



Mains Practice Question

Case Study

Puneet is a young and dynamic officer serving as the Director of the State Sports Council. His mandate is to promote sports at the grassroots level, improve infrastructure, and ensure fair selection of athletes for national and international competitions.

During his tenure, Puneet receives multiple complaints from young athletes and coaches about **rampant favoritism and corruption in the selection process** for a prestigious international sports event. Allegations suggest that **several underqualified candidates were selected due to political connections and bribes**, while talented athletes, especially from economically weaker backgrounds, were ignored.

Upon investigation, Puneet finds **strong evidence** of malpractice involving senior officials, influential politicians, and sports federation members. When he raises the issue with his superiors, he is advised to “look the other way” as the individuals involved are politically powerful. Some officials warn him that exposing the issue could lead to **career repercussions, frequent transfers, or administrative sidelining**.

Athletes and their families have intensified their protests, demanding justice and transparency, sparking mass public outrage. The issue has gained widespread media attention, putting significant pressure on the authorities to act. Meanwhile, a well-known journalist approaches Puneet, seeking insider information to expose the scandal. However, Puneet faces a dilemma: **taking action against the malpractice could delay the team selection process**, potentially jeopardizing the **country's participation in the prestigious event**, while inaction would compromise his integrity and the principles of fairness and accountability.

Questions:

1. What are the ethical dilemmas faced by Puneet in this situation?
2. Evaluate the possible courses of action Puneet can take in this scenario. Discuss the merits and consequences of each approach in light of his ethical responsibilities and the public interest.
3. What institutional and grassroots-level reforms can be implemented to prevent favoritism and corruption in sports governance and ensure fair opportunities for athletes, especially those from economically weaker backgrounds?

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Introduction

Puneet, the Director of the State Sports Council, faces an ethical dilemma involving **favoritism and corruption** in the selection process for a prestigious international sports event. Despite receiving credible complaints and strong evidence of malpractice, he faces political pressure and career threats to ignore the issue.

- Meanwhile, public outrage and media scrutiny intensify, demanding transparency and justice for deserving athletes.

Body

1. What are the ethical dilemmas faced by Puneet in this situation?

- **Integrity vs. Compliance with Superiors**
 - Puneet has a duty to uphold fairness and transparency in athlete selection. However, his superiors are pressuring him to ignore the malpractice due to political influence.
 - Following their advice would mean compromising his integrity, while resisting could invite personal and professional repercussions, such as transfers or sidelining.
- **Justice for Athletes vs. Political Pressure**
 - The **rightful candidates are being denied opportunities**, which contradicts the principles of fairness and meritocracy.
 - Exposing corruption could rectify the injustice, but it would also challenge **powerful political and administrative figures**, leading to institutional resistance.
- **Public Interest vs. National Prestige**
 - Addressing corruption ensures **long-term reforms and credibility** in the sports system, benefitting future athletes.
 - However, taking immediate action may **delay the selection process**, potentially preventing India from participating in the prestigious international event. This could harm national prestige and athlete morale.
- **Whistleblowing vs. Organizational Loyalty**
 - Revealing insider information to the journalist could **expose corruption and force accountability**, leading to positive systemic changes.
 - However, it may also breach **official confidentiality norms** and invite disciplinary action, damaging his career prospects.
- **Short-Term Consequences vs. Long-Term Reforms**
 - Punishing those responsible could **deter future corruption but may take time**, affecting current athletes.
 - Ignoring the issue for short-term convenience would allow systemic corruption to persist, harming the sports sector in the long run.

2. Evaluate the possible courses of action Puneet can take in this scenario. Discuss the merits and consequences of each approach in light of his ethical responsibilities and the public interest.

- **Take a Strong Stand and Initiate Official Action Against Corruption**
 - **Steps Involved:** Lodge a formal complaint with **anti-corruption agencies** or the **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)**.
 - Seek legal action against those involved, ensuring transparency in the selection process.
 - Engage with **honest senior officials** and seek institutional support.
 - **Merits:**
 - Upholds **integrity, fairness, and meritocracy** in sports administration.
 - Sends a strong message against **corruption**, deterring future malpractice.
 - Restores **athletes' trust** in the system and ensures the best talent is selected.
 - **Consequences:**
 - Could lead to **career repercussions** (frequent transfers, sidelining, or professional isolation).
 - Risk of **institutional resistance**, as politically powerful individuals may attempt to suppress the inquiry.
 - The **selection process may be delayed**, impacting national participation in the event.
- **Seek Internal Reforms Without Immediate Confrontation**
 - **Steps Involved:** Conduct a **transparent review process** within his jurisdiction.
 - Establish **independent oversight committees** for fair selection.
 - Propose long-term policy changes to **reduce political interference**.
 - **Merits:**

- Allows a **practical, less confrontational approach**, reducing the risk of backlash.
- Lays the foundation for **systemic reform** without immediate disruption.
- Ensures **continuity in team selection**, minimizing the risk of India's disqualification.
- **Consequences:**
 - Does not immediately **punish corrupt officials**, allowing them to remain in the system.
 - Athletes who were wronged may **not get justice in the short term**.
- **Blow the Whistle by Leaking Information to the Media**
 - **Steps Involved:** Provide **evidence to a reputed journalist** to expose corruption.
 - Use public pressure to **force authorities to take action**.
 - **Merits:**
 - Ensures **transparency and accountability**, forcing systemic reforms.
 - **Public and media support** can protect Puneet from personal retaliation.
 - **Consequences:**
 - May **breach official confidentiality norms**, leading to disciplinary action against Puneet.
 - Could **polarize the issue politically**, leading to administrative deadlock.
 - The **selection process may be stalled**, risking India's participation.
- **Follow Superiors' Advice and Ignore the Issue**
 - **Steps Involved:** Maintain silence or comply with existing corrupt practices.
 - Justify inaction by prioritizing **national interest** and organizational loyalty.
 - **Merits:**
 - Avoids **personal and professional risks**.
 - Ensures India's **uninterrupted participation** in the event.
 - Maintains Puneet's position, allowing him to work for reforms **later**.
 - **Consequences:**
 - Violates **ethical principles** of honesty and justice.
 - Allows **corruption to continue**, denying deserving athletes their opportunities.
 - Erodes **public trust** in the sports administration.
- **Balance Reform with Pragmatism - A Middle Path Approach**
 - **Steps Involved:** Conduct an **immediate internal review** and **correct wrongful selections** where possible.
 - Allow **team selection to proceed** but ensure better transparency through independent scrutiny.
 - Submit a confidential report to anti-corruption authorities **after the event** to ensure accountability.
 - **Merits:**
 - Ensures **short-term participation** while working for long-term reform.
 - Avoids unnecessary political confrontation while still upholding **fairness**
 - Reduces risks to Puneet's career while promoting **systemic change**.
 - **Consequences:**
 - Does not **immediately expose all corruption**, allowing some guilty officials to go unpunished temporarily.
 - Requires careful handling to **prevent political retaliation**.

Most Optimum Course of Action:

The **most balanced approach** is the **middle path (Option 5 that assimilate some parts of Option 2)**—ensuring transparency in selection **without disrupting the event**, while simultaneously initiating **long-term anti-corruption reforms**.

3. What institutional and grassroots-level reforms can be implemented to prevent favoritism and corruption in sports governance and ensure fair opportunities for athletes, especially those from economically weaker backgrounds?

Institutional-Level Reforms (Top-Down Systemic Changes)

- **Transparent & Merit-Based Selection:** Independent selection panels, and live-streamed assessments to ensure fairness.
- **Anti-Corruption & Whistleblower Protection:** Establish a **Sports Integrity Commission**, enforce whistleblower safeguards, and impose strict penalties on corrupt officials.
- **Independent Oversight & Governance:** Enforce term limits, mandate RTI compliance for federations, and restrict political interference.
- **Financial & Infrastructure Support:** National Sports Scholarship Fund, mandatory corporate sponsorship via CSR, and performance-based financial aid.
- **Legal & Ethical Framework:** Enforce a Sports Ethics Charter and create fast-track arbitration courts for dispute resolution.

Grassroots-Level Reforms (Bottom-Up Athlete Empowerment)

- **Universal Sports Access:** **'One District, One Sports Hub'** initiative, mobile training units, and local talent scouting at grassroots levels (while equally focusing on other sports as well).
- **Integration in Education:** Mandatory **sports hours in schools**, merit-based university sports quotas, and structured grassroots coach training.
- **Women & Minority Inclusion:** Exclusive **coaching centers, financial and social support** for women athletes, and special programs for ST/SC/OBC and minority communities.
- **Digital & Technological Reforms:** **National Sports Talent Portal**, AI-based performance analytics, and blockchain-based athlete records for transparency.

Conclusion

Puneet must uphold **integrity, fairness, and transparency** while balancing **pragmatism and national interest**. A **balanced approach**: ensuring immediate corrective action, safeguarding athlete rights, and initiating long-term reforms: would help restore **trust in sports governance**.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/mains-practice-question/question-8663/pnt>