


# VISIONS FOR A DOPING-FREE SPORTS CULTURE

*Early specialization as a risk factor*

Alessandro Donati

Reykjavik, 30 October 2007



A black and white photograph of a high jumper in mid-air, clearing a bar. The athlete is wearing a light-colored singlet and shorts. The background shows a crowd of spectators and trees. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark green box containing white text.

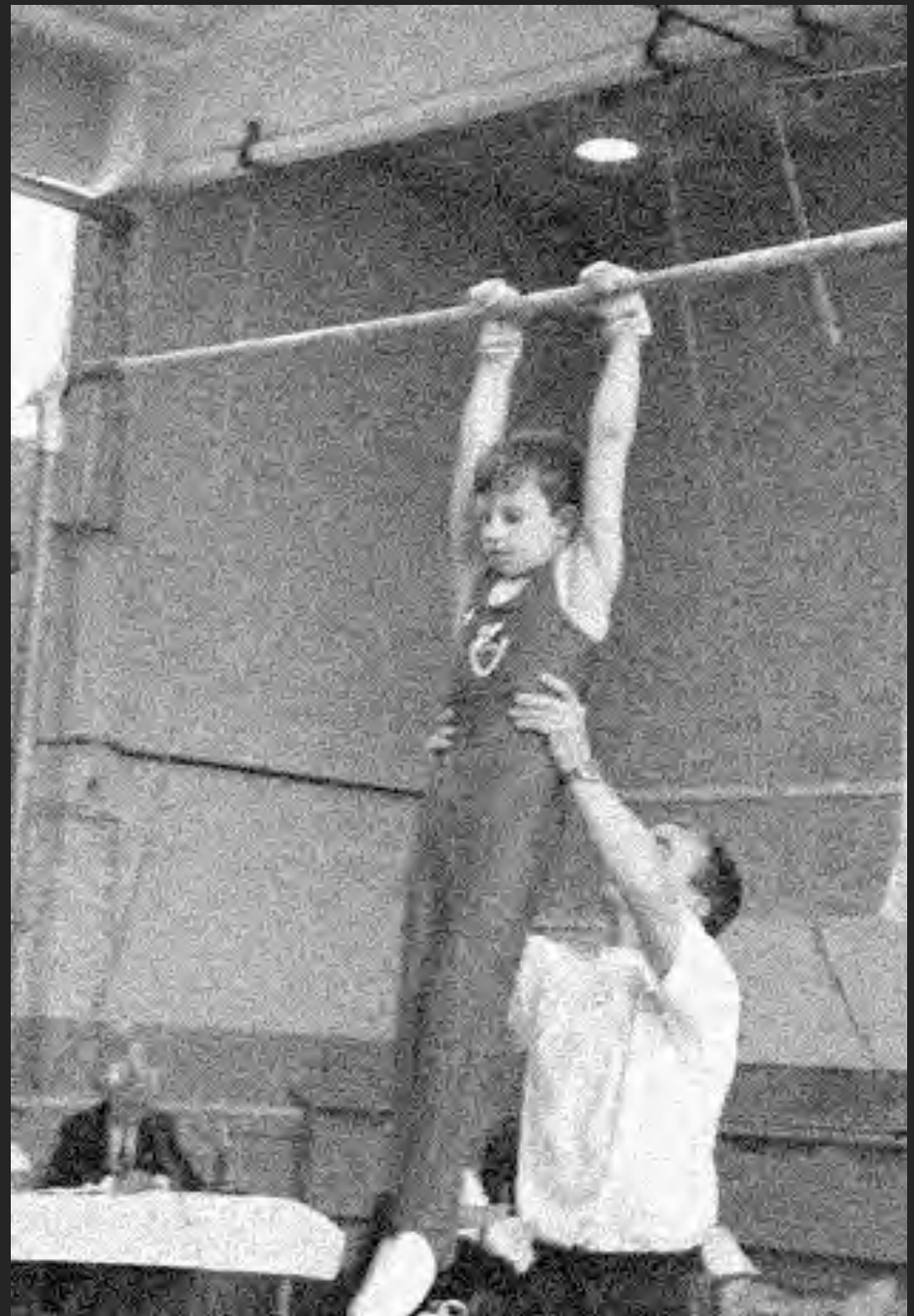
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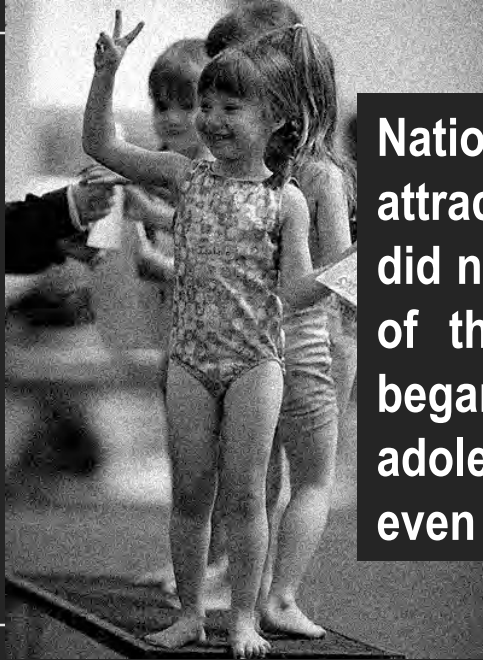


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**As of the 1970s, new very appealing methodological trends – coming from the Soviet Union and East Germany – began to be diffused in several other countries; these trends considered early talent selection the best way to enhance high level sports performances.**





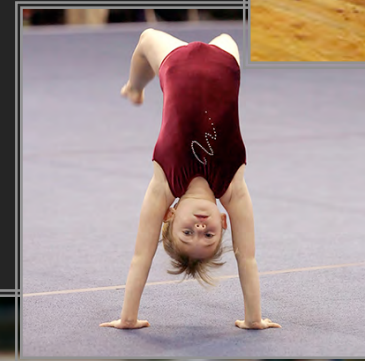
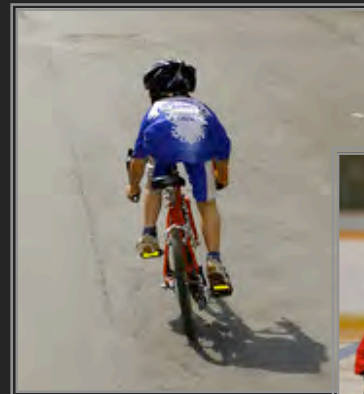
**National sports federations were highly attracted by this outlook, which certainly did not answer requirements or interests of the children themselves; they first began enlisting teenagers, then pre-adolescent children and a few years later even four- or five-year-old infants.**



Since the aim was to select talented subjects for high level sports, the sports activities of preadolescent and even younger children was organized simply by copying the models of single events.



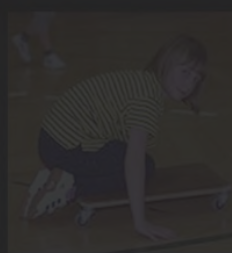
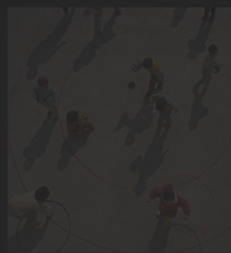
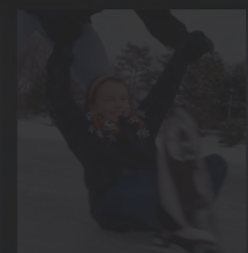
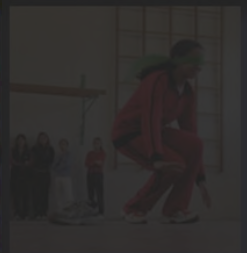
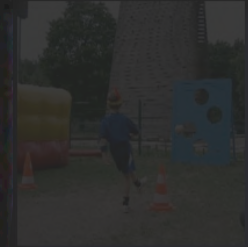
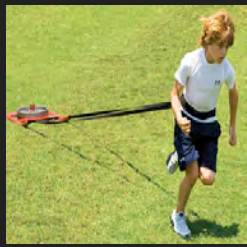
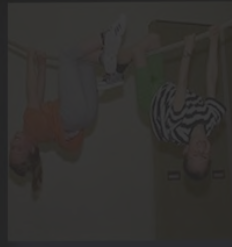
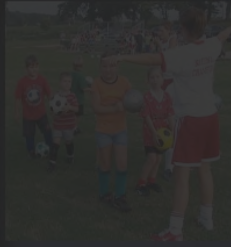
In fact neither sports executives nor coaches would have been able to do otherwise because for years all their motivation and experience had been centred on a given event with its specific competition and training models.



Since they were interested in preadolescents and in children, federation executives and coaches started, in their own interest, a dialogue with the schools which they considered only as a reservoir of possible talents. They were often supported by the physical education teachers, who in most cases were former athletes or coaches of the national federations.

This invasion led to an encounter in which federation executives and coaches with their blazoned image clashed against physical education teachers, who were definitely less striking and were in favour of a more structured approach to motor activities and sports.

The sports federations won this struggle so that, in many countries, motor activities and sports lost their meaning as psychomotor education of schoolchildren.



Born 1916



Entry in the IOC 1963

Born 1921



Entry in the IOC 1946

Born 1911



Entry in the IOC 1959

Born 1920



Entry in the IOC 1966

Born 1919



Entry in the IOC 1965

Born 1914




Entry in the IOC 1967

Federations were increasingly characterized by an endless careerism of all executives so that the average age of both executives and coaches became higher and higher. In this context, the activity prescribed to preadolescents and children was the exact copy of that followed by adult athletes, all the more exasperated by the deleterious model of the so-called “high level sports”.


No parents would ever think of allowing their children to play in the same place where adults are gambling, and often even cheating. But this is exactly the environment of the sports federations, where sports activities of adults and children are all too often in close contact.




Faced with the increasingly serious crisis of the sports system, we must, for the best interest of these children, ask an all-important question: why should their enthusiasm, their energies be manipulated through a compulsory, early specialization which has misleading effects, instead of offering them all the values and rich variety of stimuli of sports activities practiced in a peaceful environment, aimed at self-fulfilment, which would in no way exclude a subsequent specialization?



How can it be that families, schools, paediatricians and family doctors, all the other professionals interested in the wellbeing and education of children, local authorities (municipalities and regional governments) and even national policies, instead of offering sports as an amusing and educational activity, are more interested in reducing youth sports to a mere instrument for talent scouts?



Is it possible that the sporting world is incapable of taking into consideration that it is incompetent and inadequate as regards children's educational activities and games?



Public institutions should have answered these questions long ago, but they must do it now that the crisis of the sports system is all too evident and that the diffusion of doping is such that it may become a well established practice to be handed down to future generations.

Answering these questions certainly means imagining and planning a new model for youth motor and sports activities, in which would converge all the experience and knowledge acquired in these last years in the fields of education and methodology.

It is also obvious that the definition and implementation of said new model must involve all the above mentioned subjects, in particular sports institutions, the only ones in a position to provide the information necessary to construct **a concrete and stimulating system that would respect children's right to games and aim at the balanced development of their abilities and skills.**

The approach certainly cannot be the one suggested by IOC President, Jacques Rogge, who claims he wishes to contribute *“to solving the universal issue of an increasingly sedentary lifestyle and of the diffusion of obesity among the younger people”*...

...with the institution of Youth Olympics.

SPORT WORLD NEWS

## Rogge attacks childhood obesity



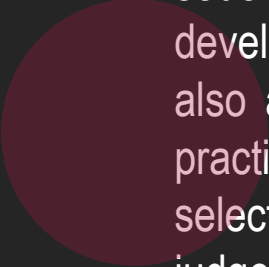
*The President of the Olympic International Committee Jacques Rogge delivers a speech during the opening ceremony of the 119th IOC session at the national theater Miguel Angel Asturias in Guatemala City, Guatemala. (Photo by Juan Carlos Munoz/Getty Images)*



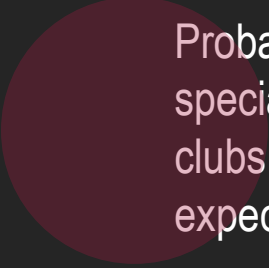
How can a physician such as him, really think that there is any connection between a small elite of highly talented young athletes who participate in Youth Olympics and the increasing diffusion of sedentariness and obesity among millions of people of the same age-group?



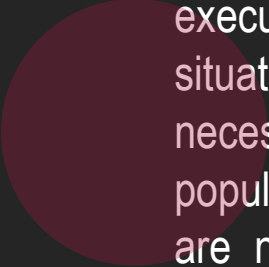
If he really believes this he cannot be very intelligent; if his project is really aimed at creating a new business for IOC then may God help us and save us from institutions such as the IOC!...



Jacques Rogge probably does not even know that sedentariness among young people and the consequent development of metabolism disorders (not only obesity!) are also a consequence of the high drop-out rate among young practitioners who are estranged by an environment where selection and marginalization are the rule and where the judgement of a young person's achievements are reduced to a mere evaluation of sports results.



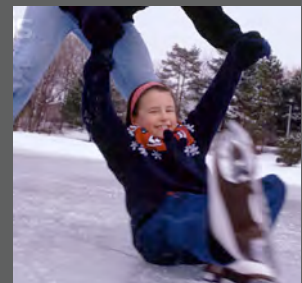
Probably Jacques Rogge does not even know that early specialization often creates false talents and induces, in sports clubs, families and even the young athletes themselves, false expectations that are only a waste of time and resources.



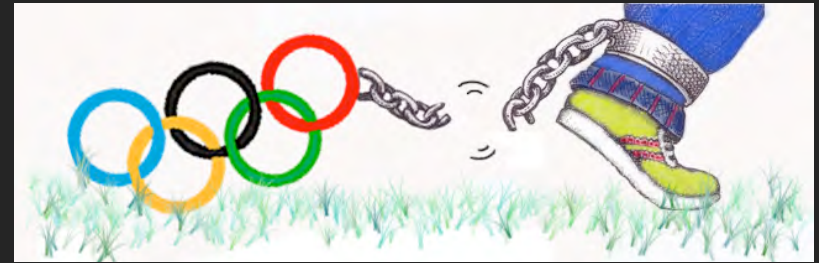
Yet, even in this sport system such as it is, there are executives, coaches and physicians who have understood the situation and are well aware that a change is absolutely necessary if we are to meet the requirements of the young population. A fruitful cooperation between these figures, who are not obsessed by careerism and visibility, and physical education teachers could bring forth new models and solutions.

# PROPOSAL FOR A NEW MODEL OF YOUTH MOTOR AND SPORTS ACTIVITIES

A discussion aimed at conceiving a practical proposal could be set in motion in different ways in each country, according to their particular situation. I here wish to set out the terms of the issue and encourage such a discussion.



1) Be independent of the NOC and of the national sports federations;



A composite institution, that would become the fundamental instrument, should be appointed in each country: a Confederation for youth sports. It should have the following characteristic features:



1) Be independent of the IOC and of the national sports federations;

2) Establish different educational projects for each age-group (from 4 to 12-13 years of age), based on a multilateral approach and multi-sport experiences;

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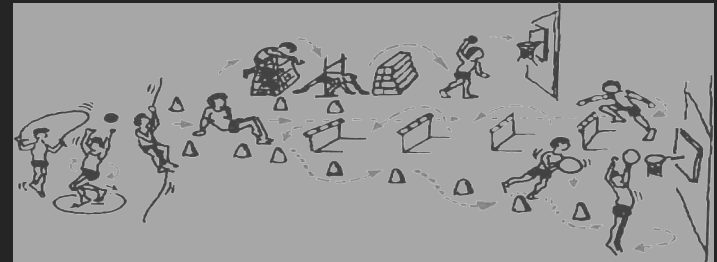
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3) Specific training for coaches/educators capable of managing this kind of structured approach according to educational objectives;





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4) Specific training for executives, officials and other personnel involved in the organization and management of competitive sports;

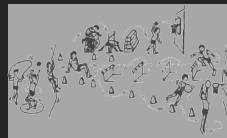




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5) Encourage researches, critical overviews and all other activities aimed at understanding the epidemiological situation in the various age-groups, identifying psychological and social requirements, pin-pointing the necessary political and economical conditions and the necessary facilities.

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In the meantime, and this could be in part an alternative, at least the content and criteria presently used in the education of coaches and executives involved in youth sports should be changed.

In particular:

**A** Educators in charge of training youth sports executives should not come only from the sports milieu but also from other spheres (schools, medical professions, psychologists, sociologists) so as to develop an adequate educational content and provide these coaches and executives with educational objectives having a wider scope than the mere development of sports performances;

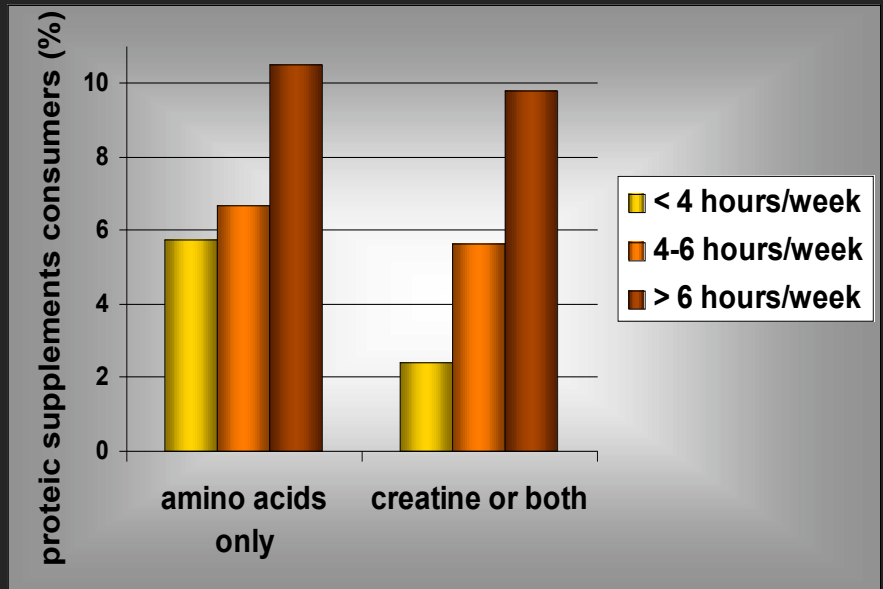
**B** Ensure that the youth sector of each sports federation has a wide degree of independence and is responsible for the achievement of said educational objectives and not for the sports results of its young athletes;

**C** Allocate sufficient financial resources to the youth sector, so that executives and coaches are in a position to really pursue the institutional objectives (organize competition activities that more varied than the model of the specific event, give more importance to educational aspects than to the development of an excessive specialization, cut down the drop-out rate).

We cannot be sure, but there is reason to believe that a profound change of the present youth sports system may be very effective as regards doping prevention.

This aspect will have to be confirmed by specific studies aimed also at monitoring the effectiveness of the interventions that have been implemented.

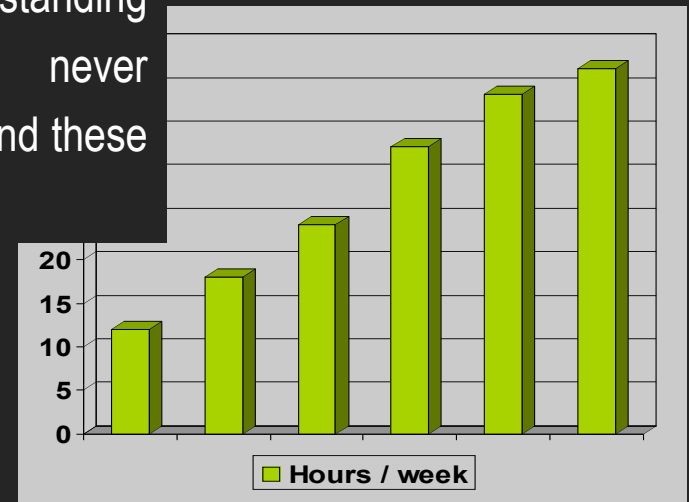
Percentage of subjects (11-13 years old) declaring creatine consumption as a function of training time:



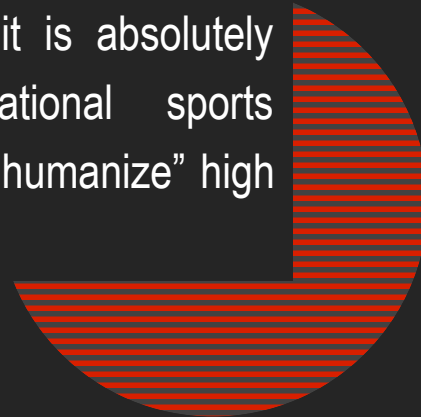
Donati Alessandro, Caterina Pesce  
Pediatric Exercise Science  
PES, 16(3), August 2004



We may also presume that reforms may also give a new impulse to the methodology of sports training that is presently humiliated by trends established or advertised by coaches who achieve outstanding international results but never explain what really lies behind these victories and records.



Some countries may manage to create a Confederation for youth sports while others will only be able to bring about a significant change in the organization and management of youth sports within the national sports federation, but in any case, it is absolutely necessary that all international sports federations be called upon to “humanize” high level sports in the next decade.



400 m – 47"60



100 m – 10"49



Shot put – 23.12 m



This means, for instance, that in the case of several individual sports disciplines based on records – such as athletics, swimming, weightlifting – special commissions of experts should be appointed to examine the list of record holders, study their historical context, their national background and decide to cancel all suspicious records (probably all of them) with the firm conviction that a tribute to the truth and the possibility to hand down to the younger athletes sports that are truly practicable is infinitely more important than protecting the image of record-men or women and of the organizations behind them.

How can it be that the significant artificial effects on performances are pointed out by those who practice doping and not by those who oppose doping?

≡ Tutti debbono avere il prodotto! per tutto l'anno

- Non bisogna più utilizzare il Metiltestosterone
- Parlare prima del di introdurre nuovi prodotti.
- Prodotti da usare: Methendiolone, Neralol, OXANDROLONE, Winster
- I dosaggi vanno stabiliti col sett. tecnico e col prof. Carnevali
- Strategie farmacologiche in abbinamento con la strategia tecnica
- seguire ogni strategia e darne copia al prof. Carnevali
- Controlli periodici ogni 20 giorni: convocazioni precise e controlli delle presenze

- Cercare ~~di~~ **Prof. Carnevali** per ridurre le dosi di metabolizzare

Secondo prof. Carnevali il 50% del risultato dipende dalla terapia in

**says that the 50% of the results depends on the drugs**

- Calendario dei controlli di laboratorio: 12 apr, 6 mag, 2 mag
- Aumento progressivo nella stagione
- Chiedere a l'idole per i farmaci di sostegno: 11 gin, 1 lug, 21 lug, 10 ago

Da 20 a 35 mg. ogni 24 giorni  
Da 80 mg a 120 mg. qui 14 giorni