

Who is Really to Blame?

Written by Brian Adams
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The hottest topic in sports the past couple of months at water coolers and bars across the land has been athletes taking steroids. I am here to cover a few points that I'm sure will garner a ton of debate from fans.

The athletes are really in a no-win situation when it comes to taking performance enhancers, whether they're prescribed or not. There is such a huge demand on an athlete to produce that it's almost as if they are forced to do whatever they deem necessary to get ahead in their particular sport. Corporations look for the athlete to dominate or lead in statistics before they stand behind him or her. Under most conditions, it is rare for the athlete to have that type of impact immediately. Which means that in today's society, corporations and fans don't have the patience to wait for natural talent to develop. The economic factor will always play a role in decisions as well.

With that said, why blame the athlete for trying to impress and entertain the fans in a timely manner? It is almost like they're damned if they do and damned if they don't. All the athletes do is try to please the people as well as try to earn the most money available at the time. I don't understand how an athlete can be cheered one day and then condemned the next.

It has been alleged that a few boxers have taken steroids in the past. Well, let's take a look at something here. There are certain guys in the sport that have advantages over their competition. Some guys have the ability to employ strength and conditioning coaches, and/or a quality trainer. If a boxer gets into the ring with men like that in his corner and the opponent wasn't able to utilize the same things, isn't that a case of one having the advantage over the other and not naturally? What about the boxer who has the financial means to get herbal products and/or vitamins to help the performance? Point being, all athletes use some kind of substance to better their performance. It's true that some may have the upper hand over the next, but honestly tell me what is the difference? I can recall Vernon Forrest saying on ESPN that Shane Mosley uses steroids, but why would Vernon bother to make a statement like that after he beat Shane twice? Bottom line is: If you have the ability to beat your opponent then enhancements will not matter.

Then you have corporations who want to publicly condemn the athlete for using a substance. But these same companies don't care what the athlete has to do as long as they promote their brand or company. These corporate individuals are to blame because of the pressure they place on the athlete. If the athlete loses a bout it will effect how that company views them. The more they win, the better treatment they will receive. That old saying, "Everyone loves a winner" is so true, and all athletes yearn to be loved.

Baseball players are the focal point of the media's attack right now, and for what? Because Barry Bonds and Sammy Sosa draw sellout crowds at every stadium. Or because those same men bring in television revenue to Major League Baseball? Now for every dollar that was generated, for every fan that left the ball game satisfied, they now want to say that these guys

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cheated. The cheating comes from the owners and investors. Let's take Evander Holyfield as an example. (I'm just using Evander, not saying that he did anything wrong.) If Evander was to test positive tomorrow for steroids, would that mean that he did not accomplish what he accomplished? Will it mean that his big heart and determination should be forgotten?

So before these fans or companies criticize the athletes, they need to understand that it is they who quietly demanded that the athletes look for ways to produce and entertain other than the natural way. When Michael Jordan first left the game of basketball, there was an outcry for his return. If he felt that it was too much on his body and he chose to take some form of steroid, then can you legitimately say it was wrong? Or will he be praised for making everybody's dream come true? Everyone wants Lennox Lewis to come back and save what they are calling a weak division right now. Do they care what he may have to do to return?

So I say before everyone screams negatively about an athlete, take a long look at what type of corners they are cutting, because it's only to please the fans. Because when push comes to shove, 99% of the athletes are fans themselves. It's easy to point the finger and say what an athlete should or shouldn't do if you have never experienced the pressure of sports on a professional level. I just digest the whole situation and ask everyone to take a moment and ask themselves: Who is Really to Blame?