

Juiced

Squeezing Steroids From Baseball



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Though steroids might help make a person stronger, the drugs also mess with an athlete's mind and body.

It's World Series time in Major League Baseball, and you know what that means: home runs, on-field heroics, the crowning of a new champion. While players and fans celebrate the October Classic, this past baseball season [2005] has been anything but a home run. The season was **marred**¹ by a steroid scandal that began as soon as spring training ended. First there was a tell-all book by former player Jose Canseco. Canseco **alleged**² that many players use the "juice," a slang term for steroids.

Then on March 17, five current and former players sat before a congressional committee and answered questions about steroid use in Major League Baseball. One of those players, Baltimore Oriole Rafael Palmeiro, went as far as to jab his finger at lawmakers and declare, "I have never used steroids. Period."

But during a random drug test in July, the Orioles star tested positive for stanozolol, a powerful steroid. Major League Baseball suspended the slugger for 10 days. The announcement was a huge blow to

¹**to mar:** to make a blemish on; to spoil

²**to allege:** to state as a fact but without proof

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baseball. Many considered Palmeiro a **shoo-in**³ for the Hall of Fame. Palmeiro became the fourth player in major-league history to reach 3,000 hits and 500 home runs.

Palmeiro told reporters that he would never "intentionally" use steroids. "I made a mistake," he said. "I hope the fans forgive me."

Major Health Problem



Jed Jacobsohn/Getty Images

Jason Giambi has been implicated in baseball's growing steroid scandal.

Palmeiro was the seventh Major League Baseball player to make that "mistake" this season, and the most notable. At no other time in baseball history have so many players been suspended at once for using illegal drugs. Other stars, such as Barry Bonds and Jason Giambi, have been **implicated**⁴ in baseball's growing steroid scandal.

Artificial steroids are substances, including drugs, that can help an athlete become stronger. Athletes who use steroids can train harder and longer than athletes who do not use the drugs. Though steroids might help make a person stronger, the drugs also mess with an athlete's mind and body. Steroids can cause panic attacks and depression.

³**shoo-in:** one that is a certain and easy winner

⁴**implicate:** to show to be connected or involved in some kind of wrongdoing

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In addition, scientists say that those who take steroids over a long period can become aggressive—a behavior that athletes call "roid rage."

Why would athletes risk harming their bodies? Some experts say that if athletes are not the best in their sport, they won't be offered big-money contracts and commercial endorsements.

Some people are concerned that teen athletes will mimic their professional sports heroes and use steroids themselves.

Different Policies

That's one of the reasons why some sports leagues take steroid testing seriously. For example, the National Football League (NFL) has the toughest steroid policy. Its players are subject to year-round tests for dozens of banned steroids. First-time offenders are suspended for four games.

Major League Baseball began its 10-day suspension policy this season. Second-time offenders are banned from the sport for 30 days. With 162 games in a baseball season, Major League Baseball's penalties are a slap on the wrist, Rep. Christopher Shays of Connecticut told Senior Edition. "It's a joke. A 10-day suspension in baseball is basically a vacation. It has no **deterrent**⁵ impact."

Outta Here

Shays and other legislators want a tough drug policy that regulates all four major professional sports leagues—baseball, football, hockey, and basketball.

To that end, lawmakers have introduced the Clean Sports Act. The proposal calls for every athlete to undergo random drug testing at least three times during the season and twice during the off-season.

Under the proposal, players who test positive once would be banned from their sports for two years. Second-time offenders would be thrown out of the game for life.

⁵**deterrent**: thing which prevents or discourages somebody from doing something

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"For me, this bill is less about sports than it is about public health," Senator Henry Waxman of California said in May. "Aspiring young athletes need to know that steroid use in the pros leads to suspension and expulsion, not home run records and adulation."

Baltimore Orioles slugger Rafael Palmeiro tested positive this year for illegal steroids. He was suspended for 10 days.