

THE DISCOURSE
OF SPORT

By LUIS CARDOSO

Ben Johnson's 9.79 time in the 100 metre event was the highlight of the Olympic Games in Seoul. The 100 metre race is track and field's glamour event, and Johnson's domination of that event has been phenomenal. There was no doubt that Ben Johnson was the fastest man in the world before the allegations of drug use surfaced and Johnson was stripped of his gold medal. I maintain that today, one day after it has been revealed to the media by the International Olympic Committee that large amounts of anabolic steroids had been found twice in Johnson's urine sample, there is still no reason to doubt that Ben Johnson is the fastest human being in the world.

The IOC's press conference, broadcast almost in its entirety on CBC television the night of Monday, September 26, was an exercise in lying and deception -- and a wonderful demonstration of the strategies of lying; for those interested, see Umberto Eco's fascinating essay "The Strategies of Lying," in *On Signs*, ed. Marshall Blonsky (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985) -- an exercise vital to the discourse of sport that is the very crux of the Olympic Games. Contradictory and confusing statements were drowned in Olympic rhetoric. Instead of explaining how the IOC's medical staff could be certain that Ben Johnson could not have ingested the outlawed substance five or six hours prior to the test, a suggestion consistent with the possibility of sabotage, Prince Alexander Merode, head of the IOC's medical staff, repeated the claim that such a suggestion was inconsistent with the profile of Johnson's test.

What is important is that the IOC could not completely rule out the scenario that a third party was involved in a sabotage situation.

Prince Merode and Michelle Verdier, IOC information director, prefaced and followed almost every statement and answer to the press's questions with rhetoric concerning the sanctity of the games and fair play. Ms. Verdier claimed that, "It means the IOC has taken a very strong stance against doping and that our system works and nobody -- no matter who he may be -- can escape the system. That's all." This is an amusing statement, considering the widespread and prevalent use of steroids by athletes. Steroids are often taken by athletes on a regimented schedule so that,

when the time for testing comes, there are no traces of them in their urine specimen. In an interview on CBC's *The Journal* Dr. Mauro di Pasquale, an expert on steroids and a former athlete, maintained that 90 to 95 percent of power-athletes use steroids. He went on to claim that drug testing was "an unsuccessful attempt to make competition fair." Drug testing is simply subject to too great a margin of error. Dr. di Pasquale also stated that the danger of steroids to athletes was exaggerated; "a scare tactic," were his exact words. Could it be that claims by the IOC that drug testing is for the athlete's own protection are another myth used to prevent a scenario in which the IOC would be unable to control sport in the face of leaps and bounds in human achievement? Remember that many on these boards, committees and panels are former athletes whose records are being shattered daily.

It is my contention that there are two separate issues. The first is that there is enough evidence to warrant an investigation of the assertions of foul play. There is more than enough doubt concerning the IOC's statements. Ben Johnson is one of the most drug-tested athletes in the world, and it has come as a shock to too many prominent people in both the Canadian and International sport scene that he failed this one. Second, and most important, is the validity of drug testing, that is, the question of international sport organizations such as the IOC and their ideology. Who are all of these princes and old people who rant and rave about fair play and the honour of the Games? Sport discourse asserts that international sports is immune from commercialism and materialism, and international bodies such as the IOC are there to guarantee that the stench of money does not lure athletes away from the shining path of amateur sport. The inherent contradiction is that corporate dollars are necessary for the very existence of the Olympic Games; they are also responsible for driving athletes to performing for medals. Fame and fortune are powerful incentives, and arguably the only logical reasons for dedicating years on one's life to sport.

A discussion of the merits of corporate sponsorship of sport is silly; the Games could not function without it. Sport, in fact, is hardly distinguishable from the names and logos of the corporations that support it. The discourse perpetrated by bodies such as the IOC, however, must be recognized as being laden with contradic-

DATE RAPE - Male Aggression? Female Complicity?

Two weeks ago, on a Friday night, I marched through the streets of Fredericton with about one hundred other women. We were marching to *Take Back the Night* - that is, to protest the threat of rape which all women face every time they head out alone after dark in Fredericton and elsewhere. The march received little attention: it didn't surprise me.

Now I'm speaking out again, but on the issue of date-rape not stranger-rape. While the latter provides the dominant image of rape for many people, the former demands more attention from women and men, whether they are feminist or not.

I recently had the opportunity to read an honours' thesis in Sociology written here at UNB last term. The title was *Sexual Aggression in Dating Relationships and its conclusions were drawn from a survey of 145 male and female students on this campus. The author wrote different dating scenarios, gave them to these students, and asked them to rate how justified they felt the man's sexual aggression in each case would be. In all of the scenarios, it was clear that the woman did not want sex. The results of the survey were shocking. It seems that all of the students felt that sexual aggression was more or less justified in some circumstances. I repeat: all of the respondents thought that even after a woman says 'no', there are some circumstances which justify a man forcing a woman to have sexual intercourse.*

If you have properly absorbed the implications of these results, you may be horrified and choose to doubt their validity. Think again. Nowadays, you can find ample support for these findings in books and journals dealing with the issue of sexual assault. All of this literature gives a person - especially a woman - pause to think. One of the more disturbing conclusions of these researchers is that sexual aggression by men in dating relationships is clearly taken as "normal" by our society.

Check this conclusion again your own experience. Have you ever heard the expression, "boys will be boys"? Or, have you ever asked someone (male or female) what they think of such aggression and got the answer: "What do you expect - a lot of guys are animals"? Such comments take the reality of male sexual aggression against women for granted. By the way, I am aware that there is such a thing as female sexual aggression against men - but I also know that female aggression is so rare as to have no statistical "significance" as the researchers put it.

Consider the scenario: I (call me Heather) go to a party at a male residence on campus. Over the course of the evening, I meet many new people and talk with many with whom I am already friends. Pretty soon, I'm "happy-drunk". Around midnight, I spot an attractive guy in the crowd, one I've chatted with once or twice before in class. He notices me and smiles, so I walk up to him and start a conversation about music. He reminds me that he promised to lend me a tape of something, and asks me to come to his room. I agree, thinking it would be nice to get away from the crowd. Once inside the room, with the door closed, he confesses his sexual attraction for me. Stepping closer, he kisses me on the neck, encircling me with his arms. I try to say something about liking him, but not wanting to... but he cuts me off, saying, "Don't worry - I won't tell anyone." He pushes me down on the bed, which I hadn't noticed is right behind me, and starts pulling my clothes off. I suddenly feel very helpless and am in complete shock at what is happening. I plead a little for him to stop but he doesn't respond. I'm so confused about my feelings, I can't act.

Does this scenario sound familiar? Would you say his actions were justified? For my part, it's "yes" to the first question, and an emphatic "no" to the second. Beyond these answers, I don't have any easy solutions to offer here. But I do have a pile of questions I'd like to put before men and women alike. I think it's time to talk

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tion. Only then can a path of less contradiction be taken, one in which athletes are not presented as cowardly drug fiends. Terms such as "good sportsmanship" and "fair play" also serve to perpetrate the discourse of sport. Are athletes who use steroids really cheating? The 1988 hundred event boasted the fastest field in history. It was the first time that four sprinters finished under ten seconds. In the context of implications of drug use, this boast is suspect, as will future inspiring performances be. If so many athletes are using steroids, perhaps it was unfair of the IOC not to allow Ben Johnson to use them.

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Special thanks to Fredericton
Rape Crisis Centre.

- in 75% of sexual assault cases, the victim and attacker are known to each other (Statistics Report of the Committee on Sexual Offenses Against Children and Youth, 1984). This largely unreported epidemic is what is known as date - or acquaintance - rape.

Rape, 1977) have concluded that sexual assault is not a sexual act, but an act of power and domination. The attacker is not, in other words, driven by any "sexual" desire or frustration, but by a desire to exercise power over another human being.

- many studies (e.g. Menachem Amir *Patterns of Forcible*

- according to a 1979 study by A.N. Groth, (*Men Who Rape*),

Did You Know That:

- it is only since 1983, when Bill C127 was introduced, that a spouse can charge his/her partner with sexual assault. The Bill dropped the word "rape" from the law books. The charge is now "sexual assault" and there are three levels based on the degree of physical harm inflicted on the survivor. There is controversy as to the consequences of this

only 1-6% of reported sexual assault victims are men. It is a common myth that offenders of male victims are either homosexuals or women. In fact, males, like women, are most frequently victimized by men. To assume that any mean who rapes another man is a homosexual reinforces the idea that rape is a sexual act rather than an act of power.

name-change. (For more information about the new laws, see Christine L.M. Boyle, *Sexual Assault*, 1984).

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ON BEING A MAN TODAY

Being a "man" can often be more difficult than we wish to admit. The difficulty does not come from any resistance against manhood. Nor, for males does it lie in a confusion about male physiology. The problem with being a "man" is that the term "man" has no single, precise meaning. Or, if it does, whatever meaning it has at any time seems to denote what is "expected or" males as a socially defined group. To be a "man," in this sense, is not just to be male; it is, more significantly, to fulfil a socially defined political, economic, cultural or sexual function.

Of these functions, none is as likely to cause pain to others, that is, to females, as the sexual function. Because aggression is a substantial part of manliness, and because womanliness is often associated with docility, passivity and deference to male aggression, "men" are more likely as not to believe that submission to their wishes is a woman's, any woman's, role. Predictably, such convictions shape our relationships with women and, even more predictably, the beliefs that to be a "man" is to be sexually aggressive, not to accept a woman's rejection, often leads directly to sexual violence such as date rape.

Rape is, no doubt, a curious word when attached to "date," dating being, I presume, a socially sanctioned expression of our sexuality. Date rape, therefore, seems a contradiction. Yet even if we were to ignore the data suggesting the prevalence of this violent expression of our manliness, we cannot dismiss the relentlessness with which, as "men," we refuse to take "no" for an answer from our "dates." Nor can many of us deny that our "Don't hear No" attitudes toward those to whose affection we aspire derive largely from a belief that "our date's "No" means "Yes." That is: denial by the woman is often seen as a call for the application of force, aggression being the instrument for transforming denial and rejection to acceptance and submission. And since we are less apt to be violent toward strangers, it is not surprising that those who fall prey to date rapes are those who, publicly at least, are considered our intimate friends.

All of this sounds, no doubt, as if I am saying that being a "man" is being unavoidably aggressive. Or that "men," being programmed to be aggressive, cannot resist being violent. Or, yet still, that as "men" we are not liable for the consequences of violent expressions of our sexuality. If it is true that manliness or its expression depends on socially constructed or framed meanings, and that aggression is a significant component of this package, it is no less true that males often have difficulties conforming to or retreating from these gender expectations. That is, not all males are "men" all of the time. Admonitions such as "Be a man" and expressions of censure such as "sissy" prove this. Conversely, statements of approbation such as "He is sensitive" also indicate that paradox at the core of manliness: aggression and gentleness.

For those (women) at the receiving end of the expression of this paradox, relating to men can be pleasurable or unpleasant. Victims of date rape may only know the pain and terror, the betrayal and self-torture, occasioned by an assault by those with whom they shared or wanted to share some intimacy. And, without doubt, such pain may even be intensified by feelings of guilt at having "led him on" or statements such as "What did you expect?" which exonerate the "man."

Whatever else we may "expect" from "men," unmitigated aggression cannot be one of them. If, even now, "man" is still a term whose meaning is both unfixed, unstable and historically multiple, it is equally a term whose functioning seems, in our times at least, to deny or reject dialogue in favour of confrontational monologues. But this is only a current construction, a phase if you like. We need another to which violence will be alien.

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