Student-Athletes' Opinions on Drug Testing

by

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Chapter One
Background of the Study

Introduction

In the last five years pressure has been put on student athletes and in turn on athletic departments to eliminate drug abuse. To alleviate the potential abuse, universities and the NCAA have instituted drug testing programs. This study is designed to inquire whether or not Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University basketball players perceive the drug testing procedures as fair and accurate, or as violations of their privacy.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to obtain and compare opinions of the members of the 1991-92 Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's Men's and Women's Basketball teams about drug testing.

Justification

After completed searches by the author of ERIC, Sport Search, and educational journals no other reported study was found which asked student-athletes their opinions about being tested for drug usage. Specifically, the results from this study could provide Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University with athlete opinions of its drug testing program.
Delimitations

The author has chosen to distribute this to only the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University 1991-92 Men's and Women's basketball teams because the author plans to compare men's and women's opinions about drug testing in the same sport.

Assumptions

There were two underlying assumptions. The first assumption was that the responses to the instrument would be accurate and honest because coaches and trainers would not be present during the surveying. Second, the author assumed that the instrument used was a valid instrument and could potentially be used in a future replication of this study without further revision.

Research Hypotheses

These hypotheses reflect the assumption that student-athletes would not have favorable opinions of current drug testing procedures.

Hypothesis One: Student-athletes do not think they should be drug tested.

Hypothesis Two: Student-athletes believe that drug testing procedures are a violation of their privacy rights.
Hypothesis Three: The number of women in favor of drug testing will be greater than the men.

Hypothesis Four: There will be more student-athletes disagreeing with the NCAA punishment than those agreeing.

Hypothesis Five: Student-athletes agree with the punishment process by Virginia Tech.

Summary

This research is a proposal of an investigation of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University basketball players' opinion of drug testing. In this chapter, the purpose, justification, problem statement, delimitations, assumptions, and research hypotheses were detailed.
Chapter Two
Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter is developed in five parts. First, there is an overview of the history of drug testing. Second, the reasons indicating the need for drug testing of student-athletes are presented. Next, the effects of drug testing programs and the constitutional issues are discussed. Fourth, there is a section detailing the specifics of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's drug testing program. This is followed by the chapter summary.

Background of Drug Testing Program

Drug testing programs were first instituted following World War II and during the occupation of Japan by American servicemen. According to Stone (1989), it was then that the use of heroin and other opiates became widespread in the military. In response to the problem, the military began a no-notice routine drug testing program. One positive urine sample resulted in the person receiving a less than honorable discharge.

Drug testing programs are currently being introduced into industry. As of 1989, estimates show that one fourth of Fortune 500 companies now utilize
drug testing. The main purpose for testing in companies is to prevent the accidents, the absenteeism, and the low productivity that are believed to result from widespread drug usage (Stone, 1989).

The crossover of testing employees in industry to testing athletes in universities has taken on two forms: NCAA drug testing and university developed drug programs. Because of the relatively small number of athletes testing positive and the financial expenditures for drug testing, each school has developed its own drug testing program (Stone, 1989).

NCAA drug testing programs screen for many substances including marijuana, cocaine, steroids, and extensive amounts of caffeine and other stimulants (Tricker, 1988). Urine samples may be taken before and after the season and before and after championship events. If an athlete tests positive (two samples are taken to aid in reliability) for any of the banned drugs, he or she will be declared ineligible to compete for one year. If the test follows a championship event, a winning team with an athlete testing positive will forfeit the game (Byers, 1986).
Need for Drug Testing Programs

The publicity surrounding the reported abuse of drugs by Olympic, collegiate, and professional athletes has heightened public and professional interest in the issues. The NCAA officials began testing student-athletes in 1986, after the tragedy of Len Bias, a star basketball player from the University of Maryland. Bias died after consuming a massive amount of cocaine, which caused a fatal heart attack (Farrell, 1986). According to the former NCAA Executive Director Walter Byers (1986), the NCAA plan provides the most comprehensive and reliable program of any organization in the United States. It is designed to give the necessary support for the student-athlete to resist peer pressures to use drugs (Tricker, 1988).

A number of universities have already developed a testing program for athletes, perhaps as an additional safeguard against their athletes testing positive during an NCAA championship. The status of these programs, however, remains largely unknown as little information is available to give a comprehensive overview of the degree to which colleges have implemented drug testing. Procedures at individual institutions remain unclear in relation to administration, counseling interventions, and preventative drug education (Tricker, 1988).
The Effects of the Drug Testing Programs

Research concerning college athlete drug abuse has provided important perspectives on the drug issue. A Big Ten Conference study comparing drug use of male athletes to that of the general student body reported that college athletes and non-athletes use drugs at a similar rate (Tricker, 1988). In a study which investigated the use of marijuana, hallucinogens, and depressants by athletes at Ohio State University, the result indicated that only 6% of athletes tested positive on one or more occasions. Results from a study at Lander College indicated a shift from traditional amphetamine substance usage to cocaine usage (Tricker, 1988).

In a study of 8,981 college athletes from 1980 to 1986, Heitzinger (1986) concluded that 5% abuse substances and another 5% are addicted. Heitzinger further reported that drug education along with counseling can deter usage.

In a report to the NCAA Executive Committee and Drug Education Committee, researchers in the College of Human Medicine at Michigan State University (1989) concluded that student athlete use of alcohol and drugs is mostly social and experimental. The study further
revealed that steroids were abused less than estimates provided by the media.

In a study representing 43 university head athletic trainers, 83% of the trainers agree that drug testing is effective in reducing drug use by athletes. The study further revealed that according to the trainers the number of athletes testing positive is on the decrease (Gough, 1988).

Constitutional Issues

The NCAA officials serve as a private entity overseeing college athletics and their drug testing program. The NCAA urinalysis laboratories provide the data for decision making, and the NCAA administrators determine the eligibility of student athletes. The institutions have delegated control over every aspect of the drug testing program to the NCAA. There have been two cases of importance pertaining to the legality of the NCAA drug testing program.

In California the right to privacy is explained by Article I, Section I of the California Constitution that people have an inalienable right to privacy. In Hill v. NCAA, (1988) the California Supreme Court found the NCAA in an invasion of the right to privacy under California's constitution. The court found that a bodily intrusion, such as the NCAA urinalysis program,
requires not only a warrant based on probable cause, but an additional balancing test to determine whether the character of the requested search is appropriate (Evans, 1990). So far, the United States Supreme Court has not ruled on the applicability of the Fourth or Fourteenth Amendments which guarantee the right to privacy to drug testing of athletes.

Areas of testing that the California court found offensive are: requiring athletes to indicate all medications; requiring information on the use of birth control by female athletes; and the requirement for an NCAA monitor to watch the partially disrobed athlete during the act of urination. In their defense, the NCAA lawyers utilized examples of drug use problems in international competition and in non-NCAA sports. The court concluded that there is no drug involvement in any NCAA sport except football and that problems relate to steroid use. Thus the court ruled that the NCAA program is an unjustified violation of the student right of privacy in California (Evans, 1990).

Another case started in state court and was later moved to Federal court. Elizabeth O'Halloran, a runner at the University of Washington, claimed that the testing rule violated her constitutional rights. Dismissing the claim, the court stated that athletes
have a diminished right of privacy in the context of collegiate athletics. The close monitoring of athletes as they provide urine specimens was not considered unreasonable by the court. The judge ruled that any invasion of Ms. O'Halloran's privacy was outweighed by the interest of the NCAA and the University of Washington in protecting the health of student athletes, reducing peer pressure, insuring fair competition, and deterring drug abuse in sports competition (Monaghan, 1988). Clearly, the legal issues involved in drug testing have yet to be resolved.

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's Program

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's drug testing program started in 1985 and still continues. Roanoke Memorial Hospital staff picks up and analyzes the specimens the day of the testing. Then the results are sent to Atlanta, Georgia, for further analysis (E. Ferrell, personal communication, March, 1991). Each student-athlete who is a member of an intercollegiate team is required to participate in all areas of the program. If a student refuses to participate in any aspect of the drug testing procedures, he or she is not permitted to continue as a member of an intercollegiate team (Staff, 1990).
The program developed by Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University has three integral components. Each is as important to the student-athlete as the others. First, student-athletes receive information about the dangers of drug abuse. Second, a drug testing program has been developed which will identify student-athletes with a drug problem so that they may be directed to the proper treatment channels. Finally, a counseling program has been established through Counseling Services on the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University campus to assist student-athletes in overcoming a drug abuse problem (Staff, 1990).

Every participant in each varsity sport will be tested at least once for banned substances during the season. Then during the year each athlete will be subject to selection on a random basis for additional testing. An entire team may be selected for testing. Student-athletes are not forewarned of the date for testing. It should be noted that there is prior warning of NCAA tests. The committee or designated members of the committee determines the frequency of random testing and the method of selection of athletes to be tested. The head coaches of the selected athletes are notified of the date and time of testing and the names of the
athletes to be tested. It is the coaches' responsibility to see that the athletes are notified and that they understand the necessity for compliance. Failure to appear for testing on the date or at the time designated is considered a positive test and appropriate action is taken (Staff, 1990).

The minimum sanctions if a student-athlete tests positive are as follows:

First Offense:
1. The athlete's parents or legal guardians may be notified by the Head Coach.
2. The athlete must meet with the Team Physician for evaluation and may be required to attend counseling sessions for a designated period.
3. Additional testing at intervals to be determined by the Team Physician and Head Trainer will be required.
4. Failure to comply with these provisions will be considered a positive test and will be dealt with accordingly.

Second Offense:
1. The athlete's parents or legal guardians will be notified by the Head Coach.
2. The athlete must attend counseling and evaluation sessions for a designated period.
3. The athlete may be tested at intervals for the duration of the academic year.

4. In-season occurrence: The athlete will be suspended from intercollegiate competition for the remainder of the season, and indefinitely suspended following the season.

5. Off-season occurrence: The athlete will be indefinitely suspended from the team.

6. If a student fails to complete the sanctions imposed for each offense, he or she may be suspended from intercollegiate athletic competition for an additional one-year period.

Third Offense:

1. The athlete will be barred permanently from any intercollegiate competition (Staff, 1990 p.3.)

A student may appeal the imposition of sanctions to the Drug Program Committee. The Committee will have the authority to review the facts of the case (Staff, 1990).

Summary

Although drug testing programs began shortly following World War II, their required use by NCAA institutions is a recent phenomenon. Little legal data are available to determine the constitutionality of these programs when applied to college athletics. Athletic department officials of Virginia Polytechnic
Institute and State University have developed comprehensive programs which include drug education and counseling activities, in addition to drug testing and sanctions.
Chapter Three
Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter is found a discussion; the subjects that were surveyed, the instrument that were used, and the procedures that were followed. This is followed by the chapter summary.

Subjects

The subjects for this study were the participants on the Men's and Women's basketball teams during the 1991-92 season at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Design

The design of this study is descriptive in nature using existing information and the gathering of information through the use of a survey.

Instrumentation

The instrument used was a survey devised by this author (Appendix A). Survey questions were based on comments made by coaches, athletes, and trainers, and a review of laws concerning an athlete's right to privacy. The instrument consists of six questions which were used to analyze the opinions of each player regarding the mandatory drug testing of student-athletes.
Procedure

The players on both Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's men's and women's basketball teams were surveyed during the spring semester of 1992 in the team meeting room in Jameson Hall. Before practice on February 21 for the men and on February 24 before a pregame meal for the women, each player completed a survey with no time limit while the author was monitoring and collecting completed surveys. No coaches or trainers were present.

Data Analysis

The information from the returned instruments was hand tabulated by frequency of response for each sex separately and for the sexes combined. Data is portrayed in bar graphs showing, by gender separately and combined, the actual number of student-athlete responses to the questions.

Questions two and four were used to evaluate Hypothesis One. Question three was used to evaluate Hypothesis Two. Questions one and two were used to evaluate Hypothesis Three. Question five on the instrument was used to evaluate Hypothesis Four. Question six was used to evaluate Hypothesis Five.
Summary

The subjects of this study were the 1991-92 Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University men's and women's basketball teams. The athletes were asked to answer a survey consisting of six questions concerning their opinions on the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's drug testing program.
Chapter IV

Results, Conclusions, Course of Action, Recommendations, and Summary

Introduction

This chapter includes information on the results of the survey and research completed for this study. In this chapter is a presentation of information on the results of the survey and conclusions drawn from the results. A suggested course of action is presented as well as recommendations for further study.

Results

After reviewing the results of the surveys, the author was surprised by the positive responses to the drug testing procedures and potential punishments. In evaluating Hypothesis One which states that student-athletes do not think they should be drug tested, the responses to Question Two of the survey indicates that the student-athletes do feel a need to be drug tested. Ten of the eleven female student-athletes and eight of the ten male student-athletes indicated there is a need for drug testing (see Figure 1).

Written in answers included the following:

1. "It's not fair for people to gain an edge in competition because they use drugs."

2. "Athletics should be free from drugs."
Figure 1

Responses to Question Two
3. "So that sports are played by healthy individuals."
4. "Because there is no room for drugs in the life of an athlete. Whether it is steroids or recreational drugs. The only thing they do is damage their health and ruin the person's life."
5. "Because there is a need to find those who are taking drugs and find ways to help them."
6. "To be able to help those with a drug problem."
7. "To make sure and let people know that drugs are not condoned."
8. "Because the use of drugs can cause serious effects to your body and performance."
9. "Because it is not fair to others who do not use drugs to better themselves."

In evaluating Hypothesis Two concerning student-athletes' beliefs about drug testing and their privacy rights, the responses to Question Three of the survey indicates that student-athletes do not consider that drug testing procedures violate their privacy. Only one out of eleven females and five out of ten males indicated drug testing procedures violate their privacy rights (see Figure 2). Written in answers included the following:

1. "Blood test instead of urine testing."
2. "Yes, but I don't know if there is a better way."
3. "I don't feel you should be tested."
Figure 2

Responses to Question Three
4. "I feel that it is an invasion of privacy, but it's not fair for athletes to have an extra advantage."

When asked in Question Four if all student-athletes on all teams should be tested, ten females and eight males answered yes. (see Figure 3). Hypothesis Four states that there would be more student-athletes disagreeing with the NCAA punishment than those that would agree. The responses to Question Five indicate that nine of the eleven females and eight of the ten males agree with the NCAA punishment (see Figure 4). Written in answers included the following:

1. "Two month suspension with rehabilitation."
2. "Missing a couple of games is suitable depending on what type of drug is used."
3. "Because some results may be false."
4. "Sitting out for a couple of weeks."

In trying to measure whether or not the student-athletes agree with the punishment process by Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Question Six of the survey indicates that all twenty-one surveyed agree with the punishment process (see Figure 5).

Conclusions

The collected data lead to the following conclusions:

1) Student-athletes agreed that there is a need for drug testing;
Figure 3

Responses to Question Four
Figure 4

Responses to Question Five
Figure 5

Responses to Question Six
2) Student-athletes do not feel that drug testing violates their privacy;
3) Student-athletes agreed that all participants should be tested;
4) Student-athletes agreed with the one year suspension for testing positive by the NCAA; and
5) Student-athletes agreed with Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's punishment process.

Course of Action

Based on the noted results, this researcher offers the following suggestions concerning drug testing of student athletes. First, although the drug testing procedures may create an uneasiness to some of the participants, until there is a more private and less expensive way to test the athletes the existing procedure should continue. Second, drug testing should continue at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University using the same punishment process, because all the student-athletes agreed that Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's drug testing punishment is acceptable and the majority agreed with the NCAA's punishment. Next, the student-athletes concluded that the randomization by Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and the NCAA is unacceptable, but drug testing every student-athlete at every school on all teams becomes very expensive. The approximate cost of drug testing one
student-athlete is between $100 to $150 (E. Ferrell, personal communication, March, 1991). Thus, drug testing every student-athlete becomes unrealistic. Therefore drug testing of every student-athlete should not be instituted.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

This study should be administered to all athletes in different sports at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University so that their opinions on drug testing can be compared to the basketball teams' opinions. To further enhance the data, athletes at randomly selected Division I schools should be surveyed regarding their opinions of drug testing to acquire a better understanding of other student-athletes' opinions. Also, this study should be repeated by a randomly-selected group of non-student athletes at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University to compare their opinions with the student-athletes' opinions.

**Summary**

The chapter included the results of the survey indicating that the majority of students agreed with the need, procedures and processes of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's and the NCAA's drug testing programs. This is followed by suggested courses of action based on the opinions of the student-athletes toward drug testing. The chapter ends with the author making recommendations based on the research findings.
References


Hill v. NCAA, No 619209, Slip op. at 10 (California Supreme Court August 10, 1988).


Staff (1990). The Virginia Tech Athletic Department Drug Education, Counseling and Screening Program. Unpublished manuscript.


Appendix A

Survey

1) Sex M____ F____

2) Do you feel there is a need for drug testing? Yes____ No____ If yes, why?

3) Do you feel that the drug testing procedures violate your privacy?
   Yes____ No____ If yes, how do you think the procedures should be done?

4) Do you think all student athletes on all teams should be tested? Yes____ No____

5) Do you think the one year suspension for testing positive by the NCAA is fair?
   Yes____ No____ If no, what type of punishment is fair?

6) Do you think Virginia Tech's punishment process is fair? Yes____ No____ If no, why not?
Coach Dean Keener  
Jamison Hall  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
Blacksburg, VA  24060

Dear Coach Dean Keener:

I am writing to thank you for your time and cooperation with the student-athletes' completion of the survey on drug testing. This was an important part of my thesis results. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

G. William Blackmore
Coach Alfano  
Jamison Hall  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Dear Coach Alfano:

I am writing to thank you for your time and cooperation with the student-athletes’ completion of the survey on drug testing. This was an important part of my thesis results. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

G. William Blackmore