

The MLB



STEROIDS & DRUG TESTING

Drug Testing In Major League Baseball Should Be More Strictly Enforced.



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“At first I felt like a cheater. But I looked around, and everybody was doing it.” This is what San Diego Padres third baseman Ken Caminiti says about the use of steroids in Major League Baseball. Should players resort to taking steroids just because everyone else does? This is a sign that players will continue to use steroids unless something is done to stop them. Drug testing in Major League Baseball should be more strictly enforced so that steroids are no longer a problem.

Major League Baseball is very competitive. As with any other professional sport, athletes are expected to

perform at top levels. There are pressures from fans, coaches, and other players that encourage athletes to do their best. These pressures, however, can lead to players using steroids. Arizona Diamondbacks infielder Craig Counsell says, “If you can get an advantage somewhere, even if it involved crossing an ethical line, people will do it. Home runs are money. That’s a fact.” Steroids allow players to become bigger, stronger, and faster, which can give them that edge over competition. According to Camaniti, “About 50% of all



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baseball professionals have used steroids.” Major league player Jose Canseco states, “About 85% of major-leaguers have used steroids.” Major League Baseball said of 1,438 anonymous tests this season, between 5 and 7 percent were positive for steroids. This is where the problem begins. Players who use steroids have an unfair advantage, they give Major League Baseball a bad name, and they go against the concept of competing. These are all reasons

why drug testing should be more strictly

enforced to end the use of steroids in Major League Baseball.

When players pump themselves up with steroids, it

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gives them an unfair advantage over players who do not use steroids. While some players rely on natural talents, others are taking steroids to boost their talents and make themselves bigger, stronger, and faster. It is obvious that these players will be able to perform at higher levels and pass up steroid-free players. This is shown by how past records are being broken rapidly and continuously with steroid use becoming more prevalent. Ten players had 50-homer seasons since 1994, compared to 11 during the previous 118 years. The 70-

homer mark, never cracked in 122 years of baseball, was reached twice, by Mark McGwire (70) in 1998 and Barry Bonds (73) in 2001 (Fainaru, Thomas). Over the past few years, both McGwire and Bonds have been accused of using steroids, but they were never convicted because drug testing policies are not strict, effective, or

enforced properly. After years of speculation, it took until now to find that Bonds has been guilty of steroid use. This makes people realize, "Gee, no wonder Bonds broke that record." In a *Sporting News* article, Ken Rosenthal states, "Major League Baseball's drug-testing program is woefully inadequate. The players' union had every opportunity to help Major League Baseball get tough on drugs in the sport's new labor agreement. Instead, it consented only to a toothless policy that drew immediate ridicule from experts." In the article, David Vincent, a

computer engineer and baseball historian from Centreville, Michigan, said he believes several factors have contributed to the recent record breaking, including smaller ballparks and lighter bats (Fainaru, Thomas). However, Vincent also states, "These guys are just huge. It's pretty obvious they're doing something beyond mere weightlifting." Baseball commissioner Bob Selig is pressing for a tougher drug-testing policy in the sport (Walker). Starting next year, positive tests for steroid use will result in treatment, fines, and suspensions (Selig's proposed plan in the box

SELIG'S PROPOSED NEW DRUG POLICIES

- 1st Positive Test = Treatment.
- 2nd Positive Test = 15-day suspension or fine of up to \$10,000.
- 3rd Positive Test = 25-day suspension or fine of up to \$25,000.
- 4th Positive Test = 50-day suspension or fine of up to \$50,000.
- 5th Positive Test = 1-year suspension or fine of up to \$100,000.

below). The suspensions would be without pay (Associated Press). After Selig decided to press for tougher policies, he stated, "This is about fairness, this is about integrity, this is about social responsibility. This is about having a level playing field for our players to compete." A change in the drug testing policies has been long awaited and hopefully Selig's proposed plan will be successful.

When players such as McGwire and Bonds are accused of using steroids, it gives the game of baseball a bad name. Why haven't measures been taken to stop the use of steroids before now? 43% of fans say the absence of steroid use would make the

game better (Moore). This shows that fans are noticing the negative affects that steroids have on baseball. Major League Baseball's drug testing program has been widely criticized as toothless, especially in comparison with the programs in place for other professional athletes and

Olympic competitors (Walker). This shows that baseball is not doing enough to enforce drug testing. Major League Baseball



is behind the curve because other athletic associations, such as the National Football League, Olympics, and International Baseball Federation, have stricter drug

Major League Baseball agreed to move their testing facilities to a WADA laboratory (Associated Press). Rob Manfred, executive vice president of Labor Relations for Major League Baseball, states, "By moving the testing program to a WADA-certified laboratory, we, together with the

“ This (stricter drug testing policies) is about having a level playing field for our players to compete. ”

~Baseball commissioner Bob Selig

testing policies (Associated Press). Baseball hasn't been able to compete in the World Cup tournament of baseball because of its policies. It took Major League Baseball until now to change and start to take some positive steps forward. They are just now being accepted by the

International Baseball Federation and World Anti-Doping Agency after Selig made his new policies and after





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Players' Association, provide a tangible demonstration of our commitment to a more stringent and effective drug prevention program at the major league level. This (moving the drug testing facility) is another important step in bringing Major League Baseball more in line with accepted international standards as well." Hopefully Major League Baseball will be able to compete with the standards of the IBF. The IBF has policies such as around-the-clock testing with no advanced notice and a two-year suspension for a player found positive (Antonin). This would definitely make drug testing policies more strict in Major League Baseball. If stricter drug testing eliminates steroid use, baseball will be restored to its original form. Players will no longer be able to rely on steroids to give them an edge. The point of

competition is finding out who can do better than everyone else, not who can take more steroids to be better. Many fans watch sports to witness extraordinary athletic ability from naturally gifted players. If players are allowed to use steroids, fans will be watching drugged-up players hitting home run after home run. All of the naturally athletic players wouldn't be able to keep up. Steroid use causes controversy among players, coaches, and fans and without it, baseball could once again be considered America's past time. Hank Aaron, who is considered a home-run king, baseball great, and who is now senior vice president of the Atlanta Braves, believes that steroids will cause a strike that will be devastating to baseball (Gray, Kennedy). This shows that there are definite problems among the league which is taking away from the game of baseball.

Aaron states, "This strike would send a bad message to fans. The message that it would send to the fans is that we (players) don't give a damn about you (fans). That we only think about ourselves." Players are not only competing for themselves, but they represent Major League Baseball. In order to keep baseball the same now as in the past, fans must be considered. Baseball wouldn't be baseball without fans cheering and singing "take me out to the ballgame!" Players also need to know that they are major-leaguers who many people, especially children, look up to. They need to set a good example by not taking steroids. A fan, named Dale Lassner, states, "Major League Baseball and other sports authorities should set clear

policies on drug testing and the legality of performance-enhancing substances." While many fans enjoy watching un-enhanced, natural players, others don't care and feel that as long as the players hit home runs and make incredible plays, steroid use is OK. With 13% of fans saying the game will be worse without steroids, it could be they

“ It’s (steroids) a problem. Let’s clean up the game. ”

~Frank Robinson, manager of the Montreal Expos

fear that ridding the game of those drugs will also lower homerun output, and thus make one aspect of the game less attractive (Moore). Even if baseball players didn't hit as many homeruns, at least when they did, it would be a sight to see. Players shouldn't be taking steroids just so they can hit homeruns. Diamondbacks first basemen Mark Grace states, "If you want to keep home runs in check, if you want to reduce home runs, start testing for steroids." Major League Baseball should be clean of steroids so that all players are on the same level. We could once again marvel at the natural athleticism of the players.

There are many actions that can be taken to reduce the use of enhancement drugs.

Selig's proposed plan of enforcing stricter penalties is a way to reduce drug use and also gives players an incentive not to use these substances. I believe the only way to get through to players is to have rules that make players think twice. Players will have to make the decision to play drug-free or be fined and suspended. Along with stricter penalties, there should also be more frequent, more effective drug testing. How is it possible to catch enhancement drug users if there is no testing? It would be nice to see Selig's proposed policies enacted in the near future. Something needs to be done. These policies would be a positive step forward for Major League Baseball.

With drug testing being more strict in Major League Baseball, the use of steroids would go down. Wouldn't steroid-free baseball in the future be a sight to see? A level playing field for all players, no more controversy, and players rightfully breaking records without being accused of steroid use. The problem cannot be solved immediately, but each positive step forward (like enforcing new policies) will help. According to Frank

Robinson, manager of the Montreal Expos, "It's a problem. Let's clean up the game."

Courtesy of Sports Illustrated

ON THE NEWS

INSIDE BASEBALL

What becomes of Barry Bonds and baseball after BALCO?

VIEWPOINT

Aging stars have greatest temptation to use steroids.

INSIDE BASEBALL

Like Elvis, the skinny version of Bonds was by far the King.

THE DAILY BLOG

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COLLEGE FOOTBALL

My Heisman vote went to the best player, not the best QB.

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