

Issue of drug use in high school athletes



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Athletes are under even more pressure now than ever to perform.

Professional sports have numerous drug testing policies to ensure the game is fair and that athletes are healthy. Despite the common use of drug testing in professional sports, Canadian high school athletes aren't subject to drug testing. It is well known that high school is a demanding time for students. With intense workloads, athletics, activities and personal stressors, high school can feel like a roller coaster at times (FOS, simile) and balancing this workload and emotions can be difficult. These stressors can lead to poor decision making and these are decisions that could change a student's life. For athletes in particular, the pressure to perform can lead to choosing to take performance enhancing drugs, but also recreational drugs. Because of these stressors, athletes can become vulnerable and therefore easily fall victim to peer pressure. Within the last year alone, twenty three percent of Ontario students were offered, sold, or given a drug at school, and forty two percent have used an illicit substance (MOP, verifiable fact) (Teen Challenge, Canadian Drug Crisis). Athletes undergoing drug testing would have a built in reason to resist these peer pressures to try or use drugs.

School administrators are charged with ensuring a safe, supportive, and healthy school environment. When drug use occurs, schools use a progressive disciplinary approach which combines early and ongoing intervention to promote positive student behavior (Government of Ontario). Through drug testing, schools would be reinforcing and promoting a safe, drug free environment. Students would be less likely to interact with drugs knowing that they are subject to testing at any time, while simultaneously recognizing the policies and consequences. Additionally, parents and

guardians would be reassured that the schools are acting in the best interest of their children and that the school is a safe environment.

Athletes are expected to play fair and obey the rules of the game. When athletes use drugs to heighten their skills, it violates the integrity of the game. Drug testing ensures that no athlete has an unfair advantage over others who are playing by the rules. Many high school athletes plan on pursuing a career in professional sports, and the first step toward that would be university/college level athletics. It wouldn't be fair if scouts recruited an athlete whose performance is enhanced by drugs, over an athlete who is playing with natural skill. Discovering athletes who use banned substances, would allow for the opportunity to reinstate the virtues, heart and "team player" aspect of sports. Drug testing levels the playing field, and gives all athletes an equal opportunity at achieving the highest standard.

Some people argue that drug testing is too expensive and money could be better spent on more effective prevention methods. They also contend that not all drug tests are one hundred percent foolproof, and those false positives could result in humiliation and jeopardize future careers.

Nevertheless, they fail to see that an athlete's health and safety overrule these factors. (MOP, statement of authors opinion)

When avoiding drug testing due to its expense, money is saved, but is the money saved (RD, Repetition) worth more than a student's health?(FOS, rhetorical device) Drug testing opens the door to early detection and intervention of drug use. Once a student is identified as drug user, parents can get involved, and seek the help and treatment their child needs. Early

interventions for adolescent substance abuse holds benefits for reducing drug use, and associated behavior. The earlier the treatment begins, the quicker a person can get up to one year of sobriety. Once someone is sober for one year, their chances of remaining sober improve significantly.

(Pyramid Healthcare Inc., Importance of Early Intervention)

Not all drug tests are one hundred percent foolproof. For example, if a student prescribed with Adderall for their ADHD was drug tested, they could test positive for amphetamines. This would cause the student much humiliation, and could be detrimental to future career paths. However, false positives are a rare occurrence. Up to only five percent of drug tests result in false positives, while the remaining ninety five percent are accurate (CBS News). Drug testing with ninety five percent accuracy, poses less of a risk than not testing at all, as it can benefit the long term health and wellness of a student. Repeated use of drugs can cause kidney problems and liver damage and an enlarged heart and high blood pressure (RD, polysyndeton), all causing an increased risk of stroke and heart attack (National Institute of Drug Abuse, Drug Facts).

Canada must conduct drug testing in high school sports, or at the very least, start small by implementing drug testing in select provinces and cities. There should no longer be a tolerance for drug abuse and unfair advantages in Canadian high school sports. If Canadian high schools continue to run sports without conducting drug testing, it not only allows their athletes to abuse drugs with limited chances of getting caught, but also runs a risk to their health, and deteriorates the value of integrity in sports. Afterall, an athlete's

health and integrity are the top priorities of sports, and drug testing must be done to hold athletes to these standards.

Work Cited

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