

## **Steroid Use in Professional Sports Points**

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### **Federal Legislative Efforts**

(September 28, 2005) The Senate Commerce Committee is discussing two proposed Senate bills that would standardize drug policies across sports. Three similar bills have been introduced in the House.

In April 2005, Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig called for a 50-game suspension after an initial positive test, and a 100-game ban for second time offenders and a lifetime ban for a third violation. Currently, a first time offense carries a 10-day ban. In a compromise, on September 26, 2005, Bud Selig offered to accept a 20-day ban for first-time steroid offenders.

Officials from the National Football League, National Basketball Association, and National Hockey League were called before the Senate Commerce Committee to discuss proposed Senate bills that would standardize drug policies across sports.

Senator John McCain sponsored the Clean Sports Act, a companion to the House bill introduced by Government Reform Chairman Tom Davis, R-Va. Sen. Jim Bunning, a Kentucky Republican and former pitcher elected to baseball's Hall of Fame in 1996, sponsored the Professional Sports and Integrity Act.

The bills are Senate 1114 (Clean Sports Act); and Senate 1334 (Professional Sports Integrity and Accountability Act)

### **NFL Appears Cleaner than Baseball**

#### **NFL Testing Procedures**

According to NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue, the NFL tests players on all teams each week, conducting more than 9,000 tests a year for steroids and related substances. Last year he told Congress the league spends \$10 million annually on steroid testing and education.

The NFL says it tests all players for banned substances before the season starts, and then randomly tests seven players per team every week of the season.

Tagliabue says that over the past five seasons they've only had about 25 players who violated the NFL's program and were suspended --- less than 1%.

#### **Doctor for Carolina Panthers Indicted**

On September 21, 2005 the Associated Press reported that James M. Shortt, a doctor who was accused in a CBS report of writing illegal steroid prescriptions for three former Carolina Panthers players, has been indicted and charged with 29 counts of distributing steroids and human growth hormones as well as a conspiracy charge.

### **Committee Pushing for In-depth Investigation of NBA**

NBA Commissioner David Stern presented the House Government Reform Committee with data showing that of the 4,200 tests over six seasons, only 23 produced positive results for steroid use. Some of those players were cut by their teams in training camp. Others were able to show they had legitimate medical reasons for using banned substances.

It was reported in September 2005 that in the NBA, only three players have been suspended for using prohibited substances, and none is currently playing in the NBA.

The House Government and Reform Committee released statistics from the World Anti-Doping Agency showing that 17 basketball players in international competitions tested positive for steroid use in 2003 and 26 more tested positive in 2004.

### **Examples of Drug Testing Failures in Professional Sports**

**PALMEIRO:** On March 17, 2005, Rafael Palmeiro told Congress he had never used steroids. On August 1, 2005, he was suspended after failing a drug test.

**ARMSTRONG:** Week of September 26, 2005 the French sports daily L'Equipe reported Tuesday that six of Lance Armstrong's 1999 urine samples tested positive for EPO (erythropoietin), a drug that increases the number of oxygen-carrying red blood cells and is prescribed for anemia in cases of cancer and kidney disease. The timeline is as follows:

1997: Blood test: Introduction of blood testing as health measure

1998: Scandal: Tour de France nearly comes to a halt when leading team is caught using banned substances

1999: Victory: Lance Armstrong wins tour for first time

2001: EPO test: The International Cycling Union tests urine for EPO

2004: Conviction, new test: Former Armstrong adviser Michele Ferrari, who had extolled the benefits of EPO in the mid-1990s, was convicted of "sporting fraud" and malpractice.

**JOHNSON:** On September 27, 1988, Ben Johnson won the 100-metre sprint title in a world-record time of 9.79 seconds at the Seoul Olympics. It was later revealed that the Canadian tested positive for the anabolic steroid stanozolol. Johnson was stripped of his gold medal and world record and was banned from competition for two years.

**MCGWIRE:** In 1998, Mark McGwire admitted to using an over-the-counter testosterone-producing pill called androstenedione, or andro. The substance became controversial because at the time it was banned by the IOC, NFL, NBA and NHL, but not by Major League Baseball.

**CANSECO:** May, 2002 Jose Canseco retired from baseball and announced that 85% of all baseball players use steroids. He also announced that he himself used steroids. In November of 2003, MLB announced that between five to seven percent of 1,438 anonymous tests on all players came back positive for steroids that year – the equivalent of nearly two full major league rosters.

**RUSEDISKI:** In January 2004, Canadian-born British tennis star Greg Rusedski joined a long list of athletes who have tested positive for nandrolone, reportedly the most commonly used banned substance by athletes today.



**Reference:**

Associated Press articles – Fehr: New Drug Policy Possible Next Month; Hall of Famers Back Tougher Drug Testing (09.28.2005), Doctor Indicted on Charges of Giving Steroids to NFL Players (09.21.2005)

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<http://www.cbc.ca/sports/indepth/drugs/stories/top10.html>

WCBS Newsradio 880 – Steroids Prescribed to NFL Players (03.30.2005)

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