

Drugs in sport

Sport & Tourism



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Although the use of performance enhancing drugs is prohibited, a lifetime ban is unreasonable when one considers the pressures and demands facing professional athletes today. Recent incidents in the news such as the National Rugby League and Lance Armstrong doping scandals have made this a hot topic and increased public awareness. Performance enhancement in sport has been around for a very long time, as far back as ancient Greek Olympians and Roman Gladiators.

This essay will explore the following issues and put forth the argument that professional sport people should not be banned for life from playing their sport if they are convicted of using performance enhancing drugs. These issues to be discussed as mentioned above are as follows; the use of performance enhancing drugs in the rehabilitation of injury, the attainment of lifetime goals of the individual including the lures of fame and fortune, the mindset of these professional athletes and health risks.

After serious injury, there are drugs used for therapeutic reasons in the rehabilitation and recovery of an athlete. These drugs, if used when there was no injury, would enhance performance thus there is a risk of continued use of these substances even after the athlete recovers from the injury. Smith (2013) says that an athlete will do this out of concern of a decline in personal performance due to a slow recovery after injury. Injured athletes are more likely to use drugs to recover faster and make up for lost time in their training.

However, even if an athlete is injured and uses therapeutic drugs to help them recover, they still should not be allowed continued use of the drugs

when they have recovered. There was always the risk of injury when the athlete starting playing their sport and the risk of injury is the same to every person playing. If they kept using the drugs, they would gain an unfair advantage over other athletes. Dr Tremayne (2013) states that “ If we can keep our sports clean then athletes will be competing on a level playing field, and it will avoid the temptations of drugs use for those less disciplined athletes.

On the other hand, pressures to perform as a professional athlete are intense, and anxiety increases when they have been injured. Their performance is publicly analysed and compared with other athletes, so to regain their former fitness and performance, the athlete turns to performance enhancing drugs. They want to reach the high expectations of their coach, team mates, the media and their fans. There are also the career issues that come with losing peak performance. The loss of income and employment, as participating in their sport is their job and livelihood. Many athletes succumb to the lure of fame and fortune.

Being recognised as the best in their sport, the opportunity to earn millions of dollars every year in prize money and potentially more in sponsorship and endorsement deals may tempt athletes to use performance enhancing drugs. “ As prize money and endorsement rewards increased, so did the science and abuse of performance enhancing techniques. ” (Baron 2007). Be that as it may, this is not an excuse to use performance enhancing drugs. Being recognised as the best in your sport for skill is one thing, being recognised as the best in your sport because of using performance enhancing drugs is another thing entirely and makes the title false.

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If the athlete is number one in the world and famous in their sport for using drugs, not because of their natural skill, perseverance and hard work, they don't deserve the accolades and endorsements they receive. However, is the playing field actually level to begin with? J Savulescu (2004) had this to say on the matter of the widespread performance enhancing drug use in sport: Despite the health risks, and despite the regulating bodies' attempts to eliminate drugs from sport, the use of illegal substances is widely known to be rife.

It hardly raises an eyebrow now when some famous athlete fails a dope test. The athlete may therefore believe they need an edge to their game if everyone else is using performance enhancing drugs. How would an athlete be able to fairly compete against their enhanced peers. So for an athlete to attain their lifelong dreams and goals, the training, discipline and hard work are not enough. To be able to achieve the number one status, along with the fame and fortune that they desire, they use performance enhancing drugs.

For many athletes, the benefits of enhanced performance outweigh the safety concerns they have for their own health. With the huge emphasis placed on winning in modern day sports combined with the potential to earn millions of dollars, the fame and status in elite sport, it is understandable that some athletes would use performance enhancing drugs despite the risks to their body and health. Even though the athletes are choosing to use performance enhancing drugs, they are still risking their bodies and potentially damaging their health.

Some of the consequences of men using performance enhancing drugs, namely anabolic steroids, are as follows (Carpenter, 2007 pg. 487): testis atrophy, oligospermia, baldness, prostatic hypertrophy and gynecomastia. Women may experience hirsutism, amenorrhea-infertility, clitoral hypertrophy, voice changes and breast atrophy. There are many more serious side effects including jaundice, hypertension, concentric cardiomyopathy, retardation in the young, 'roid rage' and in serious cases of prolonged use, major reduction in life expectancy.

In spite of this, the fact that professional athletes are still using performance enhancing drugs despite these health risks is alarming. These athletes agree with the age old ideal of superhuman performance – at any cost. The reality of the modern sports world is that athletes are rewarded for winning at virtually every level of competition and even with the health risks associated with performance enhancing drugs, specifically anabolic steroids; the serious side effects come from long term use.

This would enable the athlete to compete at the elite level and justify the use of these drugs in an athletes mind. Performance enhancing substances are against the rules, however in the modern day sporting world, the pressures placed on the athlete's performance are extreme – winning is everything. Whether using drugs to recover from injury, taking health risks to be the best, to reach a superhuman potential or to become famous and make a lot of money, the pressures on these athletes are extreme.

One bad decision in an athlete's career should not mean the end of their career. Taking all these points into account and viewing the situation from

the perspective of the athlete gives merit to the idea that a lifelong ban, for a poor choice in an athlete's career, is too severe when it comes to the penalty. Strict and plentiful drug tests, longer suspensions and larger monetary fines should be put in place, but a lifetime ban, when looking objectively at the points raised, is unfair.

Reference

www.teachpe.com/drugs/banned_list.php