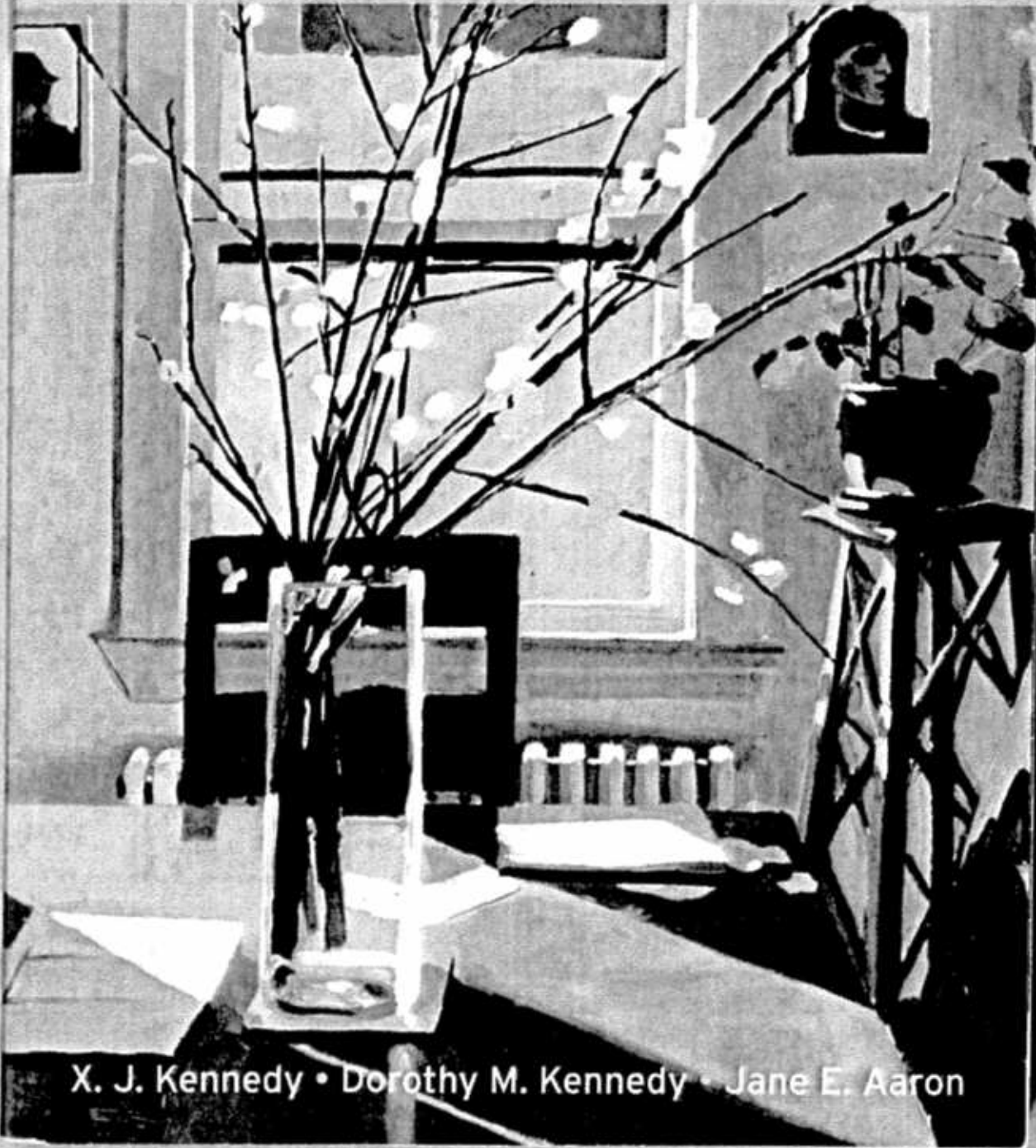


ELEVENTH EDITION

The Bedford Reader



X. J. Kennedy • Dorothy M. Kennedy • Jane E. Aaron

STEROIDS IN SPORTS

PETER F. MARTIN

Peter F. Martin was born and raised in New York City, where he attended Hunter College High School. As an undergraduate at Yale University, he wrote a sports column for the *Yale Daily News* and later became an opinion editor for the newspaper. He was also a writer, a photographer, and an editor for the *Yale Globalist*, a quarterly undergraduate magazine of international affairs. For the *Globalist*, Martin traveled widely, photographing in Tanzania and India and reporting on foreign investment in Venezuela and on water contamination in an Illinois coal-mining town. He graduated in 2010 and plans to become a teacher.

Destroyed

"Destroyed" (editors' title) was the first of twenty-five sports columns Martin wrote for the *Yale Daily News* during his sophomore year. Satirizing the fans and news anchors who demonize steroid-using athletes as "sinners" who ruin their sports, Martin urges his readers to reconsider and recognize such players as the victims of dangerous drugs.

In the essay following this one, "The Designer Player," Rodrigo Villagomez shares Martin's criticism of the media hype but argues a much different position on the place of steroids in professional sports.

Last week I had to write a paper for Introduction to Psychology about mind enhancers, drugs currently in development that would help brains work more quickly and more sharply, effectively making users smarter. I wondered if such drugs might help me finish the assignment. In our papers we were asked to explain the benefits and risks of these drugs, and to weigh in on the question posed: Are mind enhancers "cheating"? As a sports fan, I drew the obvious connection.

"Brain Doping?" I titled my piece. I've heard a lot about cheating. I've thought about it some. And I know it's bad. Athletes out there, stop cheating. Cheating ruins the game. Stop.

If only it were so easy. Performance-enhancing drugs, those nasty chemicals that athletes are guzzling down, rubbing in, and shooting up, are here to stay. They've made their way into almost every professional sport, and even

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created a new sport in the process. Now we all get to guess who's doping and who's clean. Head to Vegas and you can drop money on your guesses. Just make sure you cover the spread,¹ because it's not enough to say slammin' Sammy Sosa's been hitting the juice. You've got to call him out, naming which drugs he's taken and when. This is the new sport, replacing the old times when people simply sat and watched.

But in all the hubbub, some voices are drowned out. We hear the shouts of enraged fans, their sports mercilessly torn from purer eras, when the babes playing in the street and in the fields could look up to their athletes, those stoic giants, noble and morally firm. Writers, too, cry out from all corners. In this modern age they are joined by "anchors," suits behind a desk with rigid spines and pomade hair, crafted smiles on wax figurines. The wails are always the same. Players—sinners!—have brutally violated the games. The punishments must be swift and harsh. These criminals must be found, they must be confronted, and they must be forced out. Sports, remember, is a world of purity, of natural cleanliness. Syringes don't belong here.

I agree with the rhetoric, at least to a point. The world of sports is not for cheaters. I used to be the kid in gym class who ticked off the others by trying to enforce the rules. I don't get along well with anarchists. Or cheaters. But there are other voices out there, muffled under the deafening glow of ESPN neon and the invisible radiation of 24-hour sportstalk radio, and they're asking: Who's cheating?

Or really, what's cheating? Is it cheating to inject anabolic steroids into your buttocks, or, better yet, have a teammate do it for you? (Sharing is caring!) Yeah, sure, when everyone's outlawing the stuff. But why is it against the rules in the first place? Why can't Gaylord Perry throw his spitter? Why can't bats be stuffed with cork? These rules come from somewhere, I guess.

And it all goes back to purity. Sport, after all, isn't just entertainment. The original Olympians, heroes of sport around the world, saw nothing light-hearted or comical in their competition. Under the mountain of the gods they played, besting one another in competitions of strength and skill to honor the powers above. Zeus, one can imagine, was no fan of artificial enhancers. He liked athletes natural, apparently so much so that even clothing was off-limits. From this history we receive the spirit of sport: Competition is to be played fairly and naturally, without help from extra-human objects, artifacts, or chemicals that can be manufactured, bought, and sold. Nothing but grass and human flesh on any field where fair play is to be found.

¹A gambler on the outcome of a sports game "covers the spread" by betting on the difference in the teams' scores, not just who will win or lose.—Eds.

So here we find ourselves today. The fields, once clean, are soaked in juice. Baseball players, bicyclists, and track athletes are among the most egregious violators—or at least the most visible. The Olympics, in their modern-day incarnation, have lost luster as a result of the doping scandals across sports. And no one seems ready or able to stop the abuse.

But there's another problem to doping, one not seen on the field. As new anti-steroid messages illustrate visually with limbs falling off bodies, steroids are wildly destructive to their users. Though they may feel like magic to an athlete recovering from an injury or simply looking for easy strength, their longer-term effects are undeniable and devastating. Ken Caminiti, the whistleblower for the steroid problem in major league baseball, died three years ago of a heart attack, at age forty-one, and only eight years after winning baseball's Most Valuable Player award. He had taken steroids during his MVP season, and for several years after. It is the players, much more than the games, that we must protect.

Steroids and other performance enhancers are a true threat to sports. They challenge the ideals of sports, passed down to us from the Greeks and more recently from earlier decades of professional competition, when athletes more closely resembled real people. But more important than the games are the athletes themselves, whose physical health is threatened. Sports fans and commentators bemoan their beautiful games lost to artificial enhancers, charging the players with destroying competition by cheating. But what about the players?

Athletes—those who dope, who take steroids, who cheat—are victims of far more serious maladies than their sports. They will pay the price with their own lives, not too many years after they retire. Meanwhile, the only offense to us, the fans, is uncertainty: We must wonder which records and stats are “natural” and should be free from scrutiny and asterisks. I charge the sports-loving world to take a different look at steroid use (or abuse). Sinners? Athletes are as free as other people to make mistakes and suffer the consequences; in short, they are humans like the rest of us. Or at least they were before they started juicing.

For a reading quiz and annotated links to further readings on steroid use in sports, visit bedfordstmartins.com/thebedfordreader.

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Journal Writing

How do you respond to Martin's concerns about steroid use among athletes? What do you think about performance-enhancing drugs in professional sports? in the Olympics? at the college level? Does using steroids constitute "cheating," for example, or is it on a par with athlete-friendly advanced technologies such as drag-reducing swimsuits and laser eye surgery? Does it matter that steroids might harm the health of athletes who take them? How important to you is "natural" ability in competition? Reflect on these issues in your journal. (To take your journal writing further, see "From Journal to Essay" on the next page.)

Questions on Meaning

1. Does Martin agree with the fans and writers who argue that steroids destroy the "purity" of sport? How can you tell?
2. On what grounds does Martin object to steroid use among elite athletes?
3. What is Martin's **THESIS**, and where does he state it?
4. In his conclusion, Martin writes, "Athletes are as free as other people to make mistakes and suffer the consequences; in short, they are humans like the rest of us. Or at least they were before they started juicing" (par. 11). What does he mean? Is he saying that athletes have a right to use steroids no matter the risks, or is he suggesting something else?

Questions on Writing Strategy

1. In paragraph 6 Martin asks a series of questions. What is the purpose of these questions, and what is their **EFFECT**?
2. Identify Martin's use of a specific **EXAMPLE** in paragraph 9. What does it contribute to his argument?
3. Consider the placement and wording of Martin's thesis. Why do you think Martin might have chosen this placement and wording?
4. **OTHER METHODS** How does Martin's essay use **CAUSE AND EFFECT**?

Questions on Language

1. In paragraph 7 Martin says, "Zeus, one can imagine, was no fan of artificial enhancers. He liked athletes natural, apparently so much so that even clothing was off-limits." What is he talking about? What are the implications of this reference?
2. What does Martin mean by "extra-human" (par. 7)? What are some **CONNOTATIONS** of the term?
3. Be sure you are familiar with the following words, checking a dictionary if necessary: enhancers (par. 1); doping (2); hubbub, stoic, wails (4); rhetoric, anarchists (5); anabolic (6); egregious, incarnation (8); bemoan (10).

Suggestions for Writing

1. **FROM JOURNAL TO ESSAY** Based on your journal entry, draft an essay in which you explain your position on steroid use in sports. Are performance-enhancing drugs acceptable, or do you think they should be banned? Why? As you write, imagine an audience that may not entirely agree with you. Try to make a convincing case for your own viewpoint.
2. Martin suggests that, for a variety of reasons, sports have been ruined—they're no longer as good as they once were. Write an essay in which you offer your view of this idea, arguing for or against some recent change in a particular sport. If you generally support the change, offer specific **EXAMPLES** and speculate about the benefits. If you generally disapprove, challenge supporters with examples that counter their arguments.
3. **CRITICAL WRITING** In an essay, **ANALYZE** the image that Martin presents of himself, his **ETHICAL APPEAL**. Consider specific examples of his language and **TONE**, along with what he says about himself and his attitude toward sports. How do you respond to this appeal?
4. **CONNECTIONS** While Martin comments that "[s]port, after all, isn't just entertainment" (par. 7), Rodrigo Villagomez, in the next essay, takes the opposite view as the basis for his argument in favor of steroids. In an essay of your own, examine both writers' **ASSUMPTIONS** regarding the purpose and function of sports, both professional and amateur. Which of those assumptions come closest to your own?

Peter F. Martin on Writing

For The Bedford Reader, Peter F. Martin reflected on the importance of writing for an audience.

When I began doing journalism, I became hyperaware of the need to keep people reading. Newspapers and magazines make a difference only when people choose to read what's inside them, so a journalist's job is to produce something people will want to read. There's no reason writers shouldn't keep the same standard through all writing forms, even when the only reader will be a teacher or a friend. When I write, I hope to craft something meaningful. That isn't to say I don't write lighthearted pieces or use humor, but I want readers to take something away from my pieces. . . .

Ideally, readers won't pick up on the editing an article has undergone. The average reader is interested in the final product, not a marked-up draft with revisions and author's notes. I almost always write for a specific audience, keeping my imagined reader in mind. And for the most part, I write for my

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readers, not for myself. But I always enjoy the challenge of crafting a thought into words—and I still get excited when I know others will be able to read what I've written. That's the only way writing of any kind makes a difference.

For Discussion

1. In what ways does Martin think all forms of writing should adhere to the standards of journalistic writing?
2. Do you agree with Martin's position that writing makes a difference only when it is read by others?