTURE AND COMMERCE.**

The amount of conflict generated over the caffeine debate also reflects the difficulties governing the AFL and balancing the different priorities of culture and commerce. Brisbane Lions coach Leigh Matthews (*The Courier Mail*, 14th May, 2005: 64) editorialised the debate as the struggle for clubs and administrators to reflect the changed nature of the game. In the modern game there is less emphasis on the competition itself and more on the process of “selling” the image of the game:

“In the more amateur days, our primary objective was on-field success at club level. It was and should always be No.1. But the battle lines are moving as public relations and marketing becomes as important as wins and losses”.

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To demonstrate the conflict that can arise from these different priorities Matthews gave the example of the Lions short-lived practice of using intravenous drips during the 2001 season. The Lions medical staff thought the drips a more efficient means to hydrate players in humid conditions than drinking fluids. But the sight of players hooked up to the drips at half time was deemed “unsavoury” and bad for the image of the game. It was immediately banned by the AFL.

The “image of the game” is heavily contested and the caffeine debate reflects this. For Matthews, the requirements of professional sport and the wider community are quite different. Matthews explains his image of the game at the professional level as “competitive, tribal, combative and challenging. Its survival of the fittest and it’s these qualities that make it so compelling to spectators”. But what makes the game compelling for spectators is “probably not” the kind of game the community wants its children to play. He maintains it is unrealistic to expect elite sport to reflect exactly junior sport that, “they are separate things and keeping them that way is a delicate balancing act for the game’s administrators”.

The AFL commissioner Andrew Demetriou certainly reflected this battle to balance community expectations of football with its realities. He argues that the caffeine issue had been “blown out of proportion” and did not believe that it offered players an advantage. (Epstein, *Sunday Tasmanian*, 15th May 2005, 47) A former player for North Melbourne, Demetriou did not prescribe to the transgressive associations made with PEDs but that the general perception of caffeine as a PED was enough to warrant action:

“I’ve never believed that taking something gives you this super-doper-hyped-up thing…But the fact that we have people who believe that’s the case [that it’s a magic pill] is an issue to me. It doesn’t send a good message out”.

He stressed that the AFL commission had put pressure on clubs to ensure that caffeine be carefully monitored, that it “should be taken under medical supervision and our medical commissioners have sent a note to that effect to all the clubs and have told all the clubs they will be monitoring the situation”. (Epstein, *Sunday Tasmanian*, 15th May 2005, 47)
The trajectory of Sydney coach Paul Roos stance on the caffeine debate also demonstrates the “delicate balancing act” of commerce and culture. The Sydney Swans came under heavy criticism following their sports doctors comments that caffeine was “freely available to players”. (Prichard, The Sydney Morning Herald, 13th May 2005: 31) Despite his support for caffeine use Roos (20th May 2005) later wrote an article for Sydney’s The Daily Telegraph attempting to bring some finality to the issue and deflect the criticism that had been directed at the Swans. (64) He called upon the AFL and the WADA to take strong action on what had become “more than just a storm in a coffee cup” and wrote that he was “perfectly comfortable for WADA to come out tomorrow and say we are banning caffeine again.” Roos stressed that the Swans were very conscious of taking only legal substances having their sports doctor check everything, “including over the counter cold and flu medicine”.

However, Roos was also conscious that his call for a ‘blanket ban’ was a symbolic attempt to alleviate community anxieties about PEDs and its impact on young players. He wrote that AFL players needed to appreciate more their “huge influence on young people” but that the debate was strongly about perception rather than actual wrong doing and “centres around the image of players taking a tablet”. Roos reassured his readers that despite caffeine and its performance enhancing potential the socialising role of football would continue:

“At the end of the day I think there’s really no substitute to enhancing your performance by continually working on your skills and eating, sleeping and training properly. Its important that we do not forget there a no shortcuts to becoming a champion footballer. Its takes passion, hard work and dedication, things you wont find in any pill”.

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18 See also Baum and Johnson (The Age, 21st May 2005: 4) to see how West Coast coach John Worsfold also rescinded his earlier comments in support of caffeine tablets if it proved safe and effective. In this later article he was quoted as drawing on his professional instincts as a pharmacist to be warned against ingesting stimulants. He said, “as a pharmacist, I would probably steer away from using it to play with”. His earlier comments followed his instincts as a coach.

19 See also Wilson (The Daily Telegraph, 21st May 2005: 96) wrote that Gibbs had come particularly heavy fire from the anti No-Doz lobby.

20 See also Morrissey (The Daily Telegraph, 19th May 2005: 74) for some great PR work from the Sydney Swans following criticism of their sports doctor using star player Barry Hall. Hall came out and called for players to “wake up to themselves” because their use “paints a really bad picture” for junior players. (Morrissey, The Daily Telegraph, 19th May 2005: 74) Hall added, “I don’t take the No-Doz tablets at all. I haven’t tried them and I certainly don’t feel the need to use them”. (Morrissey, The Daily Telegraph, 19th May 2005: 74)
GLOBAL AND LOCAL INTERDEPENDENCIES: WADA WEIGHS IN.

The confluence of global sport and drug discourses with the local context is reflected in the kinds if issues that shaped the caffeine debate, but events would transpire that made the interdependency of this relationship explicit. Following the volume and intensity of the debate WADA chairman Dick Pound announced it would consider reintroducing caffeine to the prohibited list.21 (Magnay, The Age, 19th May: 3) The AFL debate very publicly threw into doubt WADA’s original claim that caffeine was not performance enhancing. Pound commented:

“the interesting thing in this debate is not that a lot of Australian players and athletes have come out saying that they have taken caffeine, but that the AIS says it is performance enhancing with research backing up their claims and recommending how it should be taken…Having heard this, our list committee will take another look at it”. (Magnay, The Age, 19th May: 3)

In a media press release the Arts and Sports minister Rod Kemp (2005) quickly responded to reinforce the close working relationship between WADA and the Australian Government. Kemp emphasised Australia’s role as a “significant player” in Anti-Doping regulations. He promised Australia would provide WADA with all the information it had on the effects of caffeine to best allow the “international watchdog” to “make informed decisions”.

However, Pound’s claim is misleading and suggests that WADA’s intrusion was less about the scientific evidence of performance enhancement and more about the symbolic message of preserving the integrity of sport. In an article for the Australian Prescriber Fricker (2004) then assistant director (now executive director) of the AIS summarised the requirements behind WADA’s prohibited list for 2004,

21 It is also interesting to note that the AIS executive director Peter Fricker said the move to ban caffeine again would be “losing the plot”. (Magnay, The Age, 19th May: 3). His argument was reminiscent of tactics used by other supporters of the safe use of caffeine in sport. Fricker sought to reinforce the everyday, normalcy of the drug and said “the beneficial effects at low doses are well within the range of the usual daily caffeine intakes of most members of the community.” (Magnay, The Age, 19th May: 3).
including the WADA’s rationale for dropping caffeine. Fricker explains the reason WADA dropped caffeine was not because there was no evidence of performance enhancement but because the amount required for benefits was too low to produce a positive test (urinary levels of 12 mg/L). Because of its known performance enhancing benefits caffeine was placed on WADA’s Monitoring Program. Thus WADA was aware of caffeine’s performance enhancing potential before it removed it from its prohibited list, but did not have the means to properly police it.

WADA’s intrusion into the caffeine debate was a show of strength, a way of asserting its position as the premier watchdog of drug issues in sport. Under its policy of harmonisation the WADA exists to symbolically preserve the utility of all sports as a conduit for collective representation, of which the amateur ideal remains a central part. The Australian government is actively complicit with this aim given sports essential role in expressions of national power. The disclosure of AFL players that they used caffeine to ‘get a lift’ is an overt expression of professionalisation over the amateur ideal propelled these institutions to comment. This concern is reflected in the WADA director general David Howman’s comments that caffeine tablets were “bordering on cheating and saying ‘Well, lets take every step now’”. (Magnay, Sydney Morning Herald, 19th May 2005, 42) It is also evident in comments made by the federal Sports Minister, Rod Kemp, who referred to the footballers attitudes to the game.

“It is a concern for the sports to have players and athletes using such substances in the belief that they will get an edge,” he said. "Popping pills to get that extra edge is not a good message, but it is an issue of conduct, and sports should be looking at changing the culture of their game.” (Magnay, Sydney Morning Herald, 19th May 2005, 42)

Thus, the “belief” that caffeine tablets were performance enhancing and the “bad message” it sent to the wider community about the priorities of their sport was enough to invite censure. But when the scandal died down caffeine was again not included in WADA’s Prohibited List for 2006. (Wilson, Herald Sun, 29th September 2005, 91)

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22 WADA’s prohibited list forms a rather dense and inaccessible document and Fricker (2004) wrote a simplified version to inform athletes, coach and medical practitioners of their requirement under the code. (84)
A LESSON IN COMPROMISE: AFL BANS CAFFEINE AT JUNIOR LEVEL FOOTBALL.

The WADA intrusion escalated the debate. The dominant concern though was again the impact of the broad promotion of caffeine on young players. Commentators like Watson deemed the AFL’s efforts to warn players against caffeine pills as merely an implicit message to young people “don’t try this at home” and this “was not good enough”. *(The Gold Coast Bulletin, 20th May, 2005: 22)* Watson called for a comprehensive awareness program to discourage “impressionable young kids” from using caffeine pills and that the AFL should feel “morally obliged to pay for it”. *(The Gold Coast Bulletin, 20th May, 2005: 22)* Further in another article by the *Herald Sun*, titled “The cost of caffeine” high profile sports medicine expert Dr Peter Larkins begins with, “every parent with a child playing sport should read this article”. *(21st May 2005: 95)* Larkins calls upon his readers, parents, to agree that caffeine tablets should be banned, not because of potential health problems or even that it actually enhances performance but because “the intent is clearly to extract a performance advantage over and above that gained through natural ability and training”. *(Herald Sun, 21st May 2005, 95)*

The AFL’s response to this new round of criticism is a lesson in compromise. It banned caffeine-taking by players in the national under-18 and under-16. This new regulation has been written into the code of ethics for the under 18’s and under 16’ Australian Football Championships and Challenge Series. There is no testing for the drug and no sanctions are enforced if found to be using the substance. Instead, if a young player is caught using caffeine their state organisation would be approached and the player counselled. AFL manager Adrian Anderson said this ban did not indicate movements towards banning caffeine at the senior level, but said that the AFL “discouraged” its use. *(Johnson, *The Age*, 28th May 2005: 4)* A few sensationalist articles did appear in the following days questioning whether the AFL had taken strong enough action to curb an increasing tide of youths seeking caffeine the dispute. However, following the AFL’s ban of caffeine at junior levels no sustained reporting on the issue has surfaced.

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23 For example, a report in the *Sunday Herald Sun* (Crawford, 29th May, 13) claimed an influx in the use of caffeine tablets by young players. These impressionable teens were “following their AFL hero’s and popping caffeine pills to improve their performance” and Victorian chemists were selling the
Ultimately, the AFL’s response was a belated form of ‘strategic philanthropy’. (Marjoribanks and Capling, 2003) It suggests that the core of the debate was the desire and the need to protect the cultural message of the game from the symbolic message of boundary violation attached to PEDs in uncertain times. Once the AFL affirmed this role the debate subsided. But this final response, indeed the whole debate itself, illuminates the ways ‘footy talk’ and football business engage with and maintain critical reflexivity. For all the criticism from public, politics and press, which gained further legitimation from the global anti-doping watchdog WADA, the AFL maintained a site for an acutely observed skepticism. The AFL could have bowed to public pressure and banned caffeine at the senior level, but it did not. Instead it maintained the “right” as it was so often expressed, for its players to prepare for their profession using any legal and safe means. In short, the final measure was perfect balance of commerce and culture.

tablets “at up to four times the usual rate to children as young as fourteen.” (Crawford, *Sunday Herald Sun*, 29th May 2005: 13) In South Australia the *Sunday Mail* made similar claims and that young players in the Burra Booborowie Hallet senior colts team were using caffeine tablets to get an edge over its opponents. Girls who played netball near the football oval claimed the “boy’s changerooms were littered with empty packets of No-Doz”. (Nankervis, *Sunday Mail*, 29th May 2005, 17) Ted Vernon chairman of the Junior District Leagues in Adelaide called for the ban to apply at all levels of the game because excluding senior players is “sending the wrong message to juniors, saying you can’t use them but its okay for their AFL heroes”. (Nankervis, *Sunday Mail*, 29th May 2005, 17)
CONCLUSION:

The caffeine debate demonstrates that the rationale behind the desire to prohibit PEDs in sport is a complex and contested issue. While WADA may be achieving unprecedented success with the harmonization of its drug policies across the globe this debate reflects that this transition will not be easy.

An important issue that has been raised throughout this thesis is the problems with WADA’s myopic approach to pursuing prohibitionist tendencies. WADA in seeking to protect the values and the ‘spirit of sport’ uncritically accepts a nostalgic vision of sport as fact. Post-modern sport has transformed its traditions, the initial attraction to the amateur ideal and it inculcating of hegemonic masculinity and principles of fair play have been universalized by nationalistic and commercial interest. This means that *Citius, Altius, Fortius*, no longer carries the same quaint notions of discipline and health and its competitive slant has become all encompassing. The desire to achieve national reaffirmation through sporting success propels nations to support WADA so as to ensure their continued participation and legitimacy in sport on the world stage. But this has been at the expense of addressing the factors which make PEDs seem essential and the support bases that make it happen. Thus, despite the expense and vigilance of its testing program and its education initiatives WADA has not impacted on the significant numbers of athletes using PEDs and the medical entrepreneurs and sporting networks that support them.

The success of WADA is its cultural relevance and not its capacity to reduce the use of drugs in sport. Under neo-liberal modes of governance contemporary ‘fears and anxieties’ stem from the loss of social structure and the need for cultural markers of ‘good’ and ‘dangerous’ becomes more important. The long history of drugs as a cultural marker for dangerousness and boundary violation ensures that its policing is more rigorous now than in times past. WADA acts to preserve sport as a cultural marker for ‘good’, a proper display of healthy bodies and moral fortitude. The policing of PEDs and its associations with creating renegade hyper-human are in keeping with this role.
However, these problematic tendencies are not prescriptive and the context and content analysis of the AFL caffeine debate demonstrates how local contexts engage with and transform global discourses on drugs and sport to reflect their own cultural milieu. The most striking thing about the debate is that caffeine, an everyday substance, became an issue and it suggests that the influence of global sport and drug discourses are enhanced in the Australian context. A particularly devoted commitment to the values of sport, principally its ability to achieve natural justice and the capacity of the AFL to be used to reflect a variety of collectivities ensured suspicions of a PED was initially acute. The later depictions of caffeine in ambiguous performance enhancing terms allowed for a direct conflation to be made between it and the more well-known transgressive potential of prohibited PEDs like steroids. This imagery connected with the role of the AFL in the development of the moral and physical direction of young (male) players gave the debate its impetus.

While this strong commitment to the values of sport and Australian football reinforced WADA’s mission, other forces around the AFL acted to question it. This included the tendency of ‘footy talk’ to generate media which is critically reflective of issues in football. This emotional detachment is evident in the direct attempts of key AFL figures to reframe caffeine as another legitimate, practical and safe performance enhancer, which is used in the course of preparing a competitive team. On the other hand the AFL also seeks to capitalize on its cultural import and key figures equally expressed reservations about alienating its supporters. Despite a symbolic show of authority by WADA, which acted to further intensify the debate the AFL commission devised a strategy that reflected the peculiar features of the game. It reaffirmed its cultural role by prohibiting caffeine in the under 18s but did not move to censure the “right” of senior AFL players to prepare their game using all legal and safe means.

This thesis demonstrates the desire to prohibit is a universal one which stems from a need to protect the cultural role of sport from the transgressive elements of drugs. WADA is the global manifestation of this desire. However, as the analysis of the ‘scandal’ of caffeine as a PED in the AFL demonstrates this drive is not easily prescribed and local contexts will consume, resist and transform this global initiative.
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