

POLITICS AS USUAL: Cheaters do prosper

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

As I watched the Olympic swimming competitions ? which were absolutely thrilling! Way to go Canada! ? I have to admit that I was a bit less than enthusiastic about some of the races. Watching the women's 100 metre breaststroke, that included the Russian swimmer that had failed two drug tests, I could not help but think of the little warning that the nuns used to say to us all the time, ?Cheaters never prosper.?

I hate to say it, Sister Sheila, but you were wrong. Cheaters most definitely prosper. Liars too. And they are paid rather handsomely for their lack of moral character.

We have multiple athletes, known drug cheats, allowed to compete in the most elite of competitions, the Olympics ? an event that is supposed to be the absolute epitome of sportsmanship.

With greatest respect, what a joke. If sportsmanship means doing whatever it takes, be it lying, cheating, and ingesting whatever deadly concoction possible to gain an edge, then yes, the Olympics is the epitome of it. Or maybe its nadir. Quite frankly, no matter what the result, no matter what the event, you cannot truly enjoy it, or revel in the spectacular outcomes. There is always a question mark beside the achievement, a little voice in the back of your head that says, ?I hope he (or she) isn't a drug cheat.?

Though the Russians are the focus of the drug vigilantes (and so too are the Chinese) and given the outcome of the WADA investigation, quite rightly so, there are few countries that can hold their heads up high in righteous piety.

The US has been wagging its fingers literally and metaphorically at competitors in the pool, even booing the Russian athletes every time they stepped on the pool deck (which was quite extraordinary). Yet, they have one of the biggest drug cheats out there ? Justin Gatlin ? in the marquee track event, the 100 metres.

He has served multiple drug suspensions for steroid use, and what was his penalty? A silver medal. I am sure Yohan Blake of Jamaica, who was pipped at the line for bronze by our very own Andre De Grasse, would very much appreciate it if Americans would practice what they preach.

He'd be on the podium, if that was the case.

There has always been cheating. The ancient games had cheats as well, but the punishment was whipping (okay, they were fined first, but still, corporal punishment for cheating sounds like it was a pretty good deterrent).

It is so much worse today. Why? There no longer seems to be any shame associated with it. There are excuses, there are denials, and there are finger pointing exercises where everyone is blamed but the cheater. Even when there are apologies, they are not acts of contrition but rather carefully orchestrated PR pieces designed to provide absolution for the cheater.

The truth is they are not sorry for what they did; they are sorry for getting caught.

They needn't be. Given the IOC's decision not to ban the Russians entirely (and I have mixed feelings about that proposal ? fodder for another column perhaps), it's clear it doesn't matter. We've become inured to it all.

And besides, everyone knows, the show will go on.