

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION**

Frank Shorter
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***Carpe Diem- Seize the Day- For the Future of the Olympic Games and
Our Children Who Are The Olympians of the Future***

Mister Chairman and other distinguished members of the committee on both sides of the aisle. My name is Frank Shorter. I was a member of the 1972 and 1976 United States Olympic teams. In addition I was fortunate enough to win a Gold Medal in the men's Olympic marathon in 1972 and a silver medal in the same event in 1976. It is an honor and privilege to be able to appear before you today to state as strongly as I can my carefully considered opinion with regard to illegal performance enhancing drugs in sport. It is an opinion based on thirty years of experience as a self-coached athlete and commentator.

Two years ago, I would have never dreamed you would be hearing testimony from General McCaffrey, a member of President Clinton's Cabinet who not only knows how pervasive and serious the problem truly is, but also, like you, actually has the resources and power to implement change. This is a *bone fide* plea on behalf of the world's athletes for help from the American government.

Without major changes in the system that detects these drugs and imposes penalties, they will continue to be the price of advancement for every young athlete who aspires to emulate a sports hero and pursue his or her career to the highest possible level. There will continue to be no choice but to put yourself at risk, even if you aware of the potential dangers and care about your health after your career is over.

Two years ago I might have sounded extreme. I do not think I sound extreme now, and, would like to outline what I perceive to be the recent confluence of events that created this unique and historic opportunity for you to act.

During the 1998 Tour De France, drugs were seized by French customs officials from a car belonging to one of the participating teams. Included were human growth hormone (HGH) and erythropoetin (EPO) two drugs with which you are, or will undoubtedly become, very familiar during the media buildup to the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney. There were even news reports that perflouorocarbon (PFC), an experimental, artificial blood only legally available to medical research institutions was discovered. Virtually unattainable, experimental, artificial blood possibly found in a Tour De France team car on its way to the next stage of the Tour.

Those of us close to international sport were not surprised. The elite athletes' grapevine is very extensive, as is the grapevine of young athletes who are emulating their heroes and heroines. Fortunately, we were very surprised and very pleased to see the level of public outrage amongst the French people. Finally, the parents were starting to understand.

Since then, the French Government has given serious consideration to nationalizing all drug testing within its borders. Such an obvious threat to its control prompted the International Olympic Committee to call for a world wide Drug Summit to take place in Lausanne, Switzerland

in February of 1999. Between the time of this announcement and the summit, the Salt Lake City Bid Scandal broke. Suddenly, it was more than a public relations problem for the IOC.

This was because the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and many members of the European Union sent cabinet level delegations to the summit. We were more than ably represented by General McCaffrey, Director of the White House Office Of National Drug Policy And Control, whom I had the privilege to brief beforehand, accompany to the summit and advise once there.

As an athlete and father, I was very pleased several of my views were shared by the General, but, we both arrived in Lausanne having decided independently and unequivocally, that our nation's children, as athletes, are currently at serious health risk. The level playing field of the Olympic Games has been chemically skewed. Taking illegal drugs is now the price of entry into the competition, and, the teenage athletes of the world know this. They no longer have a choice of whether or not to take these drugs in order to ultimately reach the top.

The IOC, unfortunately, attempted to maintain the *status quo* and proposed that a world wide drug testing agency be established with Juan Antonio Samaranch at its head. This was viewed as unacceptable by the governmental ministries in attendance, because it would not be truly independent and transparent.

In his address to the conference General McCaffrey articulated a position with which I, as an athlete, totally concur:

1. A truly independent, transparent world wide drug testing agency has to be established to oversee all testing for illegal performance enhancing drugs and enforce the penalties imposed for their use. For this reason, it can not be based in Switzerland and the IOC can not be in control of the findings or the way in which these findings are reported.

2. The testing has to be year round, random and involve blood as well as urine tests. Many performance enhancing drugs produce long term effects but will test positive for only a matter of days or weeks. Currently, only urine testing is used and the drugs of choice are only detectable through blood testing.

3. Samples have to be saved for at least ten years. The disincentive to take illegal drugs has to be maximized not minimized.

4. There should be no statute of limitations.

5. There should be ongoing, advanced research funded and technically supported by both sports federations and governments.

Now for my personal views--It is not just about catching cheaters. It is also about creating as strong an overall deterrent system as humanly possible. I believe this is what the clean athletes of the world truly want, as well as most of those who currently feel compelled to take these drugs. Consider it an "all of the above" approach.

Yes, part of the program has to be physical and immediate This is the testing and penalty side. But, the athletes will tell you it also has to be mental. This means making the process an ongoing, constantly evolving, psychological competition in which the cheater never feels secure in

his achievement and always a bit behind those whose mission it is to catch him.

With regard to the independent drug testing agency: everything possible should be done to avoid even the hint of a conflict of interest. This obviously means no IOC control. The current system is a textbook example of a conflict of interest with an inherent disincentive to catch cheaters. The athletes are well aware of this disincentive, and, are that much more motivated to find ways to stay ahead of the testing technology.

With regard to year round testing and the saving of samples: the cheaters should always live in fear. United States governmental experience in drug testing would be invaluable to the new agency so that procedures could be standardized and made less vulnerable to technical, legal challenges

With regard to any statute of limitations: it is intuitively obvious to me, as an athlete, that to be constantly be in fear that even your grandchildren might have to give back your Olympic medals would be a huge deterrent. Believe it or not, those who cheated with drugs in the Atlanta Olympics are now “home free” under the three year statute of limitations just adopted by the IOC.

I view the taking of performance enhancing drugs as perpetrating a fraud, and under international law, there is and should never be a statute of limitations for fraud. Medals, honors and money should be returned whenever it might be determined illegal performance enhancing drugs were used.

With regard to ongoing research: it adds a sense of “forever”. The pursuit should be methodical and relentless. The cheaters have to know the testers are committed morally and intellectually to catching them and that the monetary and laboratory resources available to the agency will be world wide.

All this having been said, I am very optimistic. My immersion in and love for my sport tells me the time for a drastic change in Olympic drug policy has indeed arrived. As the parent of a young runner with talent, I am optimistic that perhaps in three years he will not be faced with the option of taking drugs because all our young athletes will be emulating drug free Olympians. Finally, I have no doubt the true Olympians, present and future, will be cheering the drug free level playing field louder than anyone.

So, I urge you: *Carpe Diem*-Seize the Day

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