

Doping Control – Did you know?

This has been adapted from an article in *The Times* on Monday 6th September by Matthew Syed

As a result of the latest spate of behavioural indiscretions by key sportsmen Matthew is saying that in the future athletes will be subjected to greater intrusion into their personal lives and circumstances than ever before. The purpose of this being to save sport from cheats and cheating.

Currently he suggests that our elite sportspeople are among the most scrutinised in the world. They have to pee into a bottle watched by the dope tester. They must also provide detailed information about their whereabouts extending 12 weeks into the future. For an hour of every single day the athlete must be available at a specified location to take a drug test.

The athlete must disclose information about where he is sleeping, where he will be training, and any regular activities such as evening classes or a part-time job.

Samples are stored indefinitely so that retrospective tests can be carried out. Blood tests, in addition to urine tests, are now part of the conventional procedure of the Doping Authority, The British Olympic Association has even sought legal powers for police to search the rooms of athletes at the 2012 Games.

There is a move to create a single Global Authority to structure controls and monitoring. If that happens even greater and wider powers will be sought. There are indications that if this body is created it will seek the right to having greater discretion over such things as intelligence holding and surveillance. Athletes must now face up to a future where under cover officials armed with covert cameras will monitor their behaviour in and around events as well as during the build up to competition. Athletes are already subjected to random drugs testing they may soon have to endure the random seizure of phone records, e-mail traffic and hard drives.

Dedication to the pursuit of excellence must now be coupled with carefully distilled paranoia if one is not to fall victim to the new rules

Is it right, is it fair, does it make success worth it. Rafael Nadal the world's top tennis player says, " To know where you are every single moment of your life is a high price to pay to practise your sport." Andy Murray says it's almost impossible to live a normal life and the rowing team find themselves panicking, always having to think about when their nominated hour is for testing and regulate their lives accordingly.

Success obviously comes at a price and personalise the situation and judge how well you would or could cope.

Malcolm Oates