

# Marijuana and sports essay sample

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Ever since the recreational use of weed was legalized in the states of Colorado and Washington I've wondered how it might affect athletes and sports in those areas. Would athletes be able to smoke as much as they want whenever they cross the states borders? Imagine a United States where the use of marijuana is legal in all 50 states. Athletes whether in college or playing professionally get a ton of publicity for everything they do and are idols to youth across the world. They're essentially trendsetters. Would seeing Kobe Bryant smoke a joint on television change the general attitude towards marijuana and inspire basketball players across the world to follow? Many think weed would destroy the integrity of sports and would prevent the best product from being on the field or court. The questions can also be flipped around. Could smoking weed benefit athletes? In the end, is it even a really big of a deal? Marijuana is a green, brown, or gray mixture of dried, shredded leaves, stems, seeds, and flowers of the hemp plant. All forms of marijuana, including the stronger sensemilla and hashish varieties, are mind-altering (psychoactive) drugs.

They all contain THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol), the main active chemical in marijuana that effects changes in the brain of the user. Minutes after inhaling marijuana smoke users will begin to feel its physiological effects. When it was announced that the states of Colorado and Washington were now legalizing weed it made big headlines in the 2012 presidential election. It shouldn't be too surprising that it happened though considering how large the weed business is in those areas. Professor Elizabeth Jacobs has performed research on the amount of marijuana usage in the states that have legalized medical marijuana compared to Amsterdam where the use of

weed is completely legal. The research showed that when compared, there were no differences in the amount of drugs used. So even though weed isn't completely legal in the US it's being used just as much in places where it is legal. She then sought to find out whether there were differences between states that have legal medical marijuana laws compared to states that do not. She decided to collect data from the states that showed how much illegal weed was seized in the past year. There was no statistical difference between states with and without legalized marijuana in terms of the illegal marijuana seized.

“ The results of this study show that it is likely that the legalization of marijuana has no measured differences in the extent to which marijuana is illegally used...This would show whether there is a greater need for more effective law enforcement in states with legalized medical marijuana, and the government could allocate funds accordingly. From the data currently available however, there is no higher rate of illegal marijuana usage in states with legalized marijuana, and there may be fewer negative effects of passing such a law than its opponents anticipated.” Do some athletes smoke weed to enhance performance? Linda Cusmano writer for Shapefit. com states that smoking weed has scientifically been proven to hurt athletic performance. Its effects would make the athlete less agile, meaning slower to react to the physical movements needed to perform at a high level. The athlete would also likely feel paranoia and a lazy feeling. She also mentions that weed doesn't have the same effect on everybody. One theory that would oppose Linda Cusmano is the idea is that the ability of weed to calm nerves gives the athlete a slight advantage.

Other theories on potential benefits from marijuana surround its ability to alleviate stress and relax. The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has done a bit of research and stated that, “ Research showed that cannabinoids can allow athletes to better focus and diminish stress.” Surprisingly, not a lot of research has been done on the subject. Zarda believes scientists assume they know what smoking pot will do to an athlete (possibly help win an eating a contest). Finding test subject would be the least of their concerns which alludes to the idea that they would just rather not spend time researching the subject. So maybe playing high has no effect on an athlete’s performance, but what about after a big game? Marc Peruzzi wrote an article called “ Athletes discover Pot for Pain” which posed the question “ Marijuana works wonders on serious pain related to major illnesses. But could weed also be a better option than over-the-counter drugs for sports injuries and muscle soreness?” Marc Peruzzi was an avid Advil user.

He used it to relive pain after injuring his back in a skiing accident. Taking drugs like Advil and those that are similar have shown to deteriorate our gastrointestinal system the reason being that it blocks natural chemicals that cause inflammation. However, those same chemicals also protect your stomach from burning its own acid. According to the institute of medicine’s report, pain is the act of several neurotransmitters relaying message to our brains such as “ my legs are sore from mountain biking,” for example. Drugs like opiates and morphine essentially turn off those neurotransmitters to an extent where our perception of the pain is considerably less. THC has the same effects but works in a slightly different way. “ when it binds to two types of “ cannabinoid receptors” (CB1 and CB2)... , “ reduces reactivity to

acute painful stimuli in laboratory animals... [and] was comparable with opiates in potency and efficacy,” according to the Institute’s 1999 study. Other studies of the drug have shown that it reduces muscle spasticity, too.” In the medical marijuana world dose size is a large gray area. There is no universal standard for how much one hit of weed will do to us.

Peruzzi found in a Canadian survey shows that 53% of those who treat pain with pot take four or less hits per dose. Peruzzi also asked the question “ If I don’t care that I’m in pain, am I indeed in pain?” Most people believe that if don’t feel pain then you’re not actually in pain. “ As long as you’re able to cope with the drug’s potency, it can actually be better for you than ibuprofen,” says Dr. Donald Abrams, professor of clinical medicine at the University of California–San Francisco. He also adds, “ Marijuana has anti-inflammatory properties similar to ibuprofen, and it won’t give you an ulcer.” Given this information it’s hard to say that marijuana may not be a better option compared to the over-the-counter drugs that we use every day. Earlier this year, a few months after the Oregon Ducks won the Rose Bowl an article was written called “ We Smoke It All” by Sam Alipour. It starts off with him retelling an account he recently had with one of the players from the team at a friend’s off-campus apartment.

The player is taking weed out of a bag and preparing to smoke. This is normal for the student-athlete who says he doesn’t use bong and pipes because they “ mean more evidence”. Apparently most of his teammates were waiting to smoke until after their winter workouts were over. After that, it becomes a team activity. “ It’s not just us,” he says, taking another hit. “ If

you think Oregon's the only team smoking weed, you're crazy." An NCAA study in January said that 22.6 percent of athletes (A number that has increased since last researched) smoke weed. College football players rank the highest with 26.7% of their athletes using marijuana. It's interesting to see how many players from Oregon have been smoking weed recently and on past teams. Oregon has been a regular name seen in the top five best teams in the nation in the past decade. Current and old players have estimated between 40 and 60 percent of the teams dating back fifteen years have used marijuana. This information came from a few interviews done by The Magazine.

This past June an Oregon State trooper pulled over two Oregon football stars driving at 118 miles an hour. The stench of weed in the car couldn't have gone unnoticed. "Who's got the marijuana in the car?" asked the officer, and the player replied "We smoked it all." Shocking isn't it? Oregon continues to be one of the top college football teams every year and apparently they rank very high among college football teams that smoke marijuana. So from this evidence it's safe to say that the more a team smokes weed, the better they play. Right? On a 4/20 special (the national holiday for pot smokers) BleacherReport.com a well-known sports website counted down "Top 20 most Successful Potheads in Sports History". The list consisted of greats old and new including a former Cy Young winner Tim Lincecum, NBA stars Carmelo Anthony, Stephon Marbury, and Rasheed Wallace. NFL Stars who have admitted to, or have been caught smoking marijuana include Ricky Williams, Randy Moss and Santonio Holmes.

The NFL continues to have one of the worst drug problems in any professional sport. Ricky Williams retired for the first time just after failing yet another drug test shortly before the 2004 season. Ricky Williams was a former Heisman winner and one of the best running backs in the NFL before he suddenly retired in 2004. Ricky violated the league's substance abuse policy four times, each time being marijuana related. While retired, Ricky continued to smoke daily and became a "pothead". One of the main reasons Ricky left the NFL was that he was being overused and it took a huge toll on his body. After a few years spent living in Australia, stress free of the media and football, Ricky Williams decided to make a comeback in the NFL. Many football analysts view Williams' career as a waste, saying that his "addiction" to pot has turned him into a mediocre talent when he could have been one of the greatest running backs of all-time. Olympic Gold medalists have even been caught smoking weed. It was world news when photos of Michael Phelps smoking weed from a bong surfaced on the internet after the 2008 Olympics.

In the most recent Olympics, Michael Phelps was praised for accomplishing an amazing feat when he broke the record for most ever medals won by an Olympian. New outlets across the world wrote stories about his greatness. It's funny how not quite too long ago they had attacked Phelps for pictures of him, taking a hit from a bong had surfaced on the internet. Three months after the 2008 Olympics Phelps was caught at a party smoking weed. Most assumptions were drawn were that this had not been the first time something like this had occurred. After news had gotten out he said "I engaged in behavior which was regrettable and demonstrated bad judgment."

I'm 23 years old and despite the successes I've had in the pool, I acted in a youthful and inappropriate way, not in a manner people have come to expect from me. For this, I am sorry. I promise my fans and the public it will not happen again." Michael Phelps was doing what millions of others do at his age which is to party and have a good time, but fell victim to his gigantic celebrity status.

In the article " Motivation by positive or negative role models: Regulatory focus determines who will best inspire us." the effects of role models are discussed. Athletes play as role models to millions of people across the world. People like Lebron James or Derek Jeter who have excelled way past their competitors have their every move watched by the media and fans. They're expected to be good citizens that are always doing the right thing. These athletes are also chosen because they have impacts on the way the people that watch them act. (Lockwood & Kunda) Often we see these athletes in commercials that deal with community service, or drug prevention. On the other hand there are superstar athletes that can't seem to stay out of trouble. They give off a certain attitude or mind-set that may work for them but not others. Negative role models may inspire those who follow to be someone that is feared, or to be avoided (Lockwood). Michael Phelps inadvertently sent a message to millions that smoking marijuana isn't that bad.

It's hard not to think that way after seeing the guy become the most decorated Olympian in history. Sadly even with all the information gathered, it's very hard to make a clear statement about whether or not seeing



athletes smoking weed is good or bad. Some people are going to like it and some people aren't. However, I feel that as steps are taking towards making the US of marijuana in the US legal that attitudes will begin to change. These types of issues will never fully be resolved. It can be compared to the debate over gay marriage or abortion. The issue will only become larger as more states begin to join Colorado and Washington and believe me they will. Is weed a potential performance enhancer? There's no definite answer, but from the evidence gathered, it's most likely not the case. These types of debates have no true answers but make for great discourse. The weed discourse is far bigger than many realize and people are only beginning to see how enormous the weed industry is becoming. We can only wait and see to find out where things will go but for now we are all entitled to our own opinion. So suppose we live in the hypothetical United States I proposed earlier, where weed is legal in all 50 states. What do you think will happen?

#### Citations

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