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FOREWORD

Given the sheer scope of the doping epidemic that has engulfed Olympic sport since the 1960s, it is tempting to ask whether the founder of the modern Olympic Games, the Baron Pierre de Coubertin, might have anticipated that widespread drug use would eventually infiltrate the world of high-performance sport. This may seem like a far-fetched speculation; most people, after all, regard doping as a recent development and do not associate the nascent sports world of the 1890s with the use of performance-enhancing drugs. This view is, however, mistaken; it was well known at the time that the long-distance cyclists of the 1890s were using dangerous drugs like heroin and strychnine. The difference between then and now is that this early doping was not regarded as an illicit practice; it was rather seen as an antidote to the extreme fatigue experienced by the elite athletes of that era.

De Coubertin's creation of the modern Olympics thus coincided with the early phase of sports medicine that included informal testing of less toxic substances such as milk, tea, and alcoholic beverages. While it is conceivable that de Coubertin could have read about such experimentation in the 1894 volume of the *Archives de physiologie normale et pathologique*, there is no evidence that he did. De Coubertin did, however, anticipate the consequences of the Olympic motto *citius, altius, fortius* ("faster, higher, stronger"), and he did so without the trepidations of today's anti-doping activists. De Coubertin knew that the modern sport for which he had created an international stage possessed an element of what he called "excess." "We know," he said in 1901, "that [sport] tends inevitably toward excess, and that this is its essence, its indelible mark." Nor was de Coubertin the only Olympic visionary in this respect. "Not to develop the latent possibilities of the human body," a famous Olympian wrote in 1919, "is a crime, since it certainly violates the law of nature." The author of this Promethean declaration was none other than Avery Brundage, president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) from 1952 to 1972. As Thomas M. Hunt documents in

this book, Brundage, unlike de Coubertin, eventually had no choice but to respond to the doping issue. As Prof. Hunt demonstrates, this response was ineffectual. With prescient fatalism, Brundage feared that directing public attention to doping techniques might “give ideas to . . . unscrupulous” athletes. It was left to Pope Pius XII to warn against the use of “gravely noxious substances” in the February 1956 issue of the IOC *Bulletin*.

Drug Games is the first and only major study of how the IOC has dealt with the doping problem as it has evolved since the 1950s. Indeed, the history of the IOC is especially important in this regard, in that its failure to address the doping crisis during the presidency of Juan Antonio Samaranch (1980–2001) contributed to the creation of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), which went into operation in January 2000. WADA was the result of a negotiation between the IOC and national governments, including the United States, making the IOC a major stakeholder in a global anti-doping campaign that faces daunting obstacles to its goal of driving doping practices out of the Olympic Games and other international competitions. WADA’s current engagement with the prospect of genetically manipulated athletes is one of many troubling signs that the current campaign against doping practices may well prove to be futile. Here, as elsewhere, Prof. Hunt offers careful and well-documented assessments of an Olympic sports culture that finds itself embedded in a modern world where performance enhancers of various kinds have triumphed over traditional ideas about the importance of self-restraint.

This triumph of the Performance Principle, as suggested above, can be derived from the Olympic ethos that mandates the linear progress of human athletic performances for as long as such performances are possible. De Coubertin himself intuited the appeal of this dynamic principle and pointedly scorned the “anti-sporting utopians” who had intuited its dangers. The modern descendants of these “utopians” are those members of WADA who actually believe they can restrain the use of doping practices in a meaningful way and who oppose any techniques they deem to be “contrary to the spirit of sport.” This is a difficult position that confronts the illicit drug use of many, many elite athletes, including many Olympians, in recent years. In February 2010, frustrations resulting from this conflict between temptation and ethical rigor led the longtime WADA-president Richard Pound to denounce doping athletes as “sociopathic cheats.” At the same time, Mr. Pound and other tenacious opponents of doping must confront the possibility that de Coubertin himself defined and determined “the spirit of sport” long before it ever occurred to the IOC that it now confronted the task of reining in the “excess” the First Olympian had declared to be good.