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# Leadership in the IOC's Medical Commission on the issue of Anti-Doping

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# Background



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- Anti-doping: current public dilemmas and controversies
- Important to understand origins and developments of a policy
- Formative period: 1960s
- Consolidation: 1970s and 1980s

# Questions



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- Who was leading it?
- What did they aim to achieve?
- Why?
- Specifically – Prince Alexandre de Merode

# IOC



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- Houlihan (1999) focus on institutions
- IOC priority to maintain integrity of the Games
- Mechanism – testing during the Games
- Believed to be sufficient deterrent
- Constrained by financial resources
- Hoberman (2005) more critical of the IOC's leadership
- General tendency to focus on post-1988

# Policy process



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- Houlihan (2005) review of models of the public policy process
- A good model should:
- Allow interplay of structure/agency
- Consider structural factors
- Capable of explaining stability and change
- Should enable a medium term (5-10 year) historical analysis of policy change

# History



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- Longer term view
- De Merode was in charge from 1967
- Effectively the world leader of anti-doping
- Example of ‘policy broker’
- Constrained by internal and external factors
- But his ideas and personality helped shape anti-doping

# Two views



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- 1. Jacques Rogge and David Miller
- 2. John Hoberman

# 1960s



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Avery Brundage



Arthur Porritt



Prince Alexandre  
de Merode

# Origins



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- 1960 – Brundage concerns, then Jensen's death
- 1961 – creation of a commission headed by Arthur Porritt
- 1963 – Council of Europe
- 1964 – Tokyo Games; de Merode witnesses doping among cyclists

# De Merode



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- 1965 – de Merode reports to Session
- 1967 – Porritt reports and resigns from IOC; Medical Commission formally set up
- How did he get the job?
- 1968 – first testing: sampled 6.8%, had no test for steroids
- Brundage wanted to disband Medical Commission

# De Merode



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- Emphasised: testing in Games from 1968; gender verification
- Brundage did not want anti-doping to be the IOC's responsibility
- Simple philosophy: 'fear of the law frightens away the criminal'
- Rationale: health, use of other narcotics; not fair play or image of the Olympics

# Challenges



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- Arnold Beckett: IOC knew about steroids from 1960 onwards
- 1967 report said steroid use had been increasing since 1963
- No out-of-competition testing
- Lack of harmonised framework
- But, de Merode pressed on with expanding list, keeping process watertight, publicising anti-doping initiatives



# Internal

- ‘Subversive’ and ‘Inactive’ IOC countries
- GDR, USSR, USA - steroids
- Concerns about cost - \$1.5m in 1972
- No funds for research
- President had other concerns
- De Merode: ‘When we first introduced systematic testing, people used to say that we were going too far and exaggerating the scale of the problem’

# 1976



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- First test for steroids
- De Merode: 'It is very likely that the problem of doping with anabolic steroids will decline in the same way as that of psychomotor stimulants'
- But ... only 275 athletes were tested, of which 8 were positive
- Easy to avoid detection

# 1980



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- De Merode proud of technological advances
- Zero positives
- He claimed the Games were 'pure'
- Manfred Donike – 2 years later conducted retrospective tests and found that up to 20% of female athletes were on testosterone
- Most countries knew how to beat the tests

# 1980



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- Still undermined from within:
- Norman Hess, Winter Games Organizing Committee: 'it would cost Lake Placid far more to provide doping controls than to house and feed the athletes for the whole of the Winter Games'
- Lord Killanin: anti-doping too expensive; Medical Commission too big

# 1980-4



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- Pivotal period
- 1983 Pan-Am Games
- IOC struggling for credibility
- Pre-84 publicity about doping
- Peter Ueberroth: drugs and doctors are taking over the Games, but we must protect the integrity of the IOC

# 1984



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- De Merode's most (in)famous contribution
- 9 positive samples from finalists were 'lost'
- Arnold Beckett complained
- Later revelations showed use of blood doping, HGH, and steroids



# President

- Dr Howald, a former member of the IOC Medical Commission: "Samaranch decided that the dozen cases of drug taking already revealed was enough to bolster the image of the IOC being tough on drug taking and he did not want any more."

# De Merode



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- 1965-1984
- What had he achieved?
- Had he focused on the best strategies?
- Functionary or facilitator?
- A good man in an impossible job?



# Watershed?



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- One lucky catch
- On a backdrop of widescale abuse
- Prompted integration and harmonisation
- De Merode's role and reputation diminished



# 1990s



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- Fall of Berlin Wall
- Out-of-competition testing
- Commitment from other organisations
- Pan-European initiatives
- ‘Best people ... are so modest they have failed to get together to fight the growing problems’
- In 1996 de Merode was accused of discarding positive samples

# WADA



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- External pressure on IOC to cede some power
- Dick Pound (2004): Samaranch 'said he could not appoint Merode, since [his] current credibility in the fight against doping in sport was non-existent'
- Died in 2002: obituaries focused on scandals but sympathised with the challenges he faced

# Review



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- Importance of early period
- De Merode appointed for reactive reasons
- No medical expertise, little support, had to maintain image
- Walked the line between action and protecting the ‘integrity’ of the Games
- ‘Policy broker’ but not a ‘policy entrepreneur’ or a ‘policy revolutionary’



# History

- Fragments and episodes
- Enough to establish answers?
- Not trying to achieve ‘a window on the past’
- Connect narratives to events
- Link structure and agency
- Power, relationships, image
- Enough to rethink what we know ....