

# Major league baseball



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

There has been a lot of controversy revolving around the use of steroids in Major League Baseball. Some argue that it is alright to use steroids while a larger group debates that it is unfair. However, the use of steroids in Major League Baseball has been in existence for quite a long time (Mitchell 2007). In 1988, Jose Canseco is linked to use of steroids in his baseball career. Mark McGwire admits to using steroids in 1998. In 2003 however, 10 baseball players are summoned to testify in front of a grand jury that was investigating the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative (BALCO). BALCO was a business corporation which manufactured nutritional supplements and was blamed for providing performance enhancing drugs to Major-league Baseball players and other athletes between 1988 and 2002 (Steroid report 2012). The players summoned to testify included Bonds, Jason Giambi and Gary Sheffield. This scandal tarnished the name of the business as it was allegedly reported that the company manufactured performance enhancement drugs that could not be detected commonly referred to as 'the clear.' (Mitchell 2007). This scandal has had adverse results to sports especially baseball. Before the scandal, every major sport except baseball had a policy against steroids. The BALCO outburst resulted in Major League Baseball commissioner instituting a written league-wide policy against steroids. However, the BALCO business died due to the steroid scandal and investigations.

As mentioned earlier, the use of steroids in the Major Baseball League started quite a while back and has become chronic. Although the use of steroids had been banned since 1991, PED testing was only introduced in 2003. Before then, players randomly engaged in the use of performance

enhancing drugs as without testing they would never be caught. After the introduction of doping tests and strict penalties, players switched to the use of undetectable steroids particularly the human growth hormone. It is estimated that nearly 50% of Major Baseball League use performance enhancing drugs (Mitchell 2007). The increased number of players (in the period 1994-2004) on steroids led to the creation of the “steroids era” which is basically a period in the Major Baseball League when steroids were in the highest use. In this era of major steroid use, it is believed that BALCO was behind the supply of banned substances directly to players or via their trainers and/or managers. At first, the business only supplied required supplements to players. However, the supplements BALCO distributed were unlawful under Olympic regulations. Throughout the BALCO steroid scandal, accusations that elite baseball players had used banned performance enhancing drugs were confirmed. Following the BALCO scandal, Major League Baseball at last resolved to issue tougher penalties for steroid users. The new policy, which was accepted by Major League Baseball players and owners, was issued at the start of the 2005 season. The scandal later linked several players like Gary Sheffield, Giambi, Barry Bonds, and Jason Grimsley (Mitchell 2007). Most of these players were furious of the accusations and denied any links to doping but later confessed to having used performance enhancing drugs (Mitchell 2007).

Media treatment of the BALCO scandal was exceptionally far-reaching. Through the leakage of the grand jury commission findings to the media, the public was able to get a glimpse of the scandal that could be regarded as the worst in the history of sports and particularly, baseball. This and other stories

being covered by the media concerning baseball at the time enabled Americans and players in general to appreciate the issue of performance enhancing drugs. This story was covered by almost every kind of media from print to visual. It shed light to the ugly truth behind unnatural substances baseball players use to boost their offensive techniques. However, some of the stories were highly overrated and seemed to target only BALCO instead of everyone involved in the scandal. The company's name remained public while most players were left anonymous. However, the founder of BALCO Victor Conte responded positively to the charges thanking the commission for creating awareness to the public against steroids and also admitted to supplying illegal drugs.

The company's founder and co-founder were sentenced a jail term, their company basically fell and they went separate ways. Victor now makes legal nutrient supplements. Most of the players in the saga received punishments even in other sports apart from baseball. In conclusion, this scandal was well handled. Every party involved paid in some way and served as an example to players who compete unfairly by use of performance enhancing drugs or steroids. The BALCO case has provided a way in prosecution of companies that venture into business so as to complement cheating in sports thereby creating unfair advantages. Harsher penalties should be introduced to curb this prevalent issue of doping in sports and also creation of awareness to the public and aspiring sportsmen.