

College of Business Book Review by Kevin Ayers

Title: "Game of Shadows"

Authors: Mark Fainaru-Wada and Lance Williams

Publisher: Random House

Length: 368 pages

Price: \$26

Reading time: 8-10 hours

Reading rating: 9 (1 = very difficult; 10 = very easy)

Overall rating: 3 (1 = average; 4 = outstanding)

Franziska Van Almsick, Stephan Holm, and Neil Walker are not household names. These athletes share the dubious honor of almost winning an Olympic medal or, in the case of Neil Walker, almost making an Olympic team. What is the cost of finishing out of medal contention or getting cut from the team? This was not the focus of the book "Game of Shadows" nor has it been the focus of many written articles.

"Game of Shadows" is the investigative story of Victor Conte, Jr., and his obscure rise to founder of BALCO, Bay Area Laboratory Cooperative, and developer of undetectable steroids that helped numerous athletes cheat their way to the top of their respective sport. Authors Fainaru-Wada and Williams interviewed over 200 individuals and sifted through hundreds of documents to lift the veil of secrecy on some of the cheaters in sports. Conte once bragged that he could take average athletes and make them elite and take elite athletes and make them superhuman. Certainly it appears that his boast was true. Athletes who were average among their peers became elite under the doping schedules of Conte and James Valente, inventor of the "Clear," another undetectable steroid, also known as tetrahydrogestrinone. Taking the Clear and human growth hormone (HGH) allowed athletes to train longer, heal faster, grow muscle mass, shed body fat, improve eyesight, and transform athletic performance.

In 1998, Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa caught the world's attention with the greatest home run pursuit since Maris and Mantle. Eventually, McGwire hit 71 home runs to become the new single season king. As we now know, this record, and maybe all records since the 80's, should be viewed critically. McGwire and many others have been exposed as cheats. Enter Barry Bonds. The book reports that Bonds was jealous of McGwire and Bonds believed himself to be a superior athlete and that he should be seen as the greatest hitter of all time. Therefore, at the age of 35, he hooked up with Conte through his childhood friend and fitness trainer, Greg Anderson. He began taking HGH and the Clear, and the results were staggering. Bonds gained 25 pounds of muscle and began hitting home runs at an alarming clip. Eventually he hit 73 in 2001 to set the single season record. However, the adulation he sought did not follow and allegations of steroid abuse by athletes was hit by the spotlight and highlighted by congressional interviews. Ironically, baseball only adopted its steroid policy after the threat of congressional intervention in 2003. However, even today baseball does not test for HGH.

What is alarming are those athletes that are forgotten. While known cheaters have made millions on their celebrity, what about the athletes who came in second, third, or fourth? What celebrity benefits did they miss? What about the clean athletes who trained and sacrificed their whole lives to make a team only to fail? What about the person who finished fourth at the Olympics thereby missing the winners circle? What about the athlete who was cut or didn't make the team?

It may never be clear who all the cheaters are, or were, but it is equally clear that we cannot begin to untangle who has been cheated and the extent to which cheated athletes have been harmed. The cheated are like the victims of crime: We feel sorry but don't know how to make it right and are uncomfortable even thinking about them.

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