

Leadership in the IOC's Medical Commission on the issue of anti-doping

This paper considers the role of Prince Alexandre de Merode in heading the IOC's fight against drugs from 1968 to 2002 through his position as Chair of the Medical Commission. History has not served de Merode very well, offering us two simplistic and opposing views of his leadership. The official IOC position is that he was an intelligent man who worked hard to combat doping and led several key initiatives. However, some academic studies have presented him as an ineffectual leader who did not develop either the testing systems or the punishments required to prevent doping. His reputation has certainly been undermined when he infamously allowed positive urine samples to be 'lost' on two separate occasions. By drawing from a range of archival sources, the aim here is to present a richer, more complex portrayal of the man and his work. However, a sceptical approach is taken to documentary sources in light of recent methodological debates in sports history. It will be argued that better sources lead to better understanding, but that we remain some distance from any form of objective or complete truthfulness.