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A Look Into the Olympic Anti-Doping System: Thermo Fisher Scientific

A somewhat controversial and sensitive yet extremely important aspect of a renowned sports competition, such as the Games, is doping testing. Substance abuse is often whispered about in the sports universe, as it represents the other, corroded side of the coin no one really likes to think about.

While Thermo Fisher Scientific, an American leader in pharma services, has been involved in the Olympic zero-tolerance testing process for years now, the collaboration was kept behind the scenes. As of 2023, Thermo Fisher Scientific is the official supporter of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, sealing the deal just in time for Paris 2024. Let's take a deeper dive into the importance of fair, clean, doping-free competition and the role of Thermo Fisher Scientific in achieving this status.

Thermo Fisher Scientific: The Paris 2024 Official Supporter

Thermo Fisher Scientific, the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry pioneer, officially [joined the Olympic family](#) in July 2023. As the Official Supporter of the Games, the company is in charge of providing the necessary analytical instruments, expertise, and lab equipment to make the doping testing process as accurate as possible. The doping control analyses are performed in accordance with precise regulations set in stone by **WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency)**.

In addition to testing equipment, Thermo Fisher is also responsible for providing top-of-the-line laboratory equipment for sample storage and the instruments necessary to analyze each sample. Working closely with an accredited French laboratory, Thermo Fisher will provide mass spectrometry and chromatography instruments specifically designed to detect substances prohibited by WADA.

[In the words](#) of the Senior Vice President and President of Analytical Instruments at Thermo Fisher Scientific, *"The Olympics and Paralympic Games Paris 2024 are a global celebration that brings the world together. It's an honor and a privilege for Thermo Fisher Scientific to play a role in such an incredible event like Paris 2024."* Tony Estanguet, President of Paris 2024, [states that](#) *"this partnership with Thermo Fisher will be decisive in ensuring the exemplarity of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Paris 2024 and guaranteeing the absolute safety and integrity of athletes and competitions."*

Thermo Fisher Scientific and Olink

With an annual revenue of over \$40 billion, Thermo Fisher Scientific is widely recognized as a giant in serving science. Shortly after sealing the Olympic deal, the company succeeded in yet another business venture by [acquiring Sweden-based Olink Holding AB](#), focused on drug discovery and development. The \$3.1 billion deal between the two biotech companies boosted the U.S. Olink shares by nearly 67%. Thermo Fisher's CEO Marc Casper [recognized the deal](#) as *"highly complementary to our leading mass spectrometry and life sciences platforms."*

Thermo Fisher's Previous Involvement in the Games

While the Official Supporter status is brand new, it is based on a [successful collaboration that started decades ago](#). Back in 2000, Thermo Electron's (one of Thermo Fisher Scientific companies) mass spectrometers were selected for anabolic steroid and other prohibited substance testing at the Sydney Olympic Games. The Sydney Organising Committee decided on six magnetic sector mass spectrometers for ultratrace detection levels, guaranteeing precise, reliable results. This was the third time Thermo Electron devices and instruments were utilized in Olympic drug testing.

The company's role in shielding the integrity of the Games continued in [the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games](#) when Thermo Fisher provided testing instruments and improved testing software. With the emergence of sophisticated, hard-to-detect illegal performance-enhancing substances, the China Doping Control Center (CDCC) was faced with a challenge. Luckily, with Thermo Fisher's professional support, CDCC and IOC ensured that the testing procedures ran smoothly and uninterrupted, even with a high volume of samples that were coming in daily.

The Olympic Doping Incidents

Unfortunately, even with thorough testing and absolute vigilance, some instances of substance abuse were able to slip through the cracks. One of the examples is [Marion Jones](#), a 2000 Sydney Games medalist, who admitted to abusing performance-enhancing drugs during the competition that brought her five medals. Seven years later, following her confession, Jones was sentenced to six months in jail, and her medals were confiscated.

Decades later, 23 Chinese swimmers who competed at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics appear to have tested positive for performance enhancers but were still allowed to participate. This oversight by the Chinese anti-doping regulators was kept in the dark until The New York Times covered it in April of this year. [In the words](#) of the United States Anti-Doping Agency's CEO, *"Because of the cover-up that happened by China, and WADA allowing it, now that it's come to light, it's going to be a train wreck waiting to happen going into Paris."*

Final Thoughts

No process is ever perfect, and mistakes are bound to happen. However, in anti-doping practices, perfection is expected or even demanded. The fact that substance abuse

incidents can occur even with the latest technology and sophisticated software raises an important question: Is it the human factor or the technological factor that allows doping to go undetected?