

Anti-Doping: Western Media Ignites War on China in Sports

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Global Research, May 08, 2024

Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

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Western accusations of doping by Chinese swimmers threaten to exacerbate China-US tensions, undermine the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA) and seriously harm the upcoming Paris Olympics.

The controversy was ignited by investigation reports at the [New York Times](#) and German TV broadcaster [ARD](#).

These media outlets suggest there has been a cover-up of a mass doping incident among Chinese top swimmers with connivance of the Chinese Anti Doping Agency (CHINADA) and complicity from the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA).

This story served as red meat to the hyper aggressive leader of the US Anti Doping Agency (USADA), Travis Tygart.

It has prompted western swimming competitors to loudly complain. For example the NY Times [reports](#) that US team swimmer Paige Madden thinks medals from the Tokyo Olympics should be reallocated. "I feel that Team USA was cheated." British swimmer James Guy says, "Ban them all and never compete again." What might be considered whining and poor sportsmanship is effectively being encouraged by western media.

The NYTimes and ARD are the same two media that precipitated the accusations of "state sponsored doping" in Russia. It did enormous damage to thousands of Russian athletes and resulted in different levels of banning starting with the Rio Olympics in 2016. Although widely accepted as "truth" in the West, the claims of widespread Russian doping were weak when evidence was required. Most Russian athletes who challenged their banning were [exonerated](#). The major accusers, the Stepanovs and Grigory Rodchenkov, were themselves [guilty](#) of doping and profiting from doping. Despite this, the banning has continued and

escalated after the Russian intervention in Ukraine. The accusations and banning were useful in propelling the “new cold war” and “new McCarthyism”.

NYT and ARD, and their anonymous informants, may be seeking to do something similar to China. USADA has issued a [response](#) in which they say China may be engaging in “systematic doping” under a “coordinated doping regime”. On May 6 USADA’s Tygart [escalated his attacks](#). He implies the Paris Olympics will be a “train wreck” because of WADA complicity in China’s “cheating”. He hopes the US government will “step in and help lead and fix this.” Surely a recipe for success.

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China’s cheating threatens to wreck Paris Olympics, US anti-drugs chief says

American regulator Travis Tygart accuses the World Anti-Doping Agency of “allowing” Chinese authority to cover up illegal drug-taking by top swimmers.

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What Happened

On Jan. 1-3 in 2021, the Chinese swim team was having a domestic swim meet. It was in the midst of covid lockdown. As usual, the team was drug tested but this time a strange thing happened: many swimmers tested positive for a trace amount of the banned medication trimetazadine (TMZ).

The China Anti Doping Agency (CHINADA) investigated and reported the facts to the World Anti Doping Agency as required. They found:

- 23 swimmers tested positive for a very small amount of trimetazadine (TMZ)
- the swimmers were from different regions of China with different coaches and trainers
- all 23 were staying at the same hotel eating in the same dining room
- none of the swimmers staying at a different hotel tested positive
- some of the swimmers tested positive one day, negative the next
- tests in the hotel kitchen showed the presence of TMZ on the air vent and counters

CHINADA concluded the positive TMZ tests were from hotel food and the athletes were not at fault.

They reported the incident and investigation to the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA) and the international swimming federation now known as World Aquatics (formerly FINA). Both organizations examined the facts and agreed with the findings.

Because the athletes were deemed to have no fault, the incident and names of the athletes were not publicized. WADA regulations indicate that there should be no publicity or naming of athletes deemed innocent and without an "Anti Doping Rule Violation" (ADRV).

How It Has Been Reported

Approximately a year later, in 2022, anonymous sources reported this incident to the NY Times and ARD. Since then, the two media outlets have done further investigation but kept the story secret until two weeks ago.

They suggest something shady happened back in early 2021. They suggest WADA may be complicit in covering up anti doping violations. They almost encourage western athletes to challenge the Chinese swimming accomplishments and be "angry". On April 20 the story was ["Top Chinese Swimmers Tested Positive for Banned Drug, Then Won Olympic Gold"](#). On April 21 the story was ["'Team USA Was Cheated': Chinese Doping Case Exposes Rift in Swimming"](#). On April 22 the story was ["Top Biden Official Calls for Inquiry Into Chinese Doping Case."](#)

These reports ignited a flood of other sensational and accusatory reports and editorials. The Guardian report is titled ["Poison in the pool: why the latest Chinese doping row is proving so toxic"](#). Sports Yahoo says ["Extremely concerned Olympians will not let the Chinese doping allegations die"](#). The PBS News Hour had a video report titled ["Chinese doping 'swept under the carpet': US anti-doping chief says"](#). [Sports Illustrated](#) said the news may alter the distribution of medals from the 2021 Tokyo Olympics.

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation is looking into the situation. .

The NY Times and ARD say they have been investigating this story for two years. The release appears timed to have maximum impact and possible damage, just months before the Paris Olympics.

USADA Accuses WADA

The US Anti Doping Agency (USADA) is led by the hyper-aggressive Travis Tyler. He has used the reports to claim that WADA is complicit in a Chinese “cover-up”. In a TV interview before a large national audience Tygart [said](#),

“China didn’t follow the rules. They effectively swept this under the carpet because they didn’t find a violation. They didn’t announce a violation. They didn’t disqualify the athletes from the event at which they tested positive. And this is absolutely mandatory under the world anti-doping code that all nations are required to follow.”

WADA has responded that Tygart’s comments seem “politically motivated”. They say CHINADA followed the rules, investigated and reported as required. They say China did NOT have to announce it to the world, or name the individual athletes for the very good reason that false accusations of doping can destroy a career. WADA regulations say the names of athletes should NOT be publicized until or unless it is confirmed they have an Anti Doping Rule Violation.

WADA Appoints Independent Investigator

WADA is the international organization charged with supervising global anti-doping in sports. With its headquarters in Canada and most of its leaders from NATO countries, it is a largely western organization.

They are highly sensitive to criticism from the West. It has pushed back against some of the most extreme criticism, for example from the USADA head. They have also appointed an independent investigator to review what happened in China and whether WADA was correct to accept the Chinese investigation and report.

WADA appointed Eric Cottier, the prosecutor general of a Swiss region. WADA headquarters are in Canada but the organization is registered in Switzerland. USADA has criticized the appointment suggesting that Cottier is not sufficiently “independent”.

Thoms Bach, head of the International Olympic Committee, has voiced support for WADA.

WADA has defended their actions in a press conference and [fact sheet](#) about the case.

The controversy may quiet down. But a lot of poison has been spread around. Encouraged by the NY Times and other media, numerous western athletes now claim they feel “cheated” out of medals at the Tokyo Olympics since 5 medals were won by Chinese swimmers involved in the TMZ “doping scandal”.

It is also possible the controversy will continue. Will the “Sports Czar” of the Biden Administration get involved? Will the FBI be designated to investigate? These are now possible in the wake of the [Rodchenkov Anti Doping Act](#) which passed Congress in 2020.

Reader comments following articles indicate there is a wellspring of anti-China hostility encouraged by the accusations. The most popular comment on [this article](#) says, “When will democracies learn that authoritarian regimes play dirty, and should be viewed as suspect not deserving of good faith.” Another says, “No one knows doping like China knows doping, China knows doping best.” Another one says, “China cheats. Russia cheats. Just like the East Germans did before them. Their governments will meet the same fate as they did.”

Pushback

There has been some pushback to the sensational anti-China accusations. For example Denis Cotterell is a world class coach who has trained both Australian and Chinese Olympic swimmers. He has spoken out strongly in support of the Chinese swimmers. He [says](#), “I can see what they (the swimmers) go through. I see the measures... The suggestion that it’s systemic is so far from anything I have seen here the whole time. They are so adamant on having clean sport.”

An [insightful article](#) from an Australian academic sports authority and popular sports commentator suggests there are political forces at work: “WADA – like the United Nations and other organizations – finds itself in the cross hairs of the great power struggle of our time: a rising China and its challenge to US dominance.”

Geopolitical Consequences

According to the [“2024 Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community”](#), China is “challenging longstanding rules of the international system as well as U.S. primacy within it.” China’s positive “international image” is a challenge to U.S. leadership. By this logic, it is in the US interests to damage China’s international reputation and standing.

This raises the question: How did the TMZ get into the hotel kitchen and into the food being served to these Chinese athletes?

In February 2022, accusations of intentional doping were heaped on the Russian figure skater [Kamila Valieva](#). A trace amount of trimetazadine (TMZ) was detected in a drug test taken seven weeks before the Beijing Olympics. There are similarities to the Chinese case: same drug, same trace amount detected, same mystery as to how it was ingested.

Because she could not explain how it got there, Valieva was condemned in the West and ultimately had her international career destroyed. The Russian figure skating sweep was prevented and the Russian team lost their gold medals. The controversy distracted and partially ruined the Beijing Olympics. The “intelligence community” undoubtedly considers this a success.

How did the TMZ get in the hotel kitchen in China? Who are the “whistle blowers” who informed the New York Times and ARD and supplied the names of the athletes who tested positive for the trace amount of TMZ?

The anti doping crusade is being manipulated by powerful forces with ignoble intentions.

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