

## **Sports Dealing with Steroids**

by Jason Gerrard

Over the past decade, many of America's big sports have taken a hit due to steroids. The biggest two, the MLB and NFL, have placed harsh punishments for the players that test positive for any kind of banned performance enhancing drugs. However, the NFL hasn't taken quite the hit the MLB has. The MLB was America's pastime. With baseball's best early generation players like Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Jackie Robinson and Hank Aaron, baseball was easily the great American sports past time. But coming into the 21st century, several players tainted the stats from the past with their steroid injections. Now baseball has the controversy on what to do with these players and their mega stats that they're producing. The NFL on the other hand hasn't seen as much of a hit on popularity, mainly because taking steroids means bigger hits and faster players, causing more interest to the fans. The bottom line is, Steroids aren't just throwing off the record books, but they're teaching the little ones that look up to them as role models, that taking steroids is ok to do and that you have to take them to be great. Like many drugs, Steroids have many positive and negative effects on the body.

They allow a human to train for a longer period of time, and at a higher rate of intensity. They also help a human muscle to recover a lot faster so you can work out more often. They will get you big muscles, help you lose a little bit of weight and also will help with your endurance. They will make you a more athletic athlete, but there will be severe consequences if you take them. If a male takes steroids, he can expect the following things to happen to him: Shrinkage of the testicles, a reduced sperm count, impotence, they will make a man go bald, they can cause a difficulty or a pain while urinating, they can make you develop female breasts, and also can mess up a man's prostate. I think that the risks outweigh the benefits by a long run. I wouldn't want to even risk taking steroids to only develop one, let alone many of those problems. You would think with the athletes knowing this, they would stay away from the powerful drug; However, some of them risk whatever it takes to make a few more million dollars.

Sadly, it's not only grown men taking steroids. High school students are starting to feel the pressure to succeed in there sports, and also its not only athletes taking them. People take them to get there killer beach body as well. Everybody see's the perfect body and feel pressured to do whatever it takes to get that body, even if it takes extreme sacrifices. But it's not only men who are taking the banned remedy these days. That's right men; women are taking steroids as well. Women have been testing positive for steroids in a few sports as of lately. You all have probably heard of Marion Jones, the famous world class Olympic sprinter. She recently admitted to taking steroids prior to the 2000 Sydney Olympics. I guess she wasn't listening when her "doctor" prescribed her the drug. Women who take steroids can expect the following things to happen to her: A woman will start to appear more masculine, a woman can develop facial hair, it can change or even kill a women's menstrual cycle, a woman can expect their clitoris to get larger, it can cause a woman's voice to deepen, and steroids can also make a woman's breast shrink (geocities.com). Other small side effects include: Acne, trembling, swelling of the feet or ankles, bad breath, reduction of good cholesterol, high blood pressure, liver damage and cancers, aching joints, and also steroids can cause you to get injured easier.

Steroids were first researched in 1767, but it wasn't until the 1930's that Dutch pharmacologist Ernst Laqueur managed to isolate testosterone itself and thus allow for synthetic versions to be produced (drugpolicy.org). In the 1940's, it was dubbed as the next big thing and the new wonder drug in America. It was supposed to help aging men with their testosterone. In 1988, trafficking steroids became illegal in the U.S., and shortly after, in 1990 the Drug Enforcement Agency, Human services, and the Food and Drug administration made steroids a schedule 3 controlled substance because of there terrible effects on the body.

Steroids first made there mark during the 1988 Olympics, where a Canadian athlete named Ben Johnson was denied his gold medal for testing positive for steroids. In the International Olympic committee banned steroids from there sports. Since then, the Committee has placed 17 known anabolic steroids on the banned

list. Shortly after, the NFL placed a steroid ban on its league. In 1989, the former commissioner of the NFL Paul Tagliabue put the steroid ban in effect (USA Today). Since the rule has been put into effect, there has never been a repeat offender in the NFL. The reason the MLB has gotten such a bad wrap on steroids is because they didn't start testing for steroids until 2002, and didn't start punishing players until 2005. That's almost 20 years after the first sports steroids incident, way to long of a wait if you ask me.

It wasn't until 1997 when baseball started to raise there eyebrows though. That was the year both Mark McGuire and Sammy Sosa had there race for the most home runs in a single season ever. Babe Ruth had the original record, which he set in 1927 with 60 home runs. It then took 34 years for Roger Maris to break that record by only one home run. 37 years later, in 1997, both McGuire and Sosa blew those records away. That year McGuire finished with 70 home runs and Sosa with 66. Sadly, that record only stayed in place for four more years. In 2001, the new steroid king Barry Bonds broke the record with 73 home runs. It's a little ironic that it took 71 years for the record to be broken by more than one home run, yet in four short years the record went up 12 home runs.

Currently, I would argue that Barry Bonds is the most hated man in baseball. Not only did he break the single season home run record, but in 2007 Bonds broke one of the records that probably never should have been broken, the all time home run record. Hank Aaron hit 755 home runs in his career, and also still holds four other MLB records (Wikipedia). He is regarded as one of the best baseball players of all time, and also one of the greatest Americans of all time. Not many people wanted to see that record get broken, especially since everyone knew Bonds was on steroids. The problem with steroid testing is that steroid testing is always one step behind all of the new performance enhancing drugs that come out. Because of that, many baseball players are able to get away with what there doing. However, thankfully, Bonds is currently testifying in front of America's grand jury about his steroid use. Unless he gets some kind of a miracle, Bonds will spend some jail time for lying to them and for his illegal steroid use. His name will for ever be tainted in the baseball world. Babe Ruth hit all of his home runs being fat

and overweight, not to mention being a drunk as well, and Hank Aaron did it with pure class and pure passion and love for the game. Barry Bonds did it the illegal way, taking steroids and cheating the game, cheating the fans and also cheating him self.

Steroids are just plain bad for baseball. It makes the players that are working there butt off for hours a day, every day of the week, lose their roster spots to these athletes that want to cheat their way to the top. Because of the steroids, players are starting to get hurt more often and for longer periods of time too. The number of players on the Disabled List (DL) increased 31%, from 266 in 1989 to 349 in 1998, and the average stay on the DL increased 13% over the same period (Assael 2005). Taking the steroids caused the muscles to over grow to the point where the tendons and ligaments weren't strong enough to hold them to the bones. Since 2002, the testing for steroids in major league baseball has progressed greatly. In 2002 you could test positive for steroids once without punishment, twice for a fifteen day suspension, three times for a twenty five day suspension, a fourth time for a fifty day suspension, and a sixth time would result in a year long suspension. As it stands now, one positive test results in an automatic 50 game suspension. The second time you test positive, it bumps it up to 100 games. If you test positive for a third time in your career, you automatically get banned from baseball for life. The commissioner has really stepped up to restore the love of baseball in America. However, like I said, testing is always one step behind, so there is only so much you can do.

One of the issues why baseball always gets in the news is some of the best players from the past decade have tested positive for steroids and still deny it. Players like Barry Bonds, Jason Giambi, Sammy Sosa, Mark McGuire, and recently Roger Clemons and Alex Rodriguez have all tested positive for steroids at one time or at least have been accused of it. Roger Clemons and Barry Bonds have numerous facts and other information that is getting used against them in court, and they're still trying to deny it. If some of the players would just come out and come clean with everyone like Alex Rodriguez did recently, maybe the effect and taint on their name wouldn't be as severe. It's disappointing seeing all of these famous players testing positive. It's also terribly embarrassing. I looked up to all of

these players when I was growing up watching and learning the game. I thought what they did before they got caught was amazing. Now that I understand the whole situation and how they cheated everybody, those guys are nothing but a bunch of bums to me.

After the storm cleared on baseball with there steroid accusations, many started to point the finger back at the NFL for their use of steroids. According to [milehighreport.com](http://milehighreport.com), the average weight of an NFL player in 1990 was only 230 pounds. Fast forward that to 2008 and the average weight increased to 250 pounds. Go back to 1990 and the average offensive lineman only weight 289 pounds. The average today weighs 305 pounds. Dr. Wayne Sebastianelli, director of athletic medicine and the team physician at Penn State, thinks the weight increases are because of steroids. He states that because of the substantial increase of weight gains in football can and most like will lead to breathing problems, joint and ligament damage, heart disease, arthritis and even premature death. Put that in a combination with some of the way these NFL teams train there athletes and death is definitely a possibility. In August of 2001, Kory Stringer died of a heat stroke during one of the teams off season work outs. He was a massive offensive lineman for the Minnesota Vikings. Stringer was 6 foot and 4 inches tall, and weighed 335 pounds, 20 pounds over the average size of an NFL player.

With the weight increases going up in the NFL, younger players feel pressured to be in better shape and to put on more muscle than there body can physically handle. At least 4 or 5 times every fall you hear about High School football player or a college football player collapsing on the field and dying. It's always due to so called heat strokes or some mysterious thing that killed these young men. These young men are being pushed way too hard. Bring back the good old days when it was old fat men that played football.

In a recent interview I did with my doctor, I asked him many questions about steroids. He confirmed many of the side effects about how steroids are so bad for your body, but he surprised me a little bit with one of his answers. Apparently, if you take steroids under the watch of a doctor, it can be quite good for you. If he prescribes you the right amount and you take it right, taking steroids are healthier than smoking cigarettes. Also,

steroids are prescribed for many common injuries and sicknesses. Rolled or sprained ankles, tendonitis, a bad cold, yeah, there all prescribed for those things. So, taking steroids isn't always a bad thing. Don't get me wrong though, I still think there terrible for the MLB and NFL.

Something has to be done about steroids in the MLB and NFL. They are killing the game and are reaping all of the benefits from it anyways. They don't care that there players are getting hurt left and right. They don't care that these players muscles are so overgrown that it only takes a little movement in the wrong way to rip them straight off the bone. They don't care that these players are going to suffer from severe consequences after they retire. They just plain don't care as long as they are getting there millions upon millions of dollars.

Thanks to these famous players that have tested positive, it has finally gotten the attention on steroids in baseball. Now the MLB can finally fix there problem that they have found for the last decade. We now know the faults and defects of taking steroids thanks to the popularity it has reached with our athletes; however it may be too late. Many kids have looked up to these athletes as role models, and may end up resorting to steroids