

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN SPORT



Suzanne Lenglen,
French tennis player, 1920s

Text A

If you've ever seen old images of a sporting event, for example a tennis match from the 1920s, you've probably noticed how different the game is from its **modern counterpart**: the gear and outfits look impossibly old-fashioned. Over the past century, technology has changed the entire face of sport, providing **ever-better gear** made with superior materials. As in other fields, the use of advanced technology in sport can be justified if it leads to improved performance. But it is important to distinguish between **legitimate** improvements and ones that significantly advantage some athletes over others. Every time the Summer Olympics comes around, so does the debate about where to **draw the line**. Nevertheless, we have to accept that the technology companies are part of the **manifestation** of **human ingenuity** in sport and that their importance will increase. Despite the ongoing debate, it is certain that athletes will continue to utilise advances in sports technology to **enhance** and better their **performance**.

Text B

The use of technology in sport isn't new: there has been a steady evolution of even **seemingly mundane** sports equipment for decades. You need only look at the **huge strides made** in shoe technology, with better, lighter materials helping to improve performance. It can be argued that these advances have helped to justify the **expense** of time and money that we invest in sport. Improvements in safety standards have helped to prevent injuries among athletes and enabled them to compete to an older age. Advances in technology can enhance spectator interest and excitement as well as encouraging more people to participate in **formerly** exclusive sporting activities. In extreme cases, however, some players fear that introducing new technology might actually alter the ideal body type for a sport. We must understand how a particular technology affects performance. There's a fine balance between simply enhancing an athlete's fitness and technique and completely eliminating the human factor in competition.

Text C

Technological innovation is now an integral part of sport at the highest level, and competition isn't just about who is fastest – but whose kit is smartest. Given how much money **rides on** success today, it's little wonder that athletes are keen to **capitalise on** technological advances to help them win. It seems that the old saying 'it's not whether you win or lose' has been replaced by 'winning isn't everything; it's the only thing.' But when people talk about the **pro prowess** of athletes in sports such as tennis, golf, track and field, it's impossible to **ignore** the part played by technology. Current-day **records set** with the benefit of these advances cannot be held in such esteem as those of the past. It's not surprising that poorer countries don't compete in sports involving a lot of technology: the investment required is phenomenal. Surely it's not acceptable that competition at the highest level is now only affordable to the elite due to the high cost of equipment.



Serena Williams,
American tennis
player, 2019

Text D

Technological advances in sporting equipment and better information about nutrition, training and psychology have added significantly to athletic performance. Professional athletes now have access to far better equipment than ever before and this has undoubtedly played a role in the achievement of these athletes in their respective fields. Yet it doesn't negate or fully explain their **accomplishments**, even though composite tennis racquets, ultra-light running shoes and fibreglass poles have enabled them to perform better than ever before. No competitive professional would think of returning to the wooden tennis racquet or bamboo pole: today, the **alternatives** are just that much better. Sports, like all human enterprises, evolve over time. Technology will no doubt continue to **fuel improvements** that help **push the limits** of athletic ability still further. But records in future will be broken less frequently and incremental gains will be tiny, as technological innovation helps to **optimise** the performance of all and athletes begin to **approach** their physical limits.