



Think before you jump???

The American Athletic Institute's position on steroid paranoia

Millions spent to deter drug use by high school athletes... Desperate measures in desperate times by desperate people. In the wake of last years' steroid scandals, several states allocated funding for drug testing for high school athletes. The purpose of this article is to examine the issues of use and suggest some possible alternatives.

Start with this one... QUOTE "Random drug and alcohol testing does not reliably keep student-athletes from using. In fact, the mere presence of drug testing increases some risk factors for future substance use, Oregon Health & Science University researchers report. Their findings are published in the November issue of the Journal of Adolescent Health, the journal of the Society for Adolescent Medicine". The study, named SATURN (Student Athlete Testing Using Random Notification), is the first-ever prospective, randomized clinical trial to assess the deterrent effects of drug testing among high school athletes.

"Prior to this study, there was little research and no randomized trials to establish whether student-athlete drug testing is an effective deterrent," said Linn Goldberg, M.D., F.A.C.S.M., principal investigator, professor of medicine and head of the Division of Health Promotion and Sports Medicine, OHSU School of Medicine. "As a result of this study, drug testing is better understood. Although drug testing did not appear to reduce school sport participation as some had suggested it would, it did not reduce past 30-day drug or a combination of drug and alcohol use, and only intermittently lowered past year use. Armed with this information, parents, schools and policy-makers now can make evidence-based, cost-effective decisions about how best to protect the health and well-being of young athletes."

"This was a state-of-the-art collection and testing program that exceeded those of typical school testing programs. If this did not show significant deterrent effects, less-sophisticated programs are not likely to be more successful," said Diane Elliot, M.D., co-investigator and certified doping control officer for the United States Anti-Doping Agency. **(Oregon Health & Science University)** Last week the headlines: "Score: Texas \$5,000,000 Steroids 2". A year earlier New Jersey was shut out failing to identify one student athlete using steroids testing at the NJ State Championships. "See... it is working". Estimates of high school use are absolutely ridiculous. Many have reported to state authorities that 3-4% of high school athletes have used or are using steroids. So let's think about this with a real scenario. Imagine in California, the largest participatory state high school association in the USA, with nearly 1,400 high schools (and 41 of the largest 100 high schools in the country), 1.7 million high school students of which 700,000 are athletes. Surely there would be some athletes using steroids but with those estimates it would mean that over 20,000-40,000 steroid users are on the fields of play. Is that realistic?

I hope we could as adults, acting in the best interest of children, examine this problem without squandering the valuable and shrinking financial support we vie for to fund our high school programs as we head into a tighter and tighter budgetary future.

Did you know?

Forget ordering steroids on the internet and waiting for the unmarked parcel at your door with dreams of anabolic bliss, now steroid compounds can be obtained at the local mall. Representatives of the International Olympic Committee purchased 246 over-the-counter supplements at malls and fitness and nutrition stores in the U.S. The products were analyzed by the European Drug Testing lab in Cologne, Germany, which found that (46) or 18.8 percent of these supplements contained actual steroids. Did you know this? Do NFHSAA officials know this? Do our politicians who allocate millions of dollars for high school athlete drug testing know this? We still have coaches in this country telling kids to take supplements.

Why didn't you know this? You are not educated. This study came out in 2001. Seven years ago and still no one knows anything about it. We share it with all the athletes and organizations we (AAI) work with, to educate them strongly, that you must be BEWARE and be AWARE of all that you take into your body. The supplement industry is absolutely unregulated. Kids can buy actual steroids online in a matter of minutes. They know more about the detections/cleanout times than you do. They have been educated by black market drug dealers and when you test them at the state high school championships they are clean and are not even sweating it. The joke is truly on us.

Let's think about this.

Question #1: Have we exhausted all efforts to educate athletes, coaches and parents/guardians? The answer is no. We have headed frenzy first into drug testing mode. We support athletics from the educational setting, yet we have bypassed education as a venue for creating concern and vigilance that can impact this problem. Perhaps this was due to the myriad of high profile drug scandals that hit in succession. BALCO, Marion Jones, Tour de France, MLB, etc. Of course the increased publicity of these steroid scandals will unfortunately create an increase in interest and use.

Question #2 Why are you drug testing? It is either that you want to catch users and kick them out or off for cheating, or that you hope to identify young athletes who are using so that you can help them before they have damaged their developing bodies. If in fact, you are testing to identify those who need help then you must have a highly detailed process after identifying them, based on a model of educate, correct, restore. Show me the process. A positive test and suspension will not suffice. Most who drug test will fail, in helping these young people.

Alternatives to drug testing must take into consideration the following:

Steroids and Supplements:

- ❖ A strongly written policy banning steroid use and making evident the legal ramifications of possession and/or use, which must be signed by all student-athletes and their parents. Violators would be subject to school or district legal and civil penalties.
- ❖ SRO's (School Resource Officers) used to deliver the legal ramifications educational piece in school mandated meetings with all parents, athletes and coaches. (Throw in prescription meds as use in athlete population is increasing at alarming rates) Ex. New York's Public Health Law classifies anabolic steroids as controlled substances. Selling or giving away anabolic steroids is a Class D felony regardless of the quantity involved and is punishable by up to seven years in prison. Selling or possessing steroids with the intent to sell is also a federal felony.
- ❖ All high school athletes are required to have a physical examination by a competent medical professional prior to practice or competition. This is a perfect opportunity to assess any possible reasonable suspicion for steroid use. (AAI has a reasonable suspicion criteria form)

- ❖ Mandated education and training in steroids and muscle-building dietary supplements for the state's coaches and medical professionals engaged in student athlete physical examinations for clearance to participate in high school athletics that would help them spot steroid use as well as to warn players and parents about the health dangers of use. A strong warning that the Supplement industry is unregulated and use of any of these substances is dangerous. Ex. (The IOC Study on Supplements)
- ❖ A prohibition on school sponsorships from any muscle-building supplements and a ban on any school staff members encouraging or distributing muscle-building supplements. Violators would be subject to personnel actions by their schools or districts as well as civil and criminal penalties.
- ❖ Establish a reasonable suspicion process and status to employ drug testing for social drugs street drugs and steroids. The myriad of signs and indicators associated with steroid/drug use can be enough to warrant this process in lieu of allocating millions of dollars to test high school athletes. (Example: Texas High Schools \$5,000,000 to confirm 2 athletes who tested positive this past year. When you consider that there are less than twenty NCAA positive tests per year nationwide, this minimal number of positive tests in the High School population indicates few who are using steroids. The reasonable suspicion testing is enough of a deterrent.

Reasonable Suspicion Screening (for Steroids or any drugs and or alcohol)

A student-athlete may be subject to drug testing at any time when the Director of Athletics or his/her Administrative designee determines there is individualized reasonable suspicion to believe the student-athlete may be using a prohibited substance, or there is suspicion or confirmation within a team, that use of prohibited substances has occurred. Such reasonable suspicion may be based on objective information as determined by the Director of Athletics or by a qualified medical or health care professional, Head Coach, Assistant Coach, Head Athletic Trainer, Assistant Athletic Trainer, or School District Physician, Academic Counselor/Social Worker or School Nurse and deemed reliable by the Director of Athletics or his/her Administrative designee.

Reasonable suspicion may be found, but not limited to 1) observed possession or use of substances appearing to be prohibited drugs, 2) arrest or conviction for a criminal offense related to the possession or transfer of prohibited drugs or substances, or 3) observed abnormal appearance, conduct or behavior reasonably interpretable as being caused by the use of prohibited drugs or substances. Among the indicators which may be used in evaluating a student-athlete's abnormal appearance, conduct or performance are: class attendance, significant GPA changes, athletic practice attendance, increased injury rate or illness, extreme physical appearance changes, academic/athletic motivational level, emotional condition, mood changes, and legal involvement.

Upon Verification

If reasonable suspicion is verified (see Reasonable Suspicion Reporting Form), the Director of Athletics or his/her designee will notify the student-athlete and the Parent/Guardian. The student-athlete and Parent/Guardian must comply with the request to take a drug test upon notification and an adequate specimen must be produced. The student athlete and a parent /guardian must immediately schedule a drug test with a designated and competent agency that will conduct the test by set procedural process. Failure to comply with a request within the established process or timeframe shall be confirmation of a positive test. Sanctions shall be administered for as for a positive test.

Note: The possession and/or use of illegal substances may be determined by means other than urinalysis (e.g., using on-site saliva testing products/breathalyzer testing to determine alcohol consumption). When an individual is found to be in possession and/or using such substances, he/she may be subject to the same procedures that would be followed in the case of a positive urinalysis.

Last, but not by any means least... Get on the pot and alcohol page. Our student athletes are not just cheating to win a championship. They are being cheated out of their potential, their dreams and most tragically their health and lives with marijuana and alcohol. Athletes clearly use more of these social drugs than non-athletes.

- ❖ The lack of concern for social drugs use in the student athlete populations is hard to imagine. Alcohol use rates by 12th grade with student athletes is at 58.5% and marijuana at 20.1% yet this is not a priority. (We have a cost effective 80 hour urine test for alcohol that is being used for our drug courts in NY.)

Final chapter: Who, where, when and why will remain a topic of great debate. In the middle of all of this problem is our federal governmental negligence in allowing drug dealers to peddle these substances to the healthiest human population on the planet. There is no regulatory agency that would touch the supplement industry with a ten foot pole.