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## **EducationNews.org**

### **An Interview with Louis Cunningham: About Drugs and Sports**

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Michael F. Shaughnessy  
Eastern New Mexico University  
Portales New Mexico

Mr. Cunningham is currently the President and Chief Executive Officer of All American Research & Drug Testing. All American provides a full range of Background Screening and Drug Testing programs and services, for corporations, associations and individuals.



Mr. Cunningham was formerly Vice President of Business Development for Reach Media, Inc. the leading provider of media content for the African American community. He was responsible for creating, developing and executing events at Walt Disney World Resorts and TVOne television network. Prior to Reach Media, Mr. Cunningham was a Marketing Executive for Nokia, the largest manufacturer of cellular telephones in the world. He was responsible for acquiring digital content rights to music, movie and TV properties and was also responsible for the execution of the Nokia Sugar Bowl. Mr. Cunningham has also been a sports and entertainment consultant for the America 's Cup Yacht Racing syndicate from the U.S. Virgin Islands.

He was a Vice President of Marketing and New Business Development for the 1996 Summer Centennial Olympic Games, and was directly responsible as the lead negotiator for several corporate sponsorships and licensing products for the world's largest peace-time event. He was also responsible for the musical success of the Olympic Games. Mr. Cunningham created the concept, marketed and negotiated five separate musical deals in five different genres of music (Classical, Jazz, R&B, Country and Hispanic). This brought the Olympic Games a triple platinum album, a gold album, a gold single and a Grammy nomination. Mr. Cunningham also created

several "first-time" events for the Olympic products. Mr. Cunningham had direct P&L responsibility for the department's budget, and he generated more than \$50 million for the Olympic Games.

Mr. Cunningham's professional career in international sports, entertainment marketing and management spans more than a decade. This expertise includes his position as Special Assistant to the Vice-Chairman of ProServe, Inc. a multi-million dollar sports management and marketing firm. In his role at ProServe, Inc. Mr. Cunningham was responsible for such corporate clients as Michael Jordan and Patrick Ewing. Mr. Cunningham also served as the international liaison for the Team Sports Division (basketball) of ProServe, Inc. Within this function, Mr. Cunningham drafted and negotiated personal appearances and athletic apparel contracts, endorsement opportunities, team contracts and television contracts for clients. He also assisted in the placement of professional basketball players of foreign teams and negotiated international tours such as the Nelson Mandela Western Hemisphere Tour. Previously, Mr. Cunningham also served as Special Counsel to the President/Athletic Director at Alabama's A&M University. As an attorney, Mr. Cunningham oversaw the general marketing of the athletic department, the negotiations of University contracts for television and athletic events and athletic apparel agreements, administration of University-sponsored sports programs and ensured that the University complied with NCAA requirements.

Mr. Cunningham's international experience is also expansive as he assisted the United States Treasury Department in negotiating the largest foreign distribution agreement in U.S. Mint history.

Mr. Cunningham was responsible for negotiating several corporate sponsorships and distribution agreements with international corporations, and he has represented the interests of the United States Government and the United States Olympic Committee in countries in Europe, the Far East, the Middle East and in the Caribbean.

Mr. Cunningham also served as a Captain in the United States Marine Corps. Mr. Cunningham holds a B.A. from Rice University in Houston, Texas and a JD from the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.

### **1. What is the extent of the drug problem among high school and college football players in America? What is the extent of the problem in Texas?**

If we consider alcohol a drug, and we do, then studies show that athletes have a higher propensity for use and abuse than their counterparts. In a recent survey, the NCAA reported alcohol use above 78% among Division I athletes. Overall, recreational drug use has been declining while alcohol use has remained consistent. Alcohol use and abuse is a primary concern

### **2. The NCAA "has banned 34 stimulants, 27 anabolic agents, 18 diuretics, three street drugs and five growth hormones". Now, how can you ask the typical high school coach to keep up with all of this and be responsible for also teaching classes and also teaching good sportsmanlike conduct?**

Good question. We don't ask high school coaches to keep up with banned substances now, anymore than we do a college or professional coach. However, what we do ask is that governance be administered evenly and fairly across all schools and programs (such as the NCAA) and thus, it's the responsibility of every state high school athletic sanctioning body to ensure that their respective schools and programs are able to articulate what standards, at a minimum, their student athletes are going to be held to at their current level and their next level of performance and participation.

This information must be taught and disseminated to each student (a sixty to ninety minute class) and then it is each individual's responsibility to adhere to the standards that are set (we are making students responsible, what a novel concept). Making drug and alcohol awareness programs a requirement for participation and providing pamphlets of banned substances is easy enough to do. Coaches then do what they have always done and that is monitoring the progress of their student athletes.

Currently, everything is done in an ad hoc manner. Not only do you not have two states that agree on a standard measures for drug testing student athletes you may not have two communities, right next to each other, in the same state that will agree. However, as long as minimum drug testing standards are set by each state's high school athletic sanctioning body, each community would be free to raise the standards as they see fit. This makes participation fare to everyone.

### **3. What is the concern about over the counter supplements? What specifically are we talking about here?**

Most athletes are always looking to gain an edge over their opponent. The opponent can take on many different forms and disguises; it could be a clock or stop watch, a person or team or even themselves. Athletes take OTC supplements, which are mostly unregulated by the FDA, under the auspices that the supplement will provide that edge. Concerns stem from the products not being regulated, tested or claims proven to be accurate. Supplement designers (and we have reached the era where products are being developed, created and mass produced from CAD shops) are so advanced that they can create products that will push the envelope of legality but may also create catastrophic health issues. Ephedrine is the most recent classic example. The product could cause heart and respiratory failure. However, this issue will be a constant challenge as new and more powerful supplements come on the unregulated markets and younger and younger student athletes find their availability and try them.

### **4. What do you consider to be performance enhancing drugs? And is there ever a reason for a coach to give, say Vitamin C, with the message that "this will help you play better?"**

A performance enhancing substance is any substance taken in nonpharmacologic doses specifically for the purposes of improving sports performance. A substance should be considered performance enhancing if it benefits sports performance by increasing strength, power, speed, or endurance (ergogenic) or by altering body weight or body composition. Furthermore, substances that improve performance by causing changes in behavior, arousal level, and/or perception of pain should be considered performance enhancing.

A coach should never give a student athlete any substance, period. That is the job of the team doctor or trainer. Furthermore, a coach shouldn't give a student athlete any substance with a promise or suggestion that it will improve performance because it undermines the coach's credibility, integrity, objectivity and values. It also creates suspicion among players receiving the substances, creates subterfuge and can be detrimental to team moral. Lastly, the potential legal ramifications for the coach, school administration and school district could be extremely dire. This is a no win situation for everyone involved.

### **5. To establish a drug testing program even for a small state, the size of Rhode Island would be a gargantuan task. Are we talking about the need for random drug testing?**

Actually, the task isn't as gargantuan as one would think and it doesn't need to be costly. TPA's (third party administrators) such as All-American Research and Drug Testing are happy to speak to any school and explain how testing could be efficiently and effectively done. Depending on state and community requirements, there are very cost effective ways to conduct full or random

drug test on student athletes or the entire student body that are involved in extra curricular activities. Testing does not have to be burdensome, nor expensive

**6. Even I understand from high school kids that they can purchase diuretics over the Internet, and perhaps I shouldn't even mention certain web sites ( I don't know what's there, but I have heard that kids can get stuff " just in case" there is a random drug testing in their school.) Is there any organization looking at the purchase of steroids, diuretics etc on the web?**

Not that we are aware of. The internet is capitalism and the free marketplace at its best (or I guess, worst depending on your perspective). Governments, as you are aware, have been leery to disrupt the flow of commerce over the internet. If Viagra can be purchased over the internet without a prescription, certainly drug masking agents are free game. Periodically, you will hear of a DEA or FBI sting that captures large quantities of steroids or other illicit products sold over the web but we are unaware of any on going, coordinated effort that routinely takes place.

**7. " Texas is one of 41 states that does NOT have a steroid policy for high school athletes". What will it take to convince somebody somewhere that a lot of education needs to be done?**

We think that the movement is gaining momentum everyday. Headlines makers like Barry Bonds only help draw attention to the on going challenge and the need for education. We will be speaking to the UIL later this year and providing suggestions on how communities can address the issues.

**8. Is there a [web site](#) where readers, parents and coaches can get more information?**

**9. What are the long term effects of steroid use? Of diuretic use?**

Through our readings we have found that steroids can also have serious psychological side effects. Some users become aggressive or combative, developing "roid rage" - extreme, uncontrolled bouts of anger caused by long-term steroid use.

Steroid users who inject the drugs with a needle are at risk for contracting [HIV](#) (human immunodeficiency virus), the virus that causes AIDS, if they share needles with other users. People who use dirty needles are also at greater risk for contracting [hepatitis](#) , a disease of the liver, or bacterial endocarditis, an infection of the inner lining of the heart. It can be impossible to tell if your friend or an athlete on your team is sick. It's not enough to take their word for it; they may not know. Sharing needles is never safe.

Some people combine or "stack" anabolic steroids with other drugs. Other steroid users may "pyramid" or "cycle" their steroid doses, starting with a low dose of stacked drugs and then periodically increasing and decreasing the dosage of the steroid, which users believe helps their bodies recuperate from the drugs. Because it is difficult to understand how the drugs interact, there is the possibility of taking a deadly combination. As with medications that should not be taken together, anabolic steroids have the potential for negative interactions. Emergency departments have reported cases of vomiting, tremors, dizziness, and even coma (unconsciousness) when patients were admitted after taking combinations of steroids.

**10. Are there different types of steroids? I see you refer to anabolic steroids in your press release.**

Anabolic steroids are artificially produced hormones that are the same as or similar to, androgens, the male-type sex hormones in the body. The most powerful androgen is testosterone . Although testosterone is mainly a mature male hormone, girls' bodies produce smaller amounts of it as well. Testosterone promotes masculine traits that guys develop during puberty, such as deepening of the voice and the growth of body hair. Testosterone levels also can affect how aggressive a person is and how much sex drive he or she has. Athletes sometimes take anabolic steroids because of their testosterone-like effects, such as increasing muscle mass and strength. Steroids can be taken in the form of pills, powders, or injections.

Another group of anabolic steroids, sometimes called steroidal supplements , contain dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) and/or androstenedione (also known as andro). Steroidal supplements are often sold at health food stores or gyms. The effects of steroidal supplements aren't well known, but it's thought that, when taken in large doses, they cause effects similar to stronger anabolic steroids like testosterone. Here's what is known: companies that manufacture steroidal supplements often make claims that are false and very little is known about the long-term effects on the body of some of these substances.

The term "steroids" is also used to describe some types of non-anabolic steroids, such as cortisone, which have other medical uses and are available by prescription to treat medical problems like asthma or arthritis. These steroid medications do not have the male hormone effects of androgens.

Anabolic steroids stimulate muscle tissue to grow and "bulk up" in response to training by mimicking the effect of naturally produced testosterone on the body. Steroids have become popular because they may improve endurance, strength, and muscle mass. But research has not shown that they improve skill, agility, or performance.

#### **11. What question have I neglected to ask?**

GREAT JOB, MIKE, THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THESE ISSUES!