IOC took doping witch hunt too far in gymnast’s case

In the lights of flashing cameras and before millions of viewers, an athlete had the unique chance of a lifetime to see her dream come true: She won the gold medal in the all-around gymnastics competition. Then the glory was gone and the dream turned into a nightmare. For the young Romanian gymnast Andreea Raducan, the thousands of hours of practice and sacrifice will never find their deserved recognition because of an innocent and ridiculous mistake: the intake of two pills for cold symptoms.

The Romanians’ performance, excellent until that point, was overshadowed by what has become a form of witch hunt at Sydney: the search for evidence of doping. The moment everyone was enjoying the Romanian gymnasts’ success, a bomb was dropped: Raducan tested positive for pseudoephedrine, a stimulant banned by the International Olympic Committee, and was stripped of her gold medal.

I believe the Olympic spirit and fair play should reign at this noble competition, but this case is approaching the limits of paranoia.

How could a medication that is not even banned by the International Federation of Gymnastics be considered something to turn 162 pounds of human body into a supernatural machine? It seems to me that in the search for high performance, we have crossed the fine line between what is right and wrong.

The entire world is complaining, and people all over the world are sending Raducan comforting messages. But will she be strong enough to survive this charade?

“My heart is at peace that I have done everything right,” said the 16-year-old gymnast. What more could we ask? Maybe that she has lived her dreams, not crashes.

As a Romanian, I feel that an injustice was done in this case. As an athlete, I feel compassion and admiration for Andreea’s achievement. As a human being, I feel that the nonsense should stop.

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