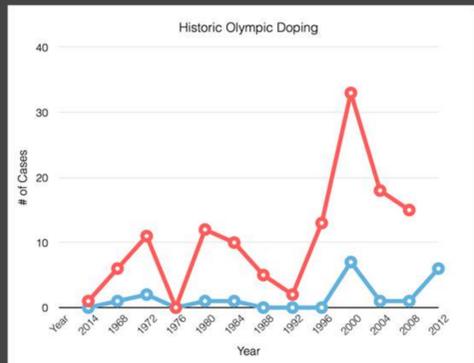


RUSSIAN SPORT + CORRUPTION

D O P I N G



Since the late 1960s, it appears as though doping and the use of PEDs (performance enhancing drugs) has continued to rise—even despite efforts to curb such behavior and amidst more stringent testing procedures. In a seemingly never-ending game of catch-up, athletes who wish to continue doping tend to maneuver around new testing methods. It would be naive to think that 100% of those doping are being caught.

Of the total number of doping cases, 11 athletes were Russian. At 7.5% of total cases, Russia is one of the highest countries in regards to athletes being caught doping.

Soviet Norms

In the Soviet Union, athletic success—especially at the Olympics—was paramount. Between 1952 and 1991, the Soviet Union won 1,204 medals: second only to the United States. Accordingly, there existed an “enormous pressure from the Communist Party to produce winners,” and by 1991 it was shown that 44% of the Soviet Union’s top 240 athletes “considered doping essential and even inevitable for winning.” Due to decades of accepted doping, the practice is less frowned upon in Russia compared to other nations; instead, it seems as though the focus is on hiding doping, not stopping it. Likewise, athletes convicted of doping in Russia tend not to lose their “hero” status as they would in, for example, Great Britain or France.

Forms of Corruption

Within the athletic and olympic realm, corruption has taken on a few notable forms: kickbacks, skimming, and blatant theft. During the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver, such corruption was rampant. Examples include the Russian Sports Minister spending \$1,400 / night on his hotel room when he should have spent \$130, price gouging by ticket salesmen and contractors, financial support of unnecessary persons, and making up for lack of funding by hiring the equivalent of high school level coaches for certain teams.

Results

As a result of such rampant corruption, Russia did not perform up to its expected standards during the Vancouver Olympics. In fact, its results were worse than lackluster: the team placed 11th—a “national disaster”.

Due to a lack of oversight and high levels of waste, fraud, and abuse by Russian officials leading up to the 2010 Games, Russia underwent its worst Olympic result in history. In the end, no Russian in power was reprimanded and the same officials began work on the 2014 Olympics in Sochi.

CONSEQUENCES

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Development + Public Thought

The 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics were the most expensive in history at over \$51 billion. Further, it was reported months before the start of the games that “half that sum” was allegedly “disappeared in corrupt building contracts.” According to oppositional figures, who point out that the budget increased five-fold from its original level of \$12 billion, nearly \$30 billion has been lost to “kickbacks and embezzlement” to those close to Putin. Media coverage aligned with this train of thought has been prevalent throughout the West, and more clandestinely amongst Russians themselves.

O

47% of Russians believe costs had risen due to embezzlement or mismanagement

C

22% of Russians believe that those responsible for such corruption will be “brought to justice for their actions”

H

40% of Americans held an unfavorable view

of the games while only **27%** held a favorable view on Putin

|

On the International Stage



Even the perception of corruption can be ruinous to a nation or event when viewed from from the outside.

It is not surprising that continually high levels of corruption within Russia—especially in regards to the Sochi Olympics—have affected how the world saw the Olympics. And while the Sochi Games may have done well overall, a few glaring errors permeated international culture and media faster than any propaganda could stop. The bathroom pictured above was but one example of the claim that for such a high budget, the amenities offered to both athletes and visitors were shockingly poor.

It was also next to impossible for Russia to detach its Olympic Games from greater social issues at hand. LGBT Rights and the rights of political dissenters, such as Pussy Riot, were often forefront in the Western media. While such tangential events may have been unrelated to the Olympics themselves, it was proven difficult to separate nation from sport. As a result of corruption in both the political and Olympic spheres this year, the Sochi Olympics did not fully live up to the standards their high budget should have allowed for.

Created and designed by Matthew Luongo

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