

Abstract

The Festina scandal during the Tour de France in 1998 gave rise to a hitherto unseen global response within the anti-doping policy arena. The scandal resulted in measures such as a marked increase in the number of anti doping tests, a whereabouts system, biological passports etc. Despite these measures the number of cases since then indicates that there has been no revolutionary change in the attitude towards the use of doping within cycle sport. In this sense one can speak of two different cultures. The dissertation argues that a change of focus is needed. Instead of imposing an ever-increasing list of restrictions, the focus should be on the cycle sport life style. The study therefore examines the specific life praxis of Danish elite cyclists on the basis of a qualitative interview study with 42 elite cyclists.

Typically elite cycle sport and sport in general is seen as mirroring modern society – among other things this is illustrated by the Olympic motto: *Citius, altius, fortius*. The dissertation instead operates against a background of interpretation that draws parallels between the elite cyclist and the religious ascetic. The analyses of the empirical material of the dissertation focuses on; social relations, educational background, diet, training regimes, self discipline, weight control, sacrifices, various extremes, freedom and restraint, competition and how the riders cope with pain. The analyses draw a picture of an all-embracing passionate occupation that more or less leaves its stamp on all areas of life. The dissertation therefore concludes that the life praxis of elite cyclists can be seen as an ascetic calling. It therefore makes more sense if one sees modern cycle sport as a phenomenon with pre-modern elements.