

Tougher punishment needed for steroids

[Sport & Tourism](#), [Baseball](#)



According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, an athlete is defined as " a person who is trained or skilled in exercises, sports, or games requiring physical strength, agility, or stamina." Athletes train and practice year-round to prepare for the competition and challenges. At times during the preparation, injuries are sustained and fatigue is endured. To rid themselves of these obstacles, athletes take performance-enhancing drugs, which are also known as steroids. In the United States, the use of steroids is illegal without a prescription. When it comes to punishing athletes for the use of performance-enhancing drugs, depending on what sport and/or what league you are playing in, the penalty is dramatically different. For example, if you are found using steroids during the winter or summer Olympics, you automatically receive a two-year suspension for a positive test (Bodley 1). If you are caught a second time using performance-enhancing stimulants, you receive a lifetime ban from the Olympics (Bodley 1). In comparison, the National Hockey League does not have any drug testing or punishment at all for steroid use. Steroids promote muscle growth and the development of male sexual characteristics (National Drug Treatment Center). Consequently, steroids are often abused by athletes to enhance athletic performance and to improve physical appearance (National Drug Treatment Center). Steroids are available in many ways including tablets, liquid, gel, and cream form (National Drug Treatment Center). Charles Yesalis, a steroids expert, believes these drugs can affect you for a long time. " They (steroids) can assist you a decade or more after you last used them. They can take you to a place you neither have the time nor the ability to get to yourself, and if you continue with the right exercise and diet, you don't go back to zero"

(Brennan). What the public does not see is the long term deleterious side effects. Some of these include cardiovascular deterioration, liver and kidney problems, sterility, mood swings, depression, and impotence. The side effects range from reversible to irreversible and vary in their severity. Because steroid use has not been prominent in sports for a significant number of years, the public has not been exposed to the ravages of long term use. Consequently, the typical sports fan and especially the young ones do not see that the players payoff for using these drugs is frequently negative and almost always life altering. One idea that has been tossed around by Congress and other sports and law related organizations is an "all-sports test plan" (Associated Press). Representative Cliff Stearns, chairman of a House Energy and Commerce, has proposed that all athletes follow one unified drug testing policy (Associated Press). "Our elite athletic organizations, both professional and amateur, should establish uniform, world-class, drug-testing standards that are as consistent and robust as our criminal laws in this area," said Stearns (Associated Press). Stearns would like to see the Olympic drug testing policy used as a foundation to creating the "all-sports test plan." Senator John McCain, from Arizona, agrees with Representative Stearns. "It seems to me that we ought to seriously consider a law that says all professional sports have a minimum level of performance-enhancing drug testing" (Bodley 2). Recently in the news, Major League Baseball has been under scrutiny for their weak drug testing policy. With the admission of steroid use among some baseball players, the need for a tougher drug guideline was in order. In 2004, the players association and Major League Baseball agreed to a drug policy testing deal that would test

for steroids and performance-enhancing drugs. A first positive test results in treatment with no suspension, followed by a 15-day suspension for a second positive and up to a year suspension for a fifth positive. After the first year of this policy, testing caught five to seven percent of players using banned substances (Baseball's). With five percent, or 30 out of 600 players tested having positive results, a change needs to be made quickly to preserve the sport. After pressure from Congress, the players association and Major League Baseball agreed to a revised drug testing deal, which randomly tests any baseball player at any point during the season and off-season. Under new regulations, a first positive test would result in a 10-day suspension with a year suspension for a fourth positive test. All Steroids, steroid precursors and designer steroids, as well as masking agents and diuretics would be tested for in the new deal (Bodley 2). Congress still isn't thrilled with the new policy as it believes that a stricter course of action should be in order. " A majority of players think steroids are influencing individual achievements — that's exactly our point," said Rep. Tom Davis, R-Virginia., chairman of the House Committee on Government Reform (Jenkins). We need to understand the dangerous cycle that perception creates" (Jenkins). Steroid use has been a consistent problem in baseball. Ken Caminiti, 1996 National League Most Valuable Player and three-time, All-Star, has admitted to using performance-enhancing drugs while he played in the major leagues. Jose Canseco, 1988 American League Most Valuable Player and six-time, All-Star, has come out and admitted to using steroids along with writing a book that acknowledges other people in baseball have used enhancers before and after games in the clubhouses. Jason Giambi,

2000 American League Most Valuable Player and five-time, All-Star, confessed to using steroids in front of a Grand Jury, while being indicted in another case, and has had his public image shattered as he is still playing baseball with the New York Yankees. All of these players have accomplished many records which include All-Star appearances, Most Valuable Player awards, and home run records. Should all these players have their records marked with an asterisk for their admitted steroid use? If they have admitted it publicly or in testimony, yes they should have their personal records asterisked. Should their accomplishments be erased from the record books? The amount of time the individual has been taking steroids is unknown so this option is probably unrealistic. Some players whose statistics have been negatively affected agree. " So perhaps it's not surprising that 35% of players surveyed said if a player is found to be using steroids, his records should be stripped or denoted with an asterisk" (Jenkins). With players admitting to steroids on a daily basis, more teenagers and youth athletes see the need to use performance-enhancing drugs. The money the youth sees these athletes make cancel out the right way of putting on weight and building strength. Drug testing isn't enough. I have friends that know when they are getting tested and will take a pill or get detoxified in order to pass the test and continue competing in a sport. Soon enough, every athlete is going to have some type of performance-enhancing drug in their blood so they can compete with the top notch talent. After that happens, more athletes will see their bodies destruct quicker and death occur sooner. Overall, what good is earning that extra dollar if you are not going to be able to use it years after you retire? Steroids need to be stopped, if not be the

players, then by the leagues employing them. Most athletes live a privileged existence due to the money they earn, the notoriety they receive, and their working conditions. The public already perceives them as overpaid, overindulged, and under worked. Now the players have the added stigma of being perceived as insolent lawbreakers. The irreparable harm they have caused themselves and their sport will not soon be forgotten by the average fan. Most professional athletes have an easy life, but the least they can do is keep an even playing field when providing entertainment for the general public. Steroids cause profound damage to the body long term, significantly outweighing the short term benefits need to be eliminated from sports.

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