

## **Performing “responsibility” and “conspiracy” through press statements: The Shane Warne case**

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### **Abstract**

In 2003, the Australian cricketer Shane Warne was suspected and convicted of doping. The purpose of this article was to understand how he tried to resolve the problem/dilemma of being suspected and convicted of doping through three press statements, which he delivered to the media during the 2003 Cricket World Cup in South Africa. The research was done within a constructionist-narrative paradigm. The press statements were analyzed using a problem-solution approach to narrative analysis. From the analysis of the press statements it appears that he portrayed himself as being a responsible cricketer in an attempt to counter the possible public perception that he was an irresponsible cricketer. Due to his legal conviction by the Australian Cricket Board (ACB) in conjunction with the Australian Sports Drug Agency (ASDA), the responsibility argument was replaced by portraying himself as the victim of a doping conspiracy.

**Keywords:** Shane Warne, cricket, doping, prohibited substances, performance enhancement, constructionist-narrative paradigm, problem-solving approach.

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### **Introduction**

The Multi-level Classification System for Sport Psychology (MCS-SP) was developed by Frank Gardner and Zella Moore as taxonomy for psychologists working in the sport context. The MCS-SP has four levels that allow psychologists to assess and classify athletes’ various psychological needs and implement appropriate psychological interventions. These levels are Performance Termination (PT), Performance Impairment (PI), Performance Dysfunction (PDy), as well as Performance Development (PD). The PT, PI and PDy levels require sports counselling (personal development) interventions, where as the PD level requires a sport psychology (performance development) intervention from psychologists working in the sport context (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2006).

Traditionally performance development in sport has been done through Psychological Skills Training (PST) programmes. These programmes are based on cognitive-behaviour practice that fall within second wave behaviourism (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 1999; Moore, 2009). The basic assumption of these programmes is that optimal sport performance is only possible in the absence of discomfort experienced by athletes. Mental skills, such as goal setting, imagery, arousal control, self talk and pre-competition routines are therefore taught to athletes to assist them in eliminating internal discomfort with the purpose of attaining optimal sport performance (Gardner & Moore, 2006; Moore, 2009).

Recently, an alternative approach, the Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach to performance development, was introduced into the world of sport psychology. This approach promotes a mindfulness way-of-being in sport through acceptance-commitment practices, which falls within third wave behaviourism (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 1999; Moore, 2009). The basic assumption of this approach is that optimal performance is possible despite discomfort pertaining to bodily sensations, internal experiences and external stimuli experienced by athletes. Athletes are taught to practice mindfulness through accepting bodily sensations, internal experiences and external stimuli in a non-judgemental fashion, while also committing to value directed behaviour in pursuit of performance goals (Garner & Moore, 2004b, 2007).

Despite PST and MAC programmes being available to athletes to assist them in their performance development, some athletes still use illegal substances and methods to enhance their sport performance. The use of these illegal substances and methods is commonly known as doping in sport (Ehrnberg & Rosén, 2009). Examples of professional athletes abroad who have been suspected and/or convicted of doping are Ben Johnson (Athletics), Shane Warne (Cricket), Marion Jones (Athletics) and Lance Armstrong (Cycling). Johan Ackerman (Rugby), David Britz (Rugby), Ronwin Kelly (Rugby) and Mbulelo Mabizela (Soccer) are examples of South African sportspeople suspected and/or convicted of doping (Wikipedia, 2013). The focus of this study is on Shane Warne.

The scholarly literature predominantly yields a picture that sport psychology research on doping has mainly been done from a cognitive-behaviour perspective (Lamont-Mills & Christensen, 2008). Conceptually, the cognitive-behaviour perspective assumes a linear causation link between athletes' doping attitudes and behaviour (Barkoukis, Lazuras, Tsorbatzoudis & Rodafinos, 2011; Zelli, Mallia & Lucidi, 2010). This view is seen as problematic by some researchers as doping is complex and unique to every athlete and therefore makes generalizing research results questionable (Peretti-Watel, Guagliardo, Verger, Mignon, Pruvost Obadia, 2004; Wright, Grogan & Hunter, 2000, 2001). Methodological, the cognitive-behaviour perspective employs semi-structured interviews and questionnaires as data gathering research activities (Barkoukis et al., 2011; Zelli

et al., 2010). This in itself can cause a dilemma as athletes usually under report their participation in doping when interviewed or asked to complete a questionnaire, due to ethical and legal issues surrounding doping (Monaghan, 2001). Furthermore, adolescents and college/university students, as well as elite-athletes have primarily been used as research participants (Naylor, Gardner & Zaichkowsky, 2001; Peretti-Watel et al., 2004; Wechsler & Davenport, 1997). Research results from a cognitive-behaviour perspective indicate that athletes have negative attitudes towards doping (Peretti-Watel et al., 2004), that athletes primarily use prohibited substances for performance enhancement (Anshel, 1991) and that doping is not a widespread phenomenon (Laure, Lecerf, Frisher & Binsinger, 2004). It seems that most of the research up to date focuses on the prevention of athletes using prohibited substances. In other words the research focuses on the time before possible doping takes place.

One study done by Lamont-Mills and Christensen (2008) focused on the time after the doping activity had taken place. This study fell within a constructionist-discursive paradigm. This study focused on the first press statement delivered by Warne on 11 February 2003 to the media in South Africa. This study found that he “constructed his drug taking as not being related to performance enhancement and substantiated this with a history of negative results” (p.250). Furthermore, the authors of this article also indicate that he made a case in the first press statement, that taking the prohibited substances hydrochlorothiazide and amiloride were done in ignorance and not due to deliberate deception.

The present study falls within the constructionist-narrative paradigm. Cognisance was taken of all the press statements delivered by Warne while he was suspected and convicted of doping. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how he performed responsibility and conspiracy through the press statements he delivered to the media as a way to counter the possible public perception of him being an irresponsible cricketer. This study does not focus on how to prevent doping, but on how he resolved his doping dilemma through performing responsibility and conspiracy in the press statements.

## **Methodology**

### **Design**

Research on narratives can be done from either a constructivist or constructionist paradigm. In the former, problem solving is seen as a cognitive process and narratives reflect the cognitive problem solving process. In the latter, problem solving is seen as a social process and narratives are used to perform the social problem solving process (Lock & Strong, 2010).

Narratives have various functions, for example, they assist people in making sense of their lives (Murray, 2008), and help people solve problems they are experiencing (Kearney, 2006). This study falls within the constructionist-narrative paradigm, and focuses on how Warne, who was suspected and convicted of doping, performed responsibility and conspiracy through press statements to the media in an attempt to solve the doping problem.

### Participant

The philosophy regarding participants differs vastly between the constructivist and constructionist paradigms. In the former, the “author” (or biological “I”) of the narrative is the research participant, and not the “actor” (or narrated “I”) in the narrative. In the latter, the actor in the narrative is the research participant, and not the author of the narrative. As this study falls within the constructionist paradigm, the focus is not on Warne the author of the press statements, but on Warne the actor in the press statements (Kearney, 2006; Sclater 2003). The question is therefore not, “What are the press statements telling us about Warne’s problem-solving abilities?”, but rather “How does Warne perform problem-solving in the press statements?”

### Data

As Warne was suspected and convicted of doping during the 2003 Cricket World Cup, he delivered press statements at that time within a media context. The first press statement was made by him in South Africa once he was suspected of doping; the second press statement was made by him on his arrival in Australia after he had been recalled from the 2003 Cricket World Cup, while the third press statement was made after he had been convicted of doping by the ACB. His defence argument during his disciplinary hearing with the ACB focused on his ignorance regarding a prohibited substance (Hayes, 2004).

**Table 1:** Press Statements

Pre-conviction:	Press Statement 1 (PS 1):	11 February 2003, South Africa.
	Press Statement 2 (PS 2):	12 February 2003, Australia.
Post-conviction:	Press Statement 3 (PS 3):	22 February 2003, Australia.

A distinction is made between “big stories” and “small stories” in the field of narrative research. The former pertains to narratives produced within formal research settings, while the latter focuses on natural occurring narratives produced in everyday life (Georgakopoulou, 2007). The press statement can be seen as small stories as they were produced within a natural media context, and their production was not dependent on the presence of a researcher (Potter, 2003a, 2003b).

## Analysis

There are various strands of narrative analyses, being thematic analysis, structural analysis, performative analysis and visual analysis (Riessman, 2008). This study falls within the sphere of performative analysis, where the focus is on how a phenomenon is performed through narrative, therefore viewing narrative as a form of social practice (Smith, Collinson, Phoenix, Brown & Sparkes, 2009). As Warne was confronted with the problem of being suspected and convicted of doping, the researcher was interested in how he performed problem-solving in the press statements within a media context.

It is for this reason that the problem-solving approach to narrative analysis of Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) was used to explore how Warne performed problem-solving in the press statements. This approach entailed the following phases:

- |          |             |   |
|----------|-------------|---|
| Phase 1: | Context:    | Describe the context of the problem   |
| Phase 2: | Problem:    | Describe the nature of the problem being experienced                        |
| Phase 3: | Actions:    | Describe what actions are performed in the narrative to resolve the problem |
| Phase 4: | Resolution: | Describe the resolution of the problem in the narrative                     |

## Results

### Context

To reflect, from a constructionist-narrative paradigm, on how Warne tried to resolve the problem of being suspected and convicted of doping, one needs to get an understanding of his cricket career before and after 2003. Warne's, *My Autobiography* (2001), gives a glimpse into his cricket career before 2001, as well as how he imagined his cricket career unfolding after 2001.

Although Warne's cricket career was not without controversy before 2001, the dominant feature of his cricket career was his numerous achievements. For example, he was named "International Cricket Player of the Year" (1993) and "Wisden Cricketer of the Year" (1994). He had been selected as one of five "Wisden Cricketers of the Century (2001), and had taken 400 test wickets in 92 games (Warne, 2001). Ian Botham depicted him as the "greatest spin bowler the game has ever seen" (Warne, 2001, p.xi).

In, *My Autobiography* (2001), Warne also described how he saw his cricket career unfolding after 2001. For example, he wanted to score a first class 100 in a cricket test, take 500 test wickets, captain Australia in a test match, and participate in the 2003 Cricket World Cup in South Africa.

Just as his cricket career was characterized by actual achievements before 2001, so was his imagined cricket career after 2001 also filled with possible achievements.

### Problem

The problem that Warne faced with being suspected and convicted of doping in 2003 is that the doping event was not in line with his actual cricket achievements before 2001, as well as his imagined cricket achievements after 2001. To use the metaphor of “photos”, his actual cricket photos before 2001 and his imagined cricket photos after 2001 were all characterized by achievements. The doping photo, being suspected and convicted of doping, was a non-achievement, an irresponsible act with legal and ethical implications. One of the contexts in which he tried to resolve the doping problem, was in the media via press statements (narratives).

### Actions

Warne constructed himself as a responsible cricketer, thereby attempting to counter the possible public perception of being an irresponsible cricketer who was suspected and convicted of doping. He did this by portraying himself as taking ownership for his appearance, by embracing an activist position towards performance enhancing drugs, through his commitment to the rehabilitation of his shoulder injury, by means of his dedicated participation to the disciplinary process, through his unconditional support towards his teammates, as well as his protectiveness towards his family.

*Appearance:* Warne acknowledged taking a fluid tablet for appearance purposes, thereby demonstrating ownership for his appearance. He indicated that he did not take the fluid table for performance enhancement reasons or for the rehabilitation of his shoulder injury. In PS 1 he stated that “the tablet actually dehydrates you and gets rid of excess fluid in your body, and as I understand, it is not performance enhancing,” while in PS 2 he mentioned that “contrary to speculation, taking it had nothing to do with the treatment for my shoulder injury.” In PS 3 he also made reference to his appearance when he said that “I thought it was important to clarify where the tablet came from. It had nothing to do with cricket or trying to mask anything. It had to do with appearances.”

*Position:* Warne depicted himself as embracing an activist position towards performance enhancing drugs. In PS 1 he stated that “I do not take performance enhancing drugs and do not condone them in any way shape or form ... I have never taken performance enhancing drugs,” while in PS 2 he mentioned that “I do not, never have and never will take any performance enhancing drugs. They have no place in cricket and I do not condone them in any way.”

In PS 3 he repeated what he had said in PS 1 and PS 2 by stating “I also want to repeat that I have never taken any performance enhancing drugs and I never will.”

*Patient:* Warne constructed himself as a committed patient with reference to the rehabilitation of his shoulder injury. In PS 1 he stated “I am proud to be in the shape that I am in at the moment and that is due to nothing other than hard work and looking after myself with diet”. He builds on his condition being the result of hard work and his diet, by stating in PS 3 that “my shoulder comeback was exactly as my surgeon and physio predicted. I am proud of the dedication I have shown in my rehabilitation and fitness regime over the past 12 months.”

*Participant:* Warne portrayed himself as a dedicated participant in the investigation process to his alleged doping. In PS 1 he stated that “I have decided to return home in the best interest of the team and the World Cup campaign and to address the situation personally, which the ACB are very supportive of.” This sentiment was also echoed in PS 2 on his arrival in Australia with the words “I felt it was important to address these issues personally. However, I am hopeful of returning back to South Africa to play a part in the World Cup.” He also elaborated in PS 1 on being a responsible participant over time regarding performance enhancement tests when he stated that “ASDA has conducted random tests for a long time now in conjunction with the ACB, and all my previous tests have come back negative.”

*Teammate:* Warne depicted himself as unconditionally supportive of his teammates. In PS 1 he stated that “I wish them luck for the rest of the tournament whether I play a part in it or not ... I believe they have the talent and the spirit to retain the World Cup, with or without me.” In PS 2 he mentioned that “I would prefer to be in South Africa congratulating Eric Symonds on a wonderful innings and the rest of the boys in the great start to the World Cup.” These sentiments were also echoed in PS 3, when he said “the Australian team, you don’t need me to win the World Cup. You have the talent, the passion and the desire to bring the Cup back to all of us here in Australia.”

*Family:* Warne constructed himself as a protective husband and father regarding his family. In PS 2 he requested the media to respect his family’s privacy when he stated that “in the meantime can you please respect me and my family’s privacy.” This request was once again put forth in PS 3 when he asked “could you please respect the privacy of my family and especially my children.”

### Resolution

Warne’s conviction by the ACB turned his argument of being a responsible cricketer up side down. He then introduced a conspiracy argument in PS 3 as an alternative explanation for his conviction.

He stated that “I am absolutely devastated and very upset at the committee’s decision suspending me for 12 months and I will appeal. *I feel that I am the victim of the anti-doping hysteria.*” In being the victim of a conspiracy, he is still able to construct himself as a responsible cricketer, who is on the receiving end of the malicious actions of others.

## **Discussion**

During the 2003 Cricket World Cup in South Africa, Warne was suspected and convicted of doping. On the one hand he had to face a “legal trial” in the form of a disciplinary hearing conducted by the ACB, while on the other hand he had to face a “media trial” in the form of press conferences. During his legal trial he presented ignorance of a prohibited substance as a defense argument (Hayes, 2004), while he presented responsibility and conspiracy as defense arguments during the media trial.

Being suspected and convicted of doping constructed the possible public perception that Warne was as an irresponsible cricketer, who had exhibited illegal and unethical behaviour. This could be depicted as the charge against him during the media trial. To defend himself against this charge during the media trial he opted to portray himself as a responsible cricketer. This allowed him to counter the possible public perception of being an irresponsible cricketer.

Warne portrayed himself as a responsible cricketer who had taken a fluid tablet for appearance purposes, indicating ownership for his appearance. He did not take the fluid table for performance enhancement and/or rehabilitation purposes. He continued to substantiate the responsibility argument by providing other evidence, besides the appearance argument. Firstly, he embraced an activist position towards prohibited substances, in which there was zero tolerance for illegal substances. His negative doping record was not only testimony to his activist position, but also to being a responsible cricketer. Secondly, he was a committed patient during the rehabilitation of his shoulder injury, in which he meticulously followed the instructions of his doctor and physiotherapist, which was characteristic of being a responsible cricketer. Thirdly, being a responsible cricketer could also be observed in him being a dedicated participant in the disciplinary process. He even opted to return to Australia to deal with the doping charge himself, and did not leave it to other people. Fourthly, he remained an unconditional supporter of his teammates during the 2013 Cricket World Cup, despite going back to Australia for the disciplinary process; therefore, he remained a responsible cricketer despite geographical distance. Lastly, being a responsible cricketer also meant being protective of his family, as seen in his request to the media to respect the privacy of his family, as he was the accused in the media trial, not his family.

However, Warne's responsibility argument and evidence fell apart when the ACB convicted him of doping. Ian Botham's description of him being the "greatest spin bowler the game has ever seen" (Warne, 2001, p.xi), changed through his conviction to being the "greatest spin bowler the game has ever seen, with a doping record." He then attempted to resolve this dilemma of being an irresponsible cricketer by portraying himself as an innocent victim of the anti-doping conspiracy campaign. This argument still allowed him to be seen as a responsible cricketer, who was innocently on the receiving end of other people's malicious actions.

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