

Badminton Olympic Scandal Exposes the Dark Side of Sports

by Anthony Caruso on August 6, 2012

Unfortunately, even the Olympics Games have a dark side. Like all sports, there is always a risk that some players will resort to cheating to gain a competitive advantage. In fact, prior to the London Games, the head of the International Olympic Committee characterized match fixing as the biggest threat to the integrity of the Olympics.

As we learned last week, badminton is no exception. Eight women badminton doubles players were disqualified from the London Olympics after they deliberately tried to lose to secure a better draw in the next round. The players, representing China, Indonesia and South Korea, deliberately hit shots out of bounds and served directly into the net.

These athletes clearly violated the spirit of the games, but did they break the Olympic rules? Technically, yes. But many would argue that the rules are highly subjective.

Olympic athletes can be held in violation of the rules of the games if they don't use their "best efforts" to win a match and conduct themselves in a manner that is "clearly abusive or detrimental to the sport."

While many place the blame on the players, others are questioning the new format of the badminton competition, arguing that the round robin format makes it much easier to influence outcomes. Unfortunately, cheating cannot likely be completely legislated out of sports. However, sports leagues can draft rules and policies to deter it. After experiencing similar issues, FIFA now requires that all decisive group matches be played at the same time to prevent this type of abuse.