

## Texas' Random Drug Test for Combative Sports Includes Anabolic Steroids, Not Diuretics

Written by Kelsey McCarson  
Monday, 10 March 2014 21:50

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In a Texas-sized shocker, the Lone Star State released information recently indicating it *does* regularly test fighters for performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) as part of its random drug testing program for combative sports.

According to information obtained through an open records request, as of February 20, 2014, the state of Texas has tested 87 professional boxing and mixed martial arts (MMA) athletes for anabolic steroids since the inception of its updated drug testing program in the fall of 2011. Texas performed eight tests in 2011, 20 in 2012, 51 in 2013 and had completed eight more in 2014 as of the report date.

All 87 athletes were given a five- or nine-panel drug test, which focuses on illicit recreational drugs. The fighters were also tested for anabolic steroids. The five-panel test screens for amphetamine, cocaine, opiates, phencyclidine and cannabinoid. The nine-panel test screens for the same as well as barbiturates, benzodiazepines, methadone, morphine and propoxyphene.

None of the 87 athletes were tested for the use of diuretics.

This data suggests something different than what was [previously reported by The Sweet Science](#) back in February 2013.

When Texas implemented the updated drug testing program in 2011, it was widely assumed at the time that the process, which includes a random selection of four to six fighters from any given fight card, incorporated testing for PEDs such as anabolic steroids.

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However, information provided to TSS by the governmental body that oversees combative sports, the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR), indicated the random testing protocol was almost exclusively geared towards illicit and recreational drug screens.

At the time, a spokesperson confirmed testing beyond the standard recreational drug screen "could" and "had" been done as part of the new protocol, but would not say how many times the tests included screens for PEDs. Moreover, the spokesperson explicitly said Texas did not regularly test fighters for PEDs.

"Anabolic steroid testing is not regularly performed, but it has been done on occasion," TDLR information Officer Susan Stanford confirmed through email in 2013. When asked what tests were performed in the program, she said only the nine-panel test.

Apparently, though, Stanford misspoke.

"I don't remember the conversation we had. When you say 'regularly test for anabolic steroids' I wonder if I thought you meant every contestant is tested," said Stanford via email. "As you can see from the Request-a-Test chart, anabolic steroids are tested for when a drug test is performed."

Texas orders drug tests through Request-A-Test, a service provider who facilitates a wide range of drug tests including pre-employment, medical and otherwise. The actual lab work is done by one of Request-a-Test's partners, LabCorp or Quest Diagnostics.

Texas provided TSS a chart from Request-A-Test indicating what tests had been completed as part of its program since 2011. The information provided conflicts with what Stanford said last year.

Part of the issue seems to be the very nature of government in the state itself. Texas, a conservatively aligned state, generally sways towards the side of the aisle which votes for

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limited government. So where other states have large governmental bodies solely responsible for the regulation of combative sports, the TDLR regulates 25 other statutes as well as boxing and MMA.

However, excerpts from last year's email exchange indicate it might just have been a miscommunication by the TDLR:

"Can you give me specifics about what the drug screen tests for...?" TSS asked.

"The drug screen test is the standard nine-panel test," said Stanford.

"Can someone please also help me find out what these tests screen? I mean to say, what specific drugs does Texas test for?" TSS asked.

Stanford replied detailing the nine-panel drug list.

"If that is the urinalysis test we perform in Texas, it means we don't regularly test for performance enhancing drugs or steroids?" TSS asked.

"Those are the tests that are performed on the nine-panel drug test," replied Stanford. "...the agency can require a contestant to undergo anabolic steroid testing, among other tests. Anabolic steroid testing is not regularly performed, but it has been done on occasion."

Stanford also confirmed this by phone shortly thereafter. No other representative from Texas would go on record.

Despite the relatively good news that Texas is testing boxing and MMA athletes for PEDs, as with many other state commissions, if not all, there is still much to be desired with Texas' drug

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testing program.

First, the majority of boxing and MMA athletes who fight in Texas are not tested at all. Only four to six contestants per fight card are randomly selected by a computer program to undergo testing.

Second, Stanford said most tests are administered before the bout due to the expectation that a fighter will be dehydrated afterwards. This could allow for the use of a stimulant or other PED during the fight as there would be no test given after the fact to detect it.

Third, drug tests are only done on fight night, and it remains unclear how many tests are done, if any, using blood instead of urine. A call made to Request-A-Test confirmed the company does not even offer a blood test for anabolic steroids or diuretics. While the company does not list on their website a test for diuretics at all, the Request-A-Test representative confirmed the company could facilitate a urinalysis for them if asked to do so.

Fourth, it is unclear exactly what type of anabolic steroids tests are being performed and how. A link to an anabolic steroid test [sample report](#) posted at Request-A-Test's website, indicates the state might receive information on various anabolic agents as well as whether a fighter has an elevated testosterone to epitestosterone (T/E) ratio. Per the report, a ratio is reported as elevated when the calculated result is greater than 4:1. Is this the test they use? And what happens if a fighter's T/E ratio is elevated? Is he or she allowed to fight? What happens to the results after the executive director receives them? Has Texas ever caught a fighter using a PED with the new program? Have they ever allowed a fighter to fight who has tested positive for PEDs?

These questions were submitted to the state but have gone unanswered.

Fifth, it is difficult to understand why Texas would say it was not regularly testing for anabolic steroids in the first place. Last year, Stanford indicated they did not keep records of testing, but when I posed a general inquiry a year later into the current state of drug testing to TDLR Executive Director, William Kuntz, I received the information, which appeared to come from the service provider, Request-A-Test. But why was I told previously they were unable to provide the information?

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Finally, in a related note, all of this may close a chapter on [what happened in Texas](#) during June 2012's Julio Cesar Chavez, Jr. vs. Andy Lee fight in El Paso.

What we knew before is that both fighters submitted urine samples for the fight. This was confirmed back in 2012 by TDLR's Randy Nesbitt as well as both fight camps. Now we know both Chavez and Lee were tested for anabolic steroids. After all, per their own records, Texas has tested all 87 fighters who have submitted samples as part of their drug testing program for anabolic steroids.

But what we also know now is this: Texas did not elect to test either Chavez or Lee for diuretics. This is especially troubling since Chavez tested positive for Furosemide just three years earlier in Nevada -- a diuretic that can be used to cut weight as well as a mask the use of steroids.

In fact, unless Texas changed its approach for last weekend's Chavez-Vera fight, Texas has never elected to test Chavez for something he's already tested positive for in any of the four bouts he's fought in the state since Texas implemented the program.

By rule, Texas can direct combatants to undergo additional testing requirements, including but not limited to testing for diuretics, at the direction of the executive director or his designee. For boxing, that'd likely be program manager Dickie Cole.

But it hasn't, and so what happened in Texas back in 2012 is that the TDLR failed to do all that could have been reasonably expected to keep both fighters safe.

Because if a jurisdiction has record of a fighter failing a drug test for a particular substance, if that substance can both help an already naturally larger fighter make weight as well as potentially mask the use of anabolic steroids, then the regulating body with the authority and means to test for the substance should absolutely do so.

Texas didn't.

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### **brownsugar says:**

Diuretics can be purchased by the pocket full for just a couple of dollars..#furosemide and HCTZ.

They can also be seriously harmful if abused.

### **Carmine Cas says:**

These is truly a "Texas-sized shocker" lol but diuretics can be used as a masking agent. Damn Dickie Cole is really that incompetent huh?