

Tired of scandals? How about an Olympics for cheaters?

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

The following editorial appeared in the Chicago Tribune on Sunday, May 29:

A big-time Russian whistleblower recently spilled astonishing details of how top athletes cheated, with a likely assist from the Kremlin, to snag medals at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

How? Athletes slugged down a three-drug cocktail of banned performance-enhancing substances mixed with Chivas or vermouth. They relied on Russian intelligence officials, who used spyecraft to secretly swap urine samples, somehow breaking into supposedly tamper-proof bottles. The New York Times re-

ports. Those under suspicion include some of Russia's biggest stars, including 14 members of its cross-country ski team and two veteran bobsledders who won gold medals.

Should Russia be banned from the 2016 Summer Olympics in Brazil? Yes. The Olympics can't condone such fraud.

No, we don't imagine the Russians are the only ones flouting rules. And no, the Olympics doesn't hold exclusive rights to deceit. Witness decades of cheating in baseball, from the Chicago Black Sox scandal of 1919 to the Cubs' Sammy Sosa, whose corked bats hit steroid-fueled homers, to every pitcher who hurled a spitball and every coach who stole a sign.

Or football — ah, the New England Patriots' Deflate-

gate. Or professional biking — the performance-enhancing juicing spree of Lance Armstrong and many others. This year brought another landmark in cycling flimflam: The first confirmed case of what's called "mechanical doping" — that is, bikers rigging tiny hidden battery-powered motors to give their bikes a boost toward the finish line.

It's almost enough for us to propose a radical solution for dealing with the sporting world's most brazen, clever and foolhardy con artists, swindlers and tinkers: Why not fence off the offenders from the honest athletes and let them run (and race) amok? How about a separate Olympics just for cheaters?

A no-holds-barred Cheaters Olympics would allow athletes to push the limits,

to do whatever they can (short of injuring an opponent) to excel. Think of this competition as a new extreme sports event, like one of those mixed martial arts minimal-rule melees that allow people to pummel each other with any available appendage.

Do we condone cheating? Of course not. Repeat: We do not.

But isn't it fascinating to imagine just how far science, super-shoes and other gear can boost human abilities? As records topple — remember the 4-minute mile, the 61-home-run season — we wonder what other feats, now considered impossible, might someday fall within the realm of human athletic achievement.

The 3-minute mile? The 8-second 100-meter dash? The 9-foot high jump?

We can already hear readers sputtering that a Cheaters Olympics would send a disastrous message to children about fair play, not to mention encouraging young athletes to experiment with performance-altering drugs that could seriously damage their health.

But how about the Cheaters Olympics as a prime example for young athletes of What Not To Do? From a young age, children know they're not supposed to cheat. And they learn that some athletes do. Children also could learn that we isolate cheaters in their own Olympics. Moreover, what if most cheaters don't perform better?

The Cheaters Olympics also could confer a huge benefit to the legitimate version: Viewers and competitors could be more certain

that the competition was untainted. All the runners, jumpers, throwers, swimmers and others who turned in thrilling performances did so without illegal chemical or mechanical assistance.

Only one rule for the Cheaters Olympics: Winners and losers would have to disclose fully what they ingested, how they trained, what contraptions they used to triumph. Compiling that data could save future athletes from ruining their health by experimenting with things shown, by trial and error, not to work.

Come August, global audiences will witness some of the world's greatest athletes — and some of the greatest cheaters — in Rio de Janeiro. Wouldn't it be great if we knew which was which?

Warriors accomplish rare comeback win

BY DIAMOND LEUNG
THE MERCURY NEWS

OAKLAND, California — The death blow delivered to the Oklahoma City Thunder, Stephen Curry **NBA PLAYOFFS** walked around on the court deliriously, holding his jersey up by his teeth.

The MVP poured in 36 points and hit seven 3-pointers to lead the Golden State Warriors to a 96-88 win against the Thunder in Game 7 of the Western Conference finals on Monday.

The Warriors overcame the odds to capture their second consecutive Western Conference championship and trip to the NBA Finals to face LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers. The series, a rematch of the 2015 finals, opens Thursday night in Oakland.

The Warriors became only the 10th team in NBA history in 233 tries to come back from 3-1 deficit to win a playoff se-

ries. It was the first time a team had done so in the conference finals in 35 years.

"It started with Draymond the night after their third win," Klay Thompson said. "He said, 'Have faith. It's not gonna be easy, but we can do it. And have fun while doing it.'"

And as coach Steve Kerr reminded, "We were not just down 3-1, we'd gotten blown out two straight games."

Thompson, who carried the Warriors to their Game 6 victory in OKC by scoring 41 points, kept the Warriors in this one by scoring 13 of his 21 in the second quarter.

But it was Curry who saved his best for last, going 13 for 24 from the field and dishing out eight assists. "We knew coming into this game that it would take the full 48 minutes, and it took till the last minute to get it done. But we're back," Curry said.

Kevin Durant led OKC with 27 points, scoring seven straight to pull the Thunder to within 90-86 with 1:40 left.



JOSE CARLOS FAJARDO | BAY AREA NEWS GROUP | TNS
Golden State Warriors' Stephen Curry gestures after making a three-point basket against the Oklahoma City Thunder during the fourth quarter on Monday at Oracle Arena in Oakland, California.

But Curry drew a shooting foul on Serge Ibaka from behind the arc, and three free throws with 1:18 left gave the Warriors some breathing room. Curry then hit a dagger

3-pointer with 26.8 seconds left to give the Warriors a 96-86 lead.

Russell Westbrook had 19 points and 13 assists, but was only 7 for 21 from the field.

NBA

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occurred during the regular season. The Cavs fought chemistry issues and fired coach David Blatt, replacing him with his top assistant, Tyronn Lue, despite the best record in the East under Blatt. The Warriors swept the season series from the Cavs, including a 34-point win at Cleveland in January.

Blatt was fired less than a week later.

These Cavs have rarely been tested in the playoffs, enjoying lengthy rest periods between each series.

They swept their way through the first two rounds, setting records for their 3-point shooting in smashing the Atlanta Hawks in the conference semifinals. The Toronto Raptors pushed them to six games in the conference fi-

nals, but the Cavaliers — not the Warriors — have been the most dominant team of this postseason. Now they're four wins from Cleveland's first major pro sports championship in 52 years.

Having Love and Irving back healthy is crucial to their chances. While James still leads the Cavs in scoring, he has taken a more secondary role at times in this postseason while the Cavs played through their other stars.

Irving watched most of the Finals last season from a hospital bed and later the bench after a fractured left knee in overtime of Game 1 required surgery. Love's shoulder was dislocated in the first round last year, rendering him a spectator for the bulk of the Cavs' march to the Finals.

"There's definitely a different feeling. I didn't appreciate last year," James said. "So much was going

on in my mind, knowing that Kev was out for the rest of the season and knowing that Ky was dealing with injuries. Having these guys right here at full strength, having our team at full strength, and the way I feel personally, I appreciate this moment, to be able to be a part of it and to be there once again."

These Finals could serve as a shootout. The Warriors and Cavs have made the most 3-pointers of any team this postseason and the numbers aren't really close. The Warriors have made 212 3s in 17 playoff games, while the Cavs made 202 in 14. No one else made more than 150 this postseason.

James is playing in his sixth consecutive Finals, a feat that hasn't been done since Bill Russell's Boston Celtics teams 50 years ago. But James' 2-4 Finals record is less impressive than most other superstars of this era.

James in November called the Warriors, "the most healthy team I've ever seen in NBA history," but now that may not be the case after Curry's knee problems led to losses in all three rounds of the playoffs. The Warriors are trying to become the third team to repeat in the NBA in the last eight years and the first since James' Miami Heat did it in 2012 and 2013.

"At this time of the year regardless how much rest they've had, everybody's got some nicks and knacks, that's just what comes with the NBA season," Warriors forward Draymond Green said. "We may have a few more than them being the road that we've had to take throughout this playoffs, but it happens. It's the NBA Finals. You find a new wind for that. You just dig deep. You don't come in saying, 'Oh, they've had more rest than us, we're doomed.' No, we'll be just fine."

Sharks

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Boston in 2011. The Bruins fell behind 2-0 to the Vancouver Canucks, losing both games on the road, before they won four of the next five to take the final in seven games. The Bruins won all three games at home and then won Game 7 in Vancouver.

The Sharks are 5-1 in the playoffs in games after a loss, with their only back-to-back losses coming in games 3 and 4 of their second round series against the Nashville Predators. That evened the series 2-2, and the Sharks won two of the next three games to advance.

In the Western Conference Final, the Sharks lost Game 1 the St. Louis Blues 2-1, then came back with a 4-0 victory in Game 2 to even the series. The Sharks also lost Game 4 at SAP Center 6-3, then came back with a 6-3 victory of their own at Scottrade Center in a pivotal Game 5.

"We had a game, Game 4

against St. Louis at home where we weren't very good," Sharks forward Dainius Zubrus said. "We bounced back and we won the next two. So, that's kind of the approach and we'll be ready."

On Monday night, Nick Bonino scored the tiebreaking goal with 2:33 remaining in the third period, and the Pittsburgh Penguins survived blowing a two-lead lead to notch the 3-2 win.

Bryan Rust, who later left the game with an undisclosed injury, and fellow rookie Conor Sheary scored 1:02 apart in a Pittsburgh-dominated first period, but the Sharks' Tomas Hertl and Patrick Marleau responded with goals in a San Jose-dominated second.

Bonino broke the tie several minutes after both Patrick Hornqvist and Phil Kessel missed excellent chances for the Penguins, who are trying to win their fourth Stanley Cup in 25 years. Defenseman Kris Letang accepted a big hit to get the puck out from the end boards, and he found Bonino in front for a shot

the center directed inside the near post and past goalie Martin Jones.

Rookie goalie Matt Murray — who like Rust and Sheary were in the minors part of the season — made the lead stand up by making several strong saves during a Sharks power play in the final three minutes. Murray made 24 saves to 38 for Jones, who was under constant pressure throughout the first and third periods in the first Stanley Cup finals game in Sharks history.

The Sharks looked as if they were three time zones behind Pittsburgh speed wise when the game began, and the Penguins quickly opened up a 2-0 lead in the 12th Stanley Cup finals game played on their home ice.

Rust got it started at 12:46, swatting in the rebound of a Justin Schultz shot that deflected off Sharks defenseman Marc-Edouard Vlasic directly to Rust for his sixth of the playoffs. That's one more than Rust has in regular-season play, and gave him three straight and four of

the last five Penguins playoff goals.

Sheary, another rookie who came up from the Penguins' Wilkes-Barre/Scranton (AHL) farm club when Mike Sullivan was promoted to the Pittsburgh job in mid-December, made it 2-0 only 1:02 later. Sidney Crosby gained control of the puck along the half-wall and made a laser-precise pass to Sheary in the right circle for a shot that flew under the crossbar.

The second period was the polar opposite, with the Sharks dominating and the Penguins looking like they were a long stride slow on every play.

Playing with patience and not deterred by being down two goals on an opponent's ice in the first Stanley Cup finals game in franchise history, the Sharks cut it to 2-1 when Hertl beat Murray from along the goal line at 3:02 for their 18th power-play goal of the playoffs.

Marleau, drafted in 1997, tied it late in the second by beating Murray with a backhander, his first goal in the finals after scoring 64 goals in 165 playoff games.

Baseball

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lying on seniors Brett Chappell, Brenden Geary and Kevin Stypukowski to be the offensive catalysts and all three had sub-par seasons.

Outfielder-designated hitter Chappell, a .315 hitter with 38 RBIs in 2015, slumped to .251 this season with 21 RBIs. First baseman Geary, who hit a solid .280 a year ago with 20 RBIs, wound up at .260 with 15 RBIs and catcher Stypulkowski fell from .254 to .249.

However, the Black Bears' three leading hitters were all freshmen and were selected to the America East All-Rookie team.

Third baseman Danny Casals hit .310 and led the team in stolen bases with 12 and triples with four. Left fielder Colin Ridley led the team in RBIs with 42 and shared the team lead in homers with Stypulkowski with six. He hit .299. Shortstop Jeremy Pena hit .283, stole 11 bases and had 10 doubles while leading the team in runs scored with 36.

All three shone in their first America East Tournament as Ridley and Pena each went 5-for-12 (.417) and Casals hit .333 with three RBIs.

Transfer Tyler Schwanz, the Black Bears' right fielder, had a respectable first season. He hit .267 with five homers, a team-leading 19 doubles and 25 RBIs.

Slick-fielding sophomore second baseman Caleb Kerbs (.227) and junior center fielder Lou Della Fera (.225) will have to hit better to play regularly.

Three junior college transfers from Florida could figure prominently next season.

Chris Bec from Miami Dade Community College and Jonathan Bennett from Gulf Coast State College, will fill the vacant catching slot and they can also play other positions.

"Jonah is one of the best hitters I've recruited the last three to four years," said Trimmer.

Brandon Vicens, Bec's Miami Dade CC teammate, is a speedy center fielder with leadoff capabilities and pop in his bat.

All three were chosen to all-star teams.

Incoming freshman outfielder-DH Hernan Sardinas and redshirt sophomore first baseman Chris Garabedian, who hit .247 with five homers and 20 RBIs two years ago but missed this season because he was academically ineligible, could also figure in next year's lineup. Infielder PJ McDonald, an incoming freshman, is

another possibility.

The pitching staff compiled an underwhelming 4.69 ERA and was hurt by an injury to sophomore Justin Courtney.

Bangor's Courtney (2-3, 4.30 earned run average) threw just one inning over the final seven weeks due to tendinitis in his throwing shoulder after being a Freshman All-American in 2015 when he was 5-6 with a 3.24 ERA.

Senior Logan Fullmer will be missed.

He went from closer to starter and was a first team All-AE selection (4-2, 2.55).

Sophomore John Arel (3-9, 3.94) pitched a masterful eighth-inning, two-hitter in Maine's 11-1 elimination-game win over UMBC and was chosen to the all-tourney team.

Arel and a healthy Courtney could supply Maine with a solid one-two punch at the top of the rotation.

Redshirt sophomore Chris Murphy (0-4, 6.05) showed some positive glimpses after coming off Tommy John surgery 15 months ago but walked an eye-opening 45 in just 41 ⅔ innings. He also struck out 54 and allowed only 29 hits.

Trimmer expects Murphy to regain the good control he had in high school.

A youthful bullpen had some growing pains but there were plenty of bright spots and it should improve with the maturation of the returnees and the influx of incoming arms.

Sophomores Jonah Normandeau (1-2, 4.50) and Connor Johnson (4-3, 4.10) and freshmen Eddie Emerson (2-2, 4.76) and Nick Silva (3-3, team-leading 5 saves, 5.89) all received valuable experience and should be even more effective next season.

Trimmer feels he will have "six quality arms" in his freshman class led by Bangor High lefty Trevor DeLaite.

"Trevor will have a great chance to crack the rotation right away," said Trimmer. "He has command of four pitches, he knows how to pitch inside and he has one of the best young [pitching] minds I've ever seen."

Power righty Sam McCarthy, rated as the top pitcher in New Hampshire by the Perfect Game scouting service, and redshirt freshman Zach Winn, a 22nd-round draft choice of the Texas Rangers who missed all of last season due to arm surgery, will also vie for a spot in the rotation.

Brewer's Matt Pushard and Bingham's Cody Laweryson will be bullpen options along with Ryan Worthington and Matt Geoffrion. Pushard will also get a look at first base.

Tennis

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not a \$10,000 tournament. It's a grand slam," said Radwanska, the highest seed to exit the tournament.

"How can you allow players to play in the rain? I cannot play in that condition. They really don't care what we think."

Ernest Gulbis and David Goffin did get on court for their fourth round showdown but took matters into their own hands by marching back into the locker room even before organizers had a chance to make a call.

It was a decision that Halep welcomed. "Good. Well done to them," the Romanian said as she gave them a thumbs-up.

While matches at the three other majors — Wimbledon (grass), Australian and U.S.

Opens (both hardcourts) — are halted at the first sight of any raindrops, the brittle claycourt surface at Roland Garros means competitors are often told to play on in drizzle.

Roger Federer did just that in the 2009 men's final when he beat Robin Soderling to win his solitary French Open trophy.

Unsurprisingly, Pironkova did not think Tuesday's conditions were unplayable, though she acknowledged they were far from ideal.

"Well, it's happened before, of course. We have played in all sorts of conditions," said the Bulgarian, a semifinalist at Wimbledon in 2010.

"Usually if the court is not fit for play, like if it's slippery, they would cancel the match right away. But today the court was still hanging in, it was okay. We could have played, and so we did."