



Mains Practice Question

Case Study

You are a young field athlete, proudly representing India in your debut at an international championship. While staying at the athletes' village, you accidentally enter the common restroom and see a few senior team members injecting themselves with an unidentified substance. Suspicious, you ask them about it. They explain that it's a 'recovery booster, a performance-enhancing drug (PED) that supposedly helps with endurance and muscle repair.

They further suggest that using it is common practice, especially in global competitions, and if you want to remain competitive and secure your place in the team, you should consider taking it too. Later, while contemplating whether to approach the coach, you learn from another junior athlete that the team coach is not only aware but has allegedly recommended its use, citing 'national interest' and 'medal pressure.'

Questions:

- (a) What are the key ethical dilemmas involved in this situation?
- (b) What are the possible courses of action available to you in this scenario?
- (c) What course of action would you choose and why?

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Introduction

As a young Indian track and field athlete making your international debut, you discover that senior teammates are using performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) with the coach's support. You are pressured to follow suit, forcing a choice between **personal integrity and career advancement**. This situation raises ethical challenges like **fairness, and the moral cost of success**.

Stakeholder	Role/ Interest
The Athlete (You)	The individual facing the ethical dilemma and making the decision.
Senior Team Members	Using PEDs and pressuring others to follow suit.
The Coach	Who may be aware of and potentially endorsing PED use.
Sports Federation/Anti-Doping Authorities	Responsible for enforcing ethical standards.
Other Junior Athletes	Peers who may be influenced by the actions.

Body

- (a) What are the key ethical dilemmas involved in this situation?

- **Integrity vs. Success:** The core dilemma lies in **balancing personal integrity with the pressure to succeed**. Using PEDs would violate ethical principles, but not using them might hinder performance and jeopardize the athlete's place in the team.
- **Loyalty vs. Ethical Conduct:** The dilemma reflects a clash between loyalty to the team, coach, and country, and the duty to uphold **ethical standards in sports**.
 - Pressure from seniors and the **coach to use PEDs fosters a sense of group obligation**, even when it conflicts with personal integrity. Justifying doping in the name of patriotism and medal expectations further complicates the issue, raising the ethical question.
- **Long-Term Consequences vs. Immediate Gain:** The dilemma between the immediate benefits of improved performance from using PEDs and the long-term health risks, potential disqualification, and damage to one's career and reputation.

(b) What are the possible courses of action available to you in this scenario?

Option 1: Using the PEDs

- **Pros:** Using PEDs may **offer immediate performance enhancement**, increasing the chances of success in the championship, **improving team standing**, and ensuring conformity with **prevailing team practices**.
- **Cons:** Using PEDs would constitute a **violation of ethical principles and personal integrity**, exposing the athlete to serious health risks.
 - Additionally, carry the **possibility of disqualification**, or a lifetime ban, ultimately damaging both career and reputation.

Option 2: Informal Warning to Athletes and Coach

- **Pros:** This approach involves **discreetly cautioning the athletes and the coach about the unethical and illegal nature** of using PEDs.
 - It allows them the **opportunity to self-correct** without immediate formal consequences.
 - By resolving the issue internally, this method **avoids potential media attention** and public embarrassment.
- **Cons:** However, such **informal warnings may not be taken seriously**, especially if PED use is normalized within the team.
 - There is also the risk of **retaliation or disciplinary action from the coach**. Moreover, if the doping continues and is later exposed, it could result in serious reputational damage to the country and the athlete.

Option 3: Lodge a formal complaint before the competition

- **Pros:** Filing a formal complaint with the **appropriate authorities (Sports Federation/Anti-Doping Authorities)** before the competition would ensure a level playing field and uphold the **principles of integrity and fairness in sport**.
 - It reflects a **strong commitment to ethical conduct** and adherence to anti-doping norms.
- **Cons:** Taking **abrupt action may deny the accused athletes and coach a fair chance to explain** or correct their behavior.
 - Such a move could **also attract unwanted media attention, potentially harming the morale of the team** and tarnishing the country's image.

Option 4: Report the Issue After the Competition

- **Pros:** Delaying the report until after the event allows **more time to verify facts, reflect on the situation**, and prepare for consequences without disrupting team performance.
- **Cons:** However, this **delay allows unethical practices to continue** and may result in doping being detected by external agencies, causing greater damage to India's global reputation and moral conflict.

(c) What course of action would you choose and why?

Chosen Course of Action would be combination of **Option 2 and Option 3:**

- **Initially**, the most prudent step is to **informally warn the senior athletes and the coach** about the unethical and illegal nature of using PEDs.
 - This approach allows the team members **an opportunity to self-correct and reflect on their actions** without immediate formal consequences or public exposure.
 - It helps to preserve **team morale, reduce potential backlash**, and maintain a constructive environment for change.
- **Simultaneously**, it is important to **document the observations carefully and prepare to submit a formal complaint** to the relevant sports authorities or anti-doping agencies if no corrective action is taken within a reasonable timeframe.
 - This ensures that if the **informal warning fails, the issue can be escalated through proper channels** to uphold fairness and integrity in the sport.

Conclusion

As an athlete, the primary obligation is to uphold the values of **fair play, integrity, and health safety** in sports. By first encouraging **internal accountability and then resorting to formal measures** if needed, this strategy promotes a culture of **clean sportsmanship and commitment to and national pride**.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/mains-practice-question/question-8800/pnt>

