**PED’s: Asking the Tough Question**

762 is the record for most homeruns hit within a professional career, but the question raised by many baseball lovers is, “Was the record obtained by cheating?” Lance Armstrong’s return from multiple forms of cancer to eventually win seven consecutive Tour De France’s was nothing short of miraculous but was this miracle from God or from steroids? Many statistics and records throughout the realm of sports wear an asterisk to remind society that this feat was not obtained by God-given talent and hard work, but through the use of performance enhancing drugs. Society says Lance Armstrong and Barry Bonds cheated to get to where they are, but is that really the way it should be? Should professional athletes be permitted to use performance-enhancing drugs within sports? I believe that performance-enhancing drugs should be permitted in sports because of the fact that it provides a more exciting form of entertainment for the fans along with the athlete making the conscious decision to partake in this practice. However, most people disagree from an ethical and health standpoint both of which are valid reasons and demand exploration into the opposing side of the argument..

The main argument that I have heard by those opposed to the use of performance-enhancing drugs is that PED’s give an athlete an unfair advantage over fellow competitors. In an article by Craig Carr called, “Fairness and Performance Enhancement in Sports” Carr refutes this argument. Carr compares the use of sporting technology, such as more aerodynamic swimsuits, available to only a select few to the use of steroids that is available to all. He goes on to explain that sporting technology directly affects the competition itself while steroids only affect one’s training outside of competition. Carr also states that PED’s can level the playing field by allowing a less gifted player to prepare using PED’s against the naturally gifted athlete who does not need to use them to increase his level of play. The author states that this helps to give a less gifted athlete a more fair chance of winning but does not necessarily guarantee said win. The last point got to me personally. I remember playing sports in high school going up against athletes who were far and away superior to me even though I worked my tail off to be the best I could. If I had been able to, I might have considered taking PED’s to level the playing field as suggested by Carr. All of this had me wondering why PED’s are even banned from athletics in the first place if all they are doing is leveling the playing field for athletes and is PED use even cheating?

In an article titled, "Justifying Anti-Doping: The Fair Opportunity Principle And The Biology Of Performance Enhancement” that I found on SportsDiscus, the authors discuss why the World-Anti-Doping Agency bans the use of PED’s; that is because it violates the spirit of sport. The authors then explain that the spirit of sport is characterized by “ethics, fair play, respect for self/other participants, and honesty” along with a numerous amount of other values. The idea of doping, training, and competing compared to an athlete who only trains and competes places the athlete who partakes in the latter at an unfair disadvantage and therefore violates: ethics, fair play, respect for other participants and honesty because no athlete is going to come forward with the fact they doped unless prompted. The author then looks at doping from a biological perspective and how it speeds up the production of muscle and endurance that can eventually overwhelm natural talent and reduce the possibility of developing sporting excellence as human excellence in virtuous ways, which just so happens to be another value put forth by the spirit of sport. As a former athlete I took pride in transforming my body on my own without any assistance from supplements. With that in mind if it ever came to my attention that a fellow athlete surpassed my physical prowess because of supplement use I would be enraged. The phrase, “hard work pays off” would hold no weight because no matter how hard one would work,theywould always be at a disadvantage to a PED user. A very interesting point is made in this article from a biological and ethical standpoint. Being a true lover of sports would I want to take PED’s for my own personal gain at the cost of violating my ethical code along with that of sports that has stood for thousands of years? Would it truly be fair for me to bulk up at twice the rate than someone who is working just as hard as me? With that being said the advantages to using PED’s from a biological standpoint intrigued me and had me wondering whether there were any biological disadvantages to using them.

In an article by the United States Anti-Doping Agency, (USADA) the author lists the medical consequences of using performance-enhancing drugs; Those include: liver damage, disruption of puberty, stunted growth, and withdrawal. In addition to physical affects there are also psychological affects, such as increased aggressiveness and increased sexual appetite. This article certainly goes against my stance that PED’s should be allowed in sport. As someone who played and suffered the medical consequences of sport, I know that I would not want to further the physical and psychological damages to my being just for momentary success. With an organization this large taking such a firm stance on PED, should there be governmental legislation passed on the use of PED’s in sports? This article also gives rise to another question; can performance-enhancing drugs really have a negative affect on those around you?

In the New York Times best seller, “*Game of Shadows*” the authors open the readers up to the corrupt market of performance enhancing drugs and the numerous well known athletes who have taken part in this shadowy game. The authors also provide a different kind of perspective that I originally had not thought of, that of someone close to a steroid user, Barry Bonds’ girlfriend. In interviews with Bonds’ former girlfriend Kimberly Bell, she discusses the psychological change within Bonds. She mentioned how easily enraged Bonds would become angry at the simplest things and how he would use Bell as an outlet for his rage. She essentially explains that these drugs warped Bonds and distorted his reality, changing the man who she had come to love into an angry, selfish, shell of a man out for only fame and fortune. This book is very powerful and not only gave me insight into the world of PED distribution but more importantly how an athlete’s choice to use these drugs negatively affected those closest to them. As a former athlete I know sports can wear on the mind. Knowing that this wear and tear not only affects you but your family also makes me wonder if taking the drugs would be worth the strain placed on personal relationships. This book certainly goes against my initial view on PED use in sport and I am slowly starting to change my view. After both of those articles I found myself asking what the point of view regarding PED’s from a players’ standpoint who has taken the substances themselves.

I eventually found an article that gave me the insight I was looking for called “Why Steroids are Bad for Major League Baseball” by Jason Oconnor. In the article Oconnor opens by mentioning how the late Ken Caminiti used steroids and the negative affects it had on his body and how it eventually led to his death. Caminiti admits that the use of steroids led to his health problems and his eventual death; he proclaims that he would do it all over again. Baseball was Ken Caminiti’s life, his livelihood, and his passion. Any professional athlete would do whatever it took to succeed at their sport when all three of those factors were in play. If an athlete would do whatever it took to succeed even if that meant endangering their own life, wouldn’t you think that the organizations that employee these athletes would want to protect them? Personally, I wouldn’t’ be willing to sacrifice myself just so I could succeed within a sport because ultimately in anywhere from ten to fifteen years your career is over and you will have to live with your decisions you made in that timeframe for the rest of your life. This is why executives need to protect their players, so they can provide perspective to an athletethat is all about the here and now.

This question led me to an article by Bryan Denham, which discusses the homerun race of 1998 that followed the 1994 player’s strike that was a result of Major League Baseball pondering enforcing drug testing. The strike made them apprehensive about becoming aggressive with drug testing and with the MLB flourishing with Bonds, McGwire, and Sosa hitting 60+ homeruns a year, why would they? Denham then points out that when MLB began to become aggressive with their testing is when they began to receive negative publicity as a result of the news of drug use by MLB stars getting out. This article points out that the sport industry is not really about the “spirit of sport,” looking out for the athlete’s well-being, or fairness but about PR and money. This concept sickens me because I myself hope to head into the sports’ industry and to know that there are people within this industry that only care about money is disgusting.

After all my research and the revelation of the true motives behind Major League’s Baseball enforcement of drug testing I find myself opposed to the use of performance-enhancing drugs within sports. While athletes are supposed to play the game fairly, take care of themselves physically and psychologically, and provide a suitable living environment for their family the call for money and fame rings equally as loud with the higher level of play the more recognition and money the player receives. This call can cause athletes to make poor decisions that affect themselves and their family. In the modern world of sport the athlete needs to be protected from themselves and those responsible for their salary. Quite frankly, the business tycoons who are responsible for players’ salaries could care less about the player’s well-being or sports ethics but about making money off of the athlete’s performance. Therefore, I have come to the conclusion that to keep ethics within the world of sport and to protect the athlete and their family, performance-enhancing drugs should not be allowed in sports.

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