Discourses of Deception: Cheating in Professional Running[1]

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Cheating, it is claimed, is anathema to sport. But is this the case? In this paper it is argued that cheating is integral to modern sport, that the model of sport as 'fair play' is simply an ideological guise of amateurism. The paper focuses on the sport of professional running which, since its origins in the eighteenth century, has been a gambling sport. Strategies involving cheating to manipulate wins, or losses, have featured in this sport as ways of increasing the probability of striking successful wagers. Such strategies are an accepted part of professional running: participants anticipate and expect others to be playing it in this way. However, a distinction is made between what is referred to in the paper as 'clean' cheating and 'dirty' cheating. The former is an accepted way of the sport, the latter occurs but is deprecated. The paper explores these different forms of cheating and the athletes' responses to them.

Through a focus on the discourses of success in capitalist society, a model of cheating is developed to interpret such practices. Within the context of professional running, a working class sport, it is argued that, given the habitus of its practitioners, 'success' may be measured in terms of monetary gains and the 'kick-on' in life that these might provide. Cheating practices may serve to enhance the probability of success and social mobility. Given the relatively short career spans of sports people and the costs involved in developing the requisite skills, cheating may promote success and establish a financial base for post-sport careers. The paper concludes that cheating in sport can be anticipated as a feature of an acquisitive capitalist society.

I stood in the crowd clustered near to the circle races[2] finish line. I could not help but hear the conversation between two men beside me. One man clearly had a deep knowledge of the sport and he was telling the other one about it, including, it seems, about how athletes run dead to secure a lighter handicap. On learning about this, the second man questioned the honesty of the sport, to which the first replied, 'If everybody's a cheat, it's not dishonest'. (fieldnotes)

Cheating, it seems, occurs in all sports. This is not to claim that all sports players cheat, but rather that each sport contains some who cheat. Revelations about athletics, cricket, cycling, baseball, the football codes, swimming and more have come to light in recent years. There is nothing new about cheating in sport, though: there are numerous historical references to it from the commencement of modern sports over two hundred years ago.[3]

Although cheating may be more widespread than many people suspect, in this paper I examine a sport, professional running, in which it is commonplace. Yet, as with other

sports, the public image projected by professional running is that of a sport in which the cheat is weeded-out and dealt with by impartial, vigilant officials. These officials, invariably former professional runners, include people who, it may be assumed, routinely cheated in their running careers, know all the ruses of cheating, are aware that cheating is taking place in the meetings they supervise, but intervene and impose penalties only when it becomes obvious. Competitors then, have to carefully conceal their cheating; successful professional runners seldom lack the art of deception. This form of cheating—'clean' cheating—features in the everyday construction of the sport. The ways of clean cheating form a significant discourse in the sport and serve to underpin its reproduction. The art of the official, to detect and penalise this cheating, forms a second discourse that, although publicly denying clean cheating as constitutive of the sport, implicitly recognises this to be the case. A further discourse centres on the continuing tussle between runners and officials, all knowing what is 'really' occurring but publicly denying the centrality of cheating in their dealings. Another form of cheating, 'dirty' cheating, does not form a part of the officials' discourse. Although the terms clean and dirty cheating are my terminology, they reflect an emic typology used in the sport to distinguish between unconscionable actions and the esoterically expected, accepted ways in which the sport is played out. Dirty cheating usually involves a personal financial gain made from a betrayal of trust or from some form of subterfuge; it is widely condemned and spoken of either in anger or in the guarded terms of the unmentionable.

My concern in this paper is to present the forms of cheating that occur in professional running and to demonstrate how clean cheating promotes discourses central to the reproduction of the sport. This is mostly an exercise in ethnographic description blended with grounded theory; as such, it is based on emic constructions, but I also draw on Bourdieu (1978, 1986) to point to how cheating in this sport may be placed in a wider social context. Methodologically, it is based on two years' observation of the professional running circuit in the Australian State of Victoria, a close association with a 'stable'[4] of runners, approximately 100 semi-structured interviews with runners, trainers and officials, and considerable historical research. Clearly, there are beguiling comparisons to be drawn between professional running and cheating in other sports. Such comparisons go beyond the bounds of this paper, however. Indeed, cheating in sport in all its forms, varieties and significances requires a much larger treatment than can be afforded in one article.

Given the rich rewards afforded top-line runners in 'mainstream athletics',[5] professional running is now perhaps something of a misnomer. As a sport it is the present day version of 'pedestrianism', which originated in eighteenth century Britain and came to Australia in the mid-nineteenth century (Mewett 1999). Today, the sport retains its strongest presence in Australia, particularly in Victoria where Stawell is located—this country town being the site of the sport's most prestigious meeting. Spurned by 'athletics', its amateur offspring, professional running has remained a mostly plebeian sport closely linked with gambling. In Australia it is a sport associated with 'battlers', those for whom each dollar is hard earned and life is a struggle against adversity.

Professional running differs from many other sports—such as soccer, rugby league, cricket, baseball—that are 'professional' in the sense that while the players are waged, they are expected to refrain from betting on the outcome of a game. Professional runners are not paid wages to run, however. Rather, they compete for cash prizes and they routinely bet on the outcome of races in which they are participating:[6] this gambling is a part of the sport for professional runners and, for a few, it has provided the money to 'set them up' for life. Many of the ruses and much of the cheating in professional running

derive from the strategies and tactics used to rake in gambling winnings and, as Vamplew (1988:51) has pointed out for horse racing, 'with gambling comes the danger of corruption'. Indeed, the 'unsavoury' nature of gambling to the British higher social orders in the latter half of the nineteenth century was an argument they used to differentiate between their supposedly 'pure' amateur sports, and, to them, the unrespectable, sullied professional sports of the working classes. Although much of the upper class hyperbole served as social markers, an important difference was centred on those who had the financial means to uphold the amateur ethic[7] and those who used sport as a source of income.

Often using sporting metaphors, an ideology of 'fair play' pervades Western-type capitalist societies and perhaps provides a reason for the widely expressed aversion to cheating. In sport, this ideology came from and has been associated most strongly with the ethos of amateurism that emerged from the English 'Greater Public Schools' and Oxford and Cambridge Universities in the second half of the nineteenth century.[8] It is an ideology that remains in many sporting arenas and with it comes the illusion that people compete simply on the basis of their innate, albeit highly trained abilities: the 'best' competitor or team wins. Although in practice numerous cheating tactics may be used and sometimes detected—weeding-out a cheat every now and then gives the appearance that they are an aberrant few and the sport as a whole is honest—the public face of many major sports present an image of fairness and honesty. But this imagery is a throw-back to the amateur fair-play ethos. As an avowedly professional sport closely associated with the working classes, pedestrianism for a long time was shrouded in disrepute, being viewed through the amateur lens as corrupt, 'ungentlemanly' and demeaning. But sport means different things for the working classes than it has for the upper classes, a point made abundantly clear by Bourdieu (1978, 1986). For the lower classes, the opportunity costs of participating in sport are significant, at the time of participation and for their futures. Unlike wealthy amateurs, they cannot afford to support themselves while preparing for competition. They need to make money from the time spent in sport. Pure competition is not an option for them, because the opportunity costs can be too high. Only when the chance involved in sport has been manipulated into an assessable, calculable risk and the promise of financial gain beckons, does the sacrifice of time from alternative income sources in favour of sport become a viable option. Cheating blunts pure competition and permits players to manipulate chance in their favour to increase the probability of a positive outcome. Bourdieu (1978:835) notes that 'class habitus defines the meaning conferred on sporting activity, the profits expected from it'. For the wealthy amateur, the acquisition of social capital, for example, may have constituted the 'profits'. But lower class athletes needed to convert their physical capital into cash. Running and competing supposedly for the thrill of it was not enough: the habitus framing their lives promoted dispositions that supported the manipulation of chance and the minimisation of risk.[9]

While increasing personal incomes over the last half century have lessened the economic imperative associated with participation in professional running, the prospect of the winnings from a big race remains a significant pull for many competitors. Although the really 'big' money now is in mainstream athletics, professional running continues to provide the battler with the chance of a 'kick-on' in life. Over the years, winners of major races have used their winnings to purchase businesses, further careers, buy houses or expensive items that would otherwise bind them in years of debt, and so on. Even though the economic imperative may have lessened—it is now a lifetime away from the

Depression years when some men survived from this sport—the ways of succeeding in the sport, including cheating, have remained remarkably similar.

Running dead

From its inception professional running has been a gambling sport. Before the mid-nineteenth century, the runners were often retained by the gentry who put them under the guidance of a professional trainer to prepare them for competition, treating them like 'he would a running horse, under like discipline' (Sinclair 1806:10). The gentry raced their men for heavy stakes. But that was not the end of it: pedestrian events were widely publicised, popular events often attracting crowds of many thousands among whom heavy betting was commonplace (Bicknell 1815:7-8; Wilson 1815:17-8; Anon. 1868; Radford 2001). Much interest was directed at the race and considerable gambling took place before and during the contest. By the mid-nineteenth century the gentry had withdrawn their patronage and the sport was continued by and largely associated with working-class men.[10]

Until the mid-nineteenth century, pedestrian events were invariably match races (Mewett 1999).[11] In the second half of the century, match races between well-known runners, used to entice a gate money-paying crowd, came to be staged along with multiple entrant events at the same meetings. Cheating practices, such as betting on one's opponent and letting them win, were developed within the context of match racing. But the staging of multiple entrant races, especially when these involved a sequence of heats, semi-finals and final, placed a different cast on cheating, making the tactics more varied and complex. By the late-nineteenth century, professional running had taken on the characteristics now associated with it. Today, it is mostly conducted in the form of meetings staging several events, from 70 metre sprints to 3,200 metre distance races, each with multiple entrants.

What makes professional running so interesting is that its practitioners, from neophyte runner to peak organisation officials, present a public face of an untainted sport, one in which the cheat is a deviant to be dealt with swiftly by fine and suspension. Yet new runners are taught the tactics of the sport, which involve running in a way to gain a favourable handicap. This is a sport that uses handicaps (also called 'marks') in the form of staggered starts, with the more poorly performed runners starting the race in front of and running a shorter distance than the better performed ones. In theory, handicapping means that differences in ability are levelled by giving the less able an advantage, increasing the uncertainty of a race's outcome thereby making for a more open betting market. But to reduce uncertainty athletes 'run dead', or deliberately lose races while pretending to win, so that by the time that they 'go-off' (that is, attempt to win) they have secured a more favourable handicap than their true ability would warrant. Accordingly, it is common practice for runners to disguise their ability and form and run dead to gain an advantage that they unleash in their targeted races. Such tactics improve the chance of winning a big race, its associated prize money and, hopefully, a princely swag from the betting ring, but this success requires careful concealment of the runners' potential until they go-off. Running dead, a major part of clean cheating, has to be concealed from the watchful eyes of the sport's officials and its followers, the latter factoring into their betting equations any evidence of a runner holding back. Many of the plays in this sport centre on trying to work out what others are doing and planning. Accordingly, to optimise gambling winnings it is important for all players to deceive, to conceal their objectives from others (Mewett 2000; Mewett with Perry 1997).

Runners are in the public gaze when they compete at meetings, which they need to do in order to get the 'lifts'[12] from the handicapper that will give them an advantageous mark. Handicappers and other officials will penalise athletes that they detect running dead. Successful concealment is recognised as that needed to deceive officials into thinking that runners are trying as hard as they can but need a lighter handicap to give them a chance of winning. Perhaps it is more a case, though a generally unspoken one, that the game being played with the officials is not so much one of pretending not to cheat—because runners and officials alike know that cheating is taking place—but rather one of concealing cheating in such a way that it is not obvious to the official and to the public gaze. Cheating has a self-regulatory quality: a runner will cheat in a way that maintains the officials' face. The consequences of ignoring these self-regulatory practices is to suffer the officials' ire and retribution.

Officials are charged with the responsibility of detecting cheating, punishing it and with keeping the sport free of rogues. But, with very few exceptions, the officials are ex-runners, many of whom had followed the ways of the sport in their own athletic careers. Their job, apart from ensuring the smooth organisation of meets, is to detect instances of running dead, 'inconsistent performances' and so forth, in order that, to the public eye at least, the sport presents as well-regulated, with cheats being detected and the perpetrators punished. Perhaps it is only the poor runner incapable of securing a win who need not cheat. In reality, only those runners with inadequate, readily detectable techniques of cheating are penalised. They, and the officials pulling them up, are well aware that there are others, cheating more effectively, that are not being spotted. Within the sport it is accepted that runners will routinely cheat in order to win; the winners are often those who can cheat most effectively. Handicappers and stewards seek the 'blanket finish', the ideal race of professional running, when all of the competitors cross the winning line very close together.[13] Although this is rarely realised in practice, the officials' nightmare is to be 'embarrassed' by having a winner succeed by a large margin over the next finisher. This makes obvious their failure to detect deception, to weed out the cheat.

David Simms[14] won the 800 metre race at the prestigious Stawell meeting by a large margin.[15] His winning time was significantly inside what he had been clocking in his previous appearances on the circuit, right up to the week before the Stawell meet. His win was accompanied by a stewards' announcement that he had been fined $500 for inconsistent performance. Although the fine was halved on appeal, this did not detract from the stewards' revenge for their 'embarrassment'. Had the race been close, David's 'sudden' improvement probably would have been overlooked. Had David, as he subsequently told me, not competed in the 800 metre event six weeks or so before the Stawell race, he probably would have eluded the stewards' payback for an easy win. Runners often will not run in their events for periods before their set races, so that they can then put their improved performance down to several weeks' intensive training before the meet. This ruse satisfies the officials. It provides an explanation for the easy win that allows the stewards to deny negligence and the successful runner avoids retribution.

David's trainer, Harry Boyle, had a successful meet at Stawell that year because, as well the 800 metres, he had another winner, Travis Nichols, in the 1600 metres.[16] Travis, a talented athlete, was a surprise winner to all except his stablemates, who were aware of his potential. To others, Nichols' win was further evidence of Harry's skills in the art of deception. Openly admired by others—he won the accolade of 'shifty bastard'—the officials, it seems, did not take so kindly to these wins. Harry, David and Travis were, to

their minds, all targeted by the officials in the following season when David was suspended for a month:

> This was for 'not running quick enough' as David put it. Harry told me that David had been upset by the 'holiday' that the stewards had handed out to him, but, Harry continued, he realised that it was inevitable given David's very easy win at Stawell last Easter ... that the stewards would want to exact some revenge on David for his embarrassment of them. It was just a question of when they would hit. (fieldnotes)

Travis also had been 'spoken to' (i.e. warned) by the handicapper, Rex Morgan, for whom Harry had few kind words. Harry suspected him of

> ... trying to effect some 'pay-back' for the easy wins of both David and Travis at Stawell last year. Harry spoke of how Morgan had a lengthy discussion with him at Stawell. This was followed by what was reported to have been an acrimonious encounter between them at a presentation evening. Following that Boyle described how he was removed from the oval at a meeting. He said that he had been standing in the centre of the oval in drenching rain, with few others around, when a steward asked him to leave the inner. Morgan subsequently boasted to Travis that he had Boyle thrown off the oval: seemingly he had asked the steward to remove Harry from the field. So, relationships between Boyle and Morgan seem to be strained, to say the least. (fieldnotes)

Deception, then, occurs in multiple ways. Gambling, taken from the wagering closely associated with horse-racing, often lurks behind the deceptive practices. The manipulation of outcomes for pecuniary advantage is hidden from public view, however. The means of cheating change little in a sport, but, when cheating comes to light and creates a scandal, administrators act to impose measures that, in the public eye at least, serve to suppress it. It is important, especially in gambling sports, to deal severely with overt cheating and perpetuate the myth that the probabilities of winning can be calculated from the known performances of the competitors. Cheating only results in large gambling winnings if the bookmakers take in a significant amount of money on a race: winnings are proportional to the total money that is bet.[17] Certainly, those in the sport lay bets on their own hopefuls and on their evaluations of what others could be doing. But to succeed in gambling, bets need to be laid by other, losing punters. Some of this money will come from a public that may not be fully aware of the deceptions being played out before their eyes. The betting public has to be kept interested in the sport, but it has turned away from professional running on several occasions when cheating became too obvious, to come back to the sport only when the controlling authorities had taken measures designed to demonstrate to spectators that cheating had been stopped. Obvious cases of cheating are dealt with by the sport's officials to avert a drop-off in attendance by spectators, including the loss of gate money (Bull 1959:64-6).

Professional runners do not try to win every event that they enter. Their objective is to win a particular, specified race: in the argot of the sport, the one for which they are 'set'. The set race often is several years away and the athlete's training and running tactics are organised with it in mind. The 'handling' of the runner, typically in the form of the ruses dictated by the trainer, in this long preparatory period is vital to securing a successful outcome. Much of the routine and expected cheating associated with the sport takes place in this lead-up to the runner's set race.

Harry Boyle once said to me that 'handicap is everything' in professional running. Rob Monaghan, a man who ran through the years of the Depression and trained runners for several decades more, had an explicit strategy of letting his runners go-off only when they had achieved a very favourable handicap, even if this meant years of running dead. Rob also went to considerable lengths to ensure that his runners were concealed from the gaze of those who might realise their potential, pick the race in which they were going-off and take the 'cream' of the 'market'.[18]

Running dead is a skill learned from the start of a professional athlete's participation in the sport. The actual techniques can differ between sprinters and distance runners, although runners of all distances commonly put in a very hard training session or run the evening or the morning before a meeting so that carry-over fatigue prevents them from performing to their true ability. Roger Best explained how he managed his running dead:

> I was starting to run well and we were going to a meeting ... I went to Monash University on the way and I ran two flat out four hundreds, one after the other, until I was physically sick and then I went to the meeting. As well as that I was fortunate in that I could run reasonably dead, I mean in ten years I was never picked up. (taped interview)

Cheating also occurs on the track. Heavier running spikes can be worn, sometimes through the addition of lead; while this is heavily proscribed, lead has been used by runners who were unable to run dead by using the more common tactics. John Whitson was one such runner. An excellent athlete and a good prospect for a major race, his chances of winning were tempered by his inability to run dead without being detected. Whitson told me:

> I didn't have the ability, as the term was in those days, 'to run a dead un'. I couldn't run dead and not get caught. And so, what we did ... Wilf [Whitson's trainer] came to training one night with a pair of inner soles and he said, 'Here, put these in your [running] shoes'. He gave them to me and my hand went down like that. He had actually lined the underside of the inner soles with lead and each one weighed about half a pound. So, for all of that season ... I ran ... with these lead weights in ... [T]he only way that you would get caught was if somebody was around when you took your shoes off, and then they had to pick them up because they looked like any other pair of shoes with inner soles ... Didn't let anybody else pick your bag up because it had to [be] the heaviest bag in town. I got right through the whole season without even being spoken to [by the stewards] ...(taped interview)

More commonly, on-track cheating involves such things as not breathing during a sprint, 'short-striding',[19] the deliberate use of a poor arm action, adjusting blocks to hinder sprint starts, starting a distance race too hard and then fading, and more. The important point is that this has to be done skilfully. As the runner progresses in the sport, skill at cheating becomes increasingly important to avoid being 'picked-up' by a steward. Asinoff (1963:71ff) makes a similar point for baseball when he argues that a very fine line separates effective play from deliberately missed play. A deliberate loss requires great care and considerable expertise.

Race stewards, in Australia appointed by the sport's state-based regulating bodies, know all of the means of cheating that are used to deceive and conceal. Moreover, they know that among the runners who they are carefully watching, many will be running dead.

Matt Ingles, a handicapper, told of some of the things that he watched for in the course of a distance race:

> The way they position themselves in the race. They run wide ... they run a bit further. You've only got to run two men wide and you're running about seven yards [further] each lap and that's a good way of losing the race. They pocket themselves in behind runners. They'll be in a position where they can go forward in the field and all of a sudden they've gone from a winning break and put themselves in behind a runner ... They can't get out, they've boxed themselves up. Watching prior to a meeting, I often stand around and see them drinking soft drinks, even hamburgers and you don't do that. They've got this bloody great big hamburger in their mouth and then half an hour after they're running, that's an indication that they're only there to enjoy themselves for the day ... Cottoned on to a school down at [a meeting] two years ago. Some of the blokes had qualified for the finals from Derek Flanagan's stable ... I looked up and there's about eight blokes from this one school and they're going out for a long run before they ran in the final. I said to a stipendiary steward, 'Hey. Have a look at this, they should be lying on their backs and they're going for a run'. They ran accordingly in the final. They convinced me that weren't having a go and I spoke to them after [their races] and they said, 'Oh no! We were having a go, Matt'. (taped interview)

Some forms of under performance, such as that from the carry-over fatigue of training sessions or recent runs are often impossible to monitor, as are those caused by eating or drinking too much shortly before competing. Run as hard as they may, fatigued or gorged runners are unlikely to put in a quick time.

The tactics used to run dead and to keep secret runners' abilities involves what I refer to as 'clean' cheating. It is clean because it is anticipated by those in the sport that others will be playing it this way. Harry's acclaim as a 'shifty bastard' refers to his success in effecting successful concealment of his runners. Shifty can refer to the ways of effecting deceptions, but it refers especially to trainers because of their cunning and subterfuge: renowned trainers are often called 'old foxes' or it has been said of some that 'their left hand doesn't know what their right hand is doing'. Used in this context, shifty is a term of praise. To be called a shifty bastard is to be lauded. Over that weekend Harry was a top trickster, the shiftiest of the shifties. There is an aesthetic appreciation of those who succeed in manipulating the ways of the sport to their advantage and it was clear that Harry's achievements won for him considerable kudos. The wins had come from a classic type of professional running strategy and this was recognised as such by others in the sport. In this way these actions were not dishonest because many others had also tried to achieve the same result through cheating, except that they did not cheat as effectively on that occasion. Apart from beating the handicapper, effective clean cheating involves outwitting others who are trying to do the same thing. This is exactly what many consider must be done for a runner to score a significant win. Officials aside, people in the sport frequently openly admire the performer who has outwitted them.

Collusion

Trials are sometimes held between hopefuls from different stables for a major race. For example, a secret trial between contenders for the Stawell Easter Gift, the sport's pre-eminent race in Australia, saw the losing trialist run last in the final of this race. The deal on this occasion was that the losing trialist would be permitted to lay a predetermined bet

at long odds on the winning one, who knew that part of the competition had been eliminated before arriving at the meeting. To be sure, this is collusion and cheating, but it is also a way of minimising risk. Both runners, from different stables, had put considerable work into getting prepared for the Stawell Gift. Much was at stake. They both increased the probability of making a return from their efforts by colluding to control the outcome of the event. As it turned out, the winning trialist went on to take out the major race and, with it, a sackful of money. The losing trialist also scored a hefty reward, from betting on himself to win his heat and semi-final as well as from the money he was allowed to bet on the race winner at long odds.

Collusive practices have been used to fix the outcome of races and have given a means for the better performed, known runners—often handicapped out of any significant chance of winning[20]—to fix races to make certain of a return for their efforts. Morrie Gilson had a good career on the professional track. His uncle, a Stawell Gift winner, had been a noted runner in the tough Depression years. In the following interview Morrie told me some of his deceased uncle's stories about race fixing in that period:

Gilson: ... he told about the races they fixed and the way they ruined betting. ... he said they would pick a pea, as they called it. And they'd, in the Depression days no-one had much money, so they picked one to be the winner, and they'd go and back him ... and in match-races too. I think match-races killed off the betting for a while because they'd set up a match race and pick one to win ... He told me many tales of the great Phil Burke and those people.

Mewett: And they were all involved in the fixing of races?

Gilson: Yes.

Mewett: And this was to make money from the bookies during the Depression?

Gilson: Yes, to make sure they didn't gamble with their money and lose their money. ... There's only one winner.

Mewett: How did you make sure that the others didn't win?

Gilson: Well, you'd go and take money off each of those and say right we'll back so and so as the pea. They'd [each] put in a quid.

Mewett: Oh OK. To make sure the bookies kept up a reasonable price ... it had to be staged in such a way that the punters were still putting money on the other runners?

Gilson: Yes, well he had to only win by an inch, and it was a good finish. (taped interview)

Morrie's stories of his uncle's exploits demonstrates the necessity of the 'good finish'. Without this, and the illusion to punters that they lost their bets by the slightest of margins, the money that must be put on the other runners for the 'pea' to realise a good return from gambling winnings, would not be forthcoming: thus Morrie's claim that match-racing, in which cheating can be more difficult to conceal, discouraged punters from laying bets. Achieving a close finish suits all players. The officials, particularly the handicappers, are satisfied because it gives the appearance of them having done a good job in matching the abilities of the runners. The runners need to have the money coming in on other

competitors for them to get their bets on at longish odds. And, for this to occur, the punters must think that they have a reasonable chance of placing a winning bet.

Collusion is not restricted to pacts between runners. One ex-runner told me of how he had survived through the Depression by being part of a bookmaker's 'team'. He would do the circuit of meetings with the bookmaker, running to their mutual advantage. Another ex-runner explained how a bookmaker had paid him a considerable sum (£100 in 1935) to 'run out' a competitor on whom he had set inappropriate odds and stood to make massive losses had this man won. Harry Boyle said that bookmakers approached him to let them know when his runners were not going to win. The idea is that the bookmaker then stretches out the odds that he offers on them in order to draw in more bets on known losing runners; the money taken on them is split between the bookmaker and the trainer. But Harry said that he knocked back these approaches, because, had he accepted, it may have become more difficult for him to have concealed from these bookmakers the races when one of his runners was to go-off.

Fixing races is not confined to the collusion between runners or with bookmakers. Allan Goddard is a runner from more recent years and a Stawell Gift winner. He told me of an instance when race organisers in another State were involved in the fixing and manipulation of events:

Goddard: I went to [another State] one year for a 300 metre race and I was paid to come third.

Mewett: So they [the organisers] actually set it up? Who they wanted to win?

Goddard: It was their own race. They wanted somebody in the final, for instance, like a Stawell Gift winner. I didn't know who was going to win first place, but they didn't want me to win. So they said come third. (taped interview)

Manipulation of races by organisers can be an unpredictable part of the sport. My guess is that organisers are seldom responsible for the type of occurrence reported by Allan Goddard. It is the predicability of the cheating practice that marks the division between where clean cheating ends and dirty cheating begins. Clean cheating is anticipated and, done well, it can be appreciated. Moreover, getting a return from clean cheating still involves considerable effort, or 'work' as the expenditure of considerable time and effort is called. Work is put into the long hours of training as well as into the strategies devised to effect a win. Dirty cheating is when a relatively unpredictable advantage is gained by someone who has not put in the work.

The unmentionable

The more straightforward instances of dirty cheating include snooping, such as surreptitiously timing a trial, often from a hidden position.[21] Knowledge gained in this way can allow the snooper to take the longest betting odds on a runner and reap a considerable financial benefit without having put in the work. Many stories record how runners, ready to go off in a major race, turn up on the day only to find that they have 'lost the market', which is the term used to refer to someone else getting the best of the betting on them. Faced with a lost market, runners must decide whether to go-off as planned and accept the reduced pay-out if successful, or 'pull-up' and set themselves for another race.

At the heart of dirty cheating is the use of what is seen to be privileged knowledge to one's own advantage. Leo Rumsey did not make the winnings from the Stawell Gift that

he had anticipated. Although he trained full-time in secret, his keep was met by a man who recognised his potential and wanted to make a gambling coup from Rumsey blasting onto the scene and winning this big race as a complete unknown. When this strategy of training hard but seldom competing is in play, it is common for the runner to trial against another who is competing on the circuit, to gauge what the hidden runner's performance might be. Les Michaels, his 'trial-horse', as the other runner is referred to, was a 'known' athlete, having scored some significant wins. According to Leo, this was when the problems for him started:

> Michaels was very, very greedy ... he trained with me and he [Rumsey's sponsor] took him into his confidence and that was the worse thing that could ever have happened to us. He just got greedy. As a result of my ability—he had to find out whether I could produce it under pressure—so I used to train with Michaels. Anyway, there wasn't much he [Michaels] could do about me, he couldn't give me starts, and that was when the problem really started. We had blokes ... would be standing there with a bit of paper, watching me run ... Every time we had a trial, a tree moved ... We didn't know how the word was getting out until something happened just before Stawell ... We had to get away from Michaels. What had happened was he went to a place called ..... and run about 12 inside[22] with a gale behind him. But then he tried to give me a start and couldn't give me much ... so he knew what we was doing. And then we had to drop him off because he was talking too much. This was when the trouble started. Really started. A [State] athletic official ... he used to bet on the Stawell Gift a month before and all of a sudden a bet was laid. And the fellow was Eric Connelly ... he laid the bet. ... That in itself started a snowball type of effect so what we had to do then, we had to get away from Michaels. So, we then had to go and train and trial with [another runner] ... in the meantime, the damage had been done. But, I've got to tell you this, Peter: I didn't know until 10 years later who had laid that bet. But we found out in the meantime that Les Michaels was sleeping with his [Connelly's] daughter, he was stopping with Eric Connelly, you know, and he just mentioned to Eric Connelly, 'If there's a world series next year, this bloke'll be in it'. And in the final trial we had, he [Michaels] tried to give me a three yard start and couldn't give it to me. I was equal to him. ... Then it just snowballed and snowballed and snowballed. By the time that we got there [to Stawell], the price had gone off ... (taped interview)

Many successful runners have seen the prospect of sought-after riches—and they are riches for people from the working class backgrounds of most professional runners—disappear because others, some 'low down buggers' as one ex-runner referred to them, have made use of privileged information to take the cream of the betting market.

If someone from within the runner's own stable makes use of privileged information for their own advantage the hurt is deeply felt. A stable is supposed to act collectively, its members not revealing to others what takes place within it. The stables constitute professional runners' 'teams'. When a stable's runner goes-off, all members of the stable can benefit through collective betting on their representative. Runners in successful stables can expect a steady trickle of money in this way, with a major prize coming their way should they win a big race. A strong sense of camaraderie characterises the successful stables and with it occurs a reinforcement of the secrecy essential for its triumphs. The reality, however, is that leaks occur from stables, sometimes inadvertently and sometimes by design. Many trainers keep as much as they can to themselves, or share information only with their senior runners, to reduce the risk of a secret slipping out. But when

members of a stable use privileged information to their own advantage, the resentment is real and the hurt is deeply felt. Harry Boyle was highly aggrieved that one of his runners had cheated by placing a bet on a fellow runner before the stable had laid its collective stake-money. When a runner is about to go-off, stable members usually pool their stake-money which is bet in the form of a 'plunge'—a well coordinated procedure in which several bookmakers are 'hit' simultaneously. If a member of the stable bets before the plunge, they can get the longest odds and privilege themselves at their stablemates' expense; they can also alert the bookmakers to the runner who is going-off.

Perhaps the most despised form of dirty cheating occurs when trainers cheat their runners. Many runners build close and very fond relationships with their trainers, some claiming that these mentors even changed their lives. The more prominent and well regarded trainers are known not just for their legendary prowess in preparing athletes and managing brilliant deceptions, but also for their honest dealings with their runners. But some trainers have cheated their wards. Greg Parker did not make as much money from his win of the Stawell Easter Gift as he had anticipated. Parker soon discovered, to his lasting anger, that he had been cheated by his trainer, Dan Gore. Other than the early bets taken by some Melbourne bookmakers, betting on the Stawell Gift opens on Good Friday evening, but some stables will not bet until the following morning, when the running starts, executing their plunge just before or during the running of the Gift heats. This is especially the case for those going into Stawell with a 'dark horse', a runner that others do not think to be a chance for the big race. By delaying the betting plunge, it is hoped that sufficient money will have been laid on other runners for the bookmakers not to shorten their odds too quickly when the stakes go on one's own competitor. Parker, a dark horse for the race, claimed that they had agreed to delay their plunge until the Saturday morning.

Parker: ... We had an agreement not to bet on the Friday night and they organised it so they would hit the betting ring on the Saturday morning before the heats. Unfortunately, the price was only ... it opened at about 15 to 1 or something like that. Subsequently, we found out that Dan and—there was another fellow called Bernie Dawson, he was our punter, he was a professional punter. He had a lot more money than we had and he was going to take the odds and sling back. And Bernie, never saw him back. Unfortunately, Gore and Dawson got into the ring on the Friday night.

Mewett: They took the odds?

Parker: Bloody true. We ... were still at Stawell when we actually found out. We had so many relatives in Stawell. ... and it didn't take long ... it came back to us that they [Gore and Dawson] were peeling off wads of notes and putting the money on on the Friday night. And Bernie Dawson was at the Dandenong trial—that was the final run before Stawell. He wanted to have a look and hold the clock on me.

Mewett: Did he have a good knowledge of professional running?

Parker: Oh yes.

Mewett: Did you feel used?

Parker: I certainly did. ...

Mewett: What [odds] did you open at [on Friday evening]?

Parker: 60s I think.

Mewett: So there was quite a bit of money laid to take it down to [15s]

Parker: Thousands of pounds. Thousands of pounds. And, of course, when the 'hit the ring' time came about [on Saturday morning], they put money on and the effect of the previous night's betting was well and truly registered with the bookies at that stage, so it didn't take much money for them to drop it down really low. (taped interview)

Many years after the rort, Parker remained aggrieved at Gore's treatment of him. Other runners do not know how they lost the market, some surmise dirty cheating but are unwilling to voice their suspicions.

Discourses

As Bourdieu (1978) has pointed out, the sports available for people to take-up result from the history of the activities' emergence and development; an individual cannot change this, he or she must choose between contemporaneous sports. A correlation exists between socio-economic factors and the distribution of sports in a population, moreover. In part this linkage of class and sport arises from differences between people in their availability of spare time, economic capital and cultural capital, but it is essential also to take into account the different meanings given to the practice of their sports by specified sections of the population. These meanings derive from the dispositions born of particular class habituses; upper class sport is a very different thing from that of the lower classes (Bourdieu 1978: 834).

But the hegemonic power of the upper classes ensures that working class sports at least pay lip service to the ideology of fair play, even if, as in professional running, it is turned into a useful masking device for the concealment and deception that necessarily occurs. Publicly, the discourses of clean cheating present an image of a sport that is relatively free from corruption and shady dealings. Beneath the public image, these discourses, from the runners' and their trainers' points of view, are all about how to cheat; about how it is necessary to cheat to win; and about how others are cheating. Their concern is with deception, concealment, beating the handicapper, sowing false leads, and with detecting the subterfuges of others. The officials, from the same habitus as the runners, control the sport and impose penalties when they detect infringements of the rules. But the interesting aspect of the officials' discourse is that they know clean cheating is constitutive of the sport, so they attack the tip of the iceberg while disregarding the submerged mass. The third discourse centres on the tussle between runners and their trainers on one side, and the officials on the other. Tacit understandings about how the sport is constituted underpin an often unspoken complicity between these parties. The sport continues in a well-organised, seemingly amicable manner provided that these games-within-games are played by the unstated, informal rules. This complicity involves keeping the clean cheating to reasonable levels and maintaining the appearance of fair play essential to ensure the participation of a gambling public. Runners are aware that embarrassing the officials by flouting how well they have deceived the handicapper, for instance, will lead to retribution. The revenge may not be limited to the runner but can extend to all of the runners under the same trainer, because these mentors are major players in deception and concealment. Apart from finding a reason to fine or 'rub-out' (suspend) a runner who has embarrassed them, officials may penalise all the athletes in the runner's stable by not giving them expected handicap lifts. A fine line exists between working the sport to one's advantage and offending the officials. The largely unspoken discourse between runners and officials succeeds partly

because the latter have come from within the sport, which ensures that all these participants share the same esoteric knowledge. But it is predicated on the shared meanings that all bring to the sport, meanings that derive from a working class habitus.

The participants in professional running bring with them the dispositions of their class habitus. Although this may account for a readiness to embrace this sport—to select it and participate in it from among those available—and for a predisposition towards the ways in which it is played out, it cannot fully explain what goes on within professional running, which has its own sub-culture, folklore and layers of esoteric knowledge. Although 'sport' as a category may form what Bourdieu (1978:821) refers to as a 'field of competition', professional running produces a field in its own right. Despite their habitus disposing them towards this sport, there is much for neophytes to learn after entering it. That which is learned—and here it is necessary to consider the 'ways' constitutive of the sport, more so, perhaps, than the techniques of acquiring fitness and athletic skills—accords with aspects of the runners' social origins.

Conclusion

An ideology of fair play—a hegemonic imposition of the wealthy upper classes—has little to offer working class people. Fair play insofar as it exists occurs between those in specified alliances for specific ends. Fair play is expected in the dealings between members of the same professional running stable. Trainers sometimes form links to trial their runners against one another. To betray the trust cementing these often labile consociations of individuals and groups is underhand, it is dirty cheating.

Possibly sports people such as professional runners have a more realistic perspective on success than those struggling with ideas of fair play. They see people who have succeeded in business through sharp or shady practice, and they see those possibly using privileged information to strike it rich off the stock market. What is 'fair' about that? How does one succeed in an acquisitive capitalist society, if not by stacking the odds in one's favour? Clean cheating is all in the game—the sporting game that is simply a part of the game of life. This necessitates alliances with others, all of whom can benefit to some greater or lesser extent. When the deceptive ploys are being worked on people outside these alliances, the cheating is an accepted and anticipated part of play. Perhaps an irony of professional running is that the financial returns that may accrue from clean cheating hinge on the exercise of trust between those on the 'inside'. The unacceptable form of cheating occurs when someone within the alliance uses their privileged knowledge for their personal advantage.

Within professional running, working class athletes have manipulated chance through tactics involving secrecy, deception and the tactical concealment of ability. Done effectively, with the skill that eludes detection by others, it can result in a handsome pay-out, rewarding the opportunity costs of participation and providing a 'kick-on' for the person's post-sport career. The promise of a reward from the investment of time and effort in the sport justifies the opportunity costs necessarily incurred. The working classes have not been able to afford the dilettantism of amateurism. The model of pure competition is an ideology of the society at large as well of amateurism; embracing it involves more risk than the working classes can allow, it is a luxury that they cannot afford. For the less well off, risk-averse behaviour equates with the avoidance of penury. Cheating is the risk reduction strategy pertinent to the field of professional running. It occurs because the runners bring to the sport the risk-averse dispositions of their social origins.

Notes

1. This research, conducted jointly with John Perry, was supported by grants from the Australian Research Council and from Deakin University.
2. 'Circle races' are those, from 400 metres upwards, that involve one or more full circuits around the running track.
3. See Radford's (2001) biography of Captain Barclay for accounts of cheating in prize-fights in Regency Britain.
4. Professional runners are mostly organised in close-knit groups called 'stables'. A stable usually is under the control of one 'trainer', although the occasional stable is run by two trainers.
5. I use the term 'mainstream athletics' to refer to the relatively recent development from the so-called 'amateur athletics' that dominated global track and field competition for a century. Mainstream athletics has the World Championships and the Olympic Games as its most prestigious meets.
6. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this difference between professional running and other forms of professional sport. Clearly, as the recent revelations about cricket testify, involvement with gambling may occur as a covert part of any sport. Also see Asinoff (1963) for an account of the infamous 'Black Sox' case in baseball.
7. Horse racing certainly continued as a gambling sport significantly supported by the upper classes, but whether these were the same people that condemned plebeian gaming is a matter of conjecture—and an important area for historical research.
8. Amateurism emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century with the 'cult' of upper class athleticism associated with the more prestigious British private schools. Mangan (1981) has described the development of athleticism in these schools.
9. The poolroom 'hustlers' described by Polsky (1971) were also of lower-class origins. It is arguable whether the cheating that occurs in horse-racing (Scott 1968) can be understood in the same way, though.
10. Pedestrianism/professional running has been an overwhelmingly male sport. Some female 'pedestriennes' competed in the USA during the nineteenth century, but these were marginal to the sport as a whole and risked being labelled as 'loose' women (Shaulis 1999). Although the sport's rules did not explicitly stop women from competing, informal measures (such as refusing entries from women because the oval lacked changing rooms for them) ensured that they were unknown in Australian professional running until about the mid-1980s. A combination of a move towards 'open athletics', allowing amateur athletes to run professionally without losing their amateur status, sponsorship providing prize money explicitly for women's races, and changing attitudes witnessed a shift to an increasing female involvement in the sport. Women's races are now a part of the program at most professional running meetings and women also compete against men in the 'open' races. Prize money for women's races remains much less than for men's races and they are generally considered to be secondary to the male runners and races.
11. Match races are those with just two competitors. In pedestrianism it was also common for a single competitor to enter in a match against 'time' (i.e. complete a stated distance within a predetermined time).
12. A 'lift' is the term used to describe the acquisition of a lighter handicap. Handicaps are measured from 'scratch', so in a 100 metre race, for example, a person on a handicap of zero starts from scratch and runs the full 100 metres. Another runner, on a handicap of two metres, starts the race in front of the person on scratch and runs 98 metres to complete the race. However, if the runner is re-handicapped to 2.5 metres, which is referred to as getting a 'lift' of 0.5 metre, then 97.5 metres needs to be covered in the race. Conversely, a 'pull' refers to

being moved to a harder handicap, so if the handicap was reduced (pulled) by 0.5 metre, to 1.5 metres, the runner would need to run 98.5 metres in the race.

13. The term 'blanket finish' comes from the image of being able to cover all of the close-finishing runners with a blanket.
14. All personal names used in this paper are pseudonyms.
15. See Mewett with Perry (1997) for an account of this win.
16. With the adoption of metriculation in Australia in the 1970s, distances in yards or miles were converted directly into their metric equivalents in professional running. So the 'mile' became the 1600 m race, the 'two miles' became the 3200 m race. Professional running does not conduct 1500 m races, nor events equivalent to the 'amateur' 5000 m and 10,000 m races.
17. Briefly, the betting on a race is assessed in terms of two variables: the price, or odds that can be obtained on runners and, second, the amount of money, or stake, that can be put on them. Long odds refers to winning more for a specified bet than short odds (for example: a bet laid at 20 to 1 stands to win five times more than one laid at 4 to 1). Bookmakers shorten odds as the bets laid against a runner increase, but the rate at which they shorten depends on the amount of money being laid against the other runners in the same race. If plenty of money is being taken against other runners, then the odds will shorten more slowly against a particular runner. Also, the more money being bet on a race, the more ready that bookmakers are to take larger stakes against runners before, perhaps, refusing to take any further bets against them. The objective in betting is to lay the total stake money at the longest average odds that can be achieved.
18. The 'cream' of the 'market' refers to the longest odds given by the bookmakers against a specified runner in a race. If the betting on a runner opens at 50 to 1, then the betters getting those odds have taken the cream of the market, because the odds will shorten quickly when money is laid against that competitor. The objective of a runner and stable is get the cream for themselves.
19. Short-striding involves putting in shorter than normal steps while moving the legs at the same speed. Done effectively, it gives the appearance of running at full speed.
20. A win involves the re-handicapping of the runner to a tighter mark. Also a different handicapping logic comes into play following a win, because the bigger the monetary value of the race won, the bigger the pull received by the winning runner. Many winners of major races have been handicapped out of further wins.
21. See Mewett (2000) and Mewett with Perry (1997) for some examples of snooping and of the precautions taken by trainers when trialing their runners.
22. A measure of runners' abilities is how far they can run 'inside' or 'outside' 'evens'. Evens refers to 'even time', which is 10 seconds for the 100 yards, for example. An even-time runner is a good athlete. But the more exceptional athletes—those sprinters capable of running sub-10 seconds over 100 yards, for instance—are referred to as running inside evens, their actual performance being measured as the number of 'yards inside [even-time]'. A similar logic applies to slower runners, those who are 'outside evens'.

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