

[ SOLVE THIS ]

# Doping in Sports

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**A**s a father of three young children ages seven and under, I hope that one day they will learn the valuable life lessons that can be obtained by participating in sports played with integrity and honor and without prohibited drugs. I want them, like all of our children, to benefit from the ideal that, in its purest form, true sport builds character and promotes the virtues of selfless teamwork, dedication, and commitment to a greater cause.

Unfortunately, there are those who would undermine these intrinsic principles and are willing to cheat for the sake of winning at all costs. This willingness to put winning above all else erodes our trust in sport and its inherent value. Unfortunately, as sports fans, we have all witnessed the tragedy of athletes devoting everything to their sport only to miss their rightful moment on the podium

because the competitor in the lane next to them was cheating. We have also seen too many heroes fall from grace and end up compromising their athletic legacy. Some of our heroes have even had to return medals in the wake of scandal.

The doping crisis is not just a public image problem for one sport or one group of owners, nor a problem in only certain professional sports. Illicit drug use is a crime that creates an ethical and public health problem that reaches right to the core of our collective values and our future because it adversely affects today's high school, junior high school, and even grade school athletes.

As CEO of the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), which is the independent, national anti-doping agency for Olympic and Paralympic sports in the United States, my mission is to protect and preserve the health of athletes, the integrity of competition, and the well-being of sport through the elimination of doping.

The reality is that while we still have a long, hard fight in front of us, much has been achieved already to facilitate success in this movement. USADA was formed as a truly independent and transparent entity in 2000 in support of U.S. athletes. The International Olympic Committee externalized its program through the formation of the World Anti-Doping Agency, harmonizing the movement around the globe. In the United States we can claim the gold standard in out-of-competition, no-advance-notice testing programs; we have a comprehensive list of prohibited substances and methods for which we test; we have a substantial education program that arms athletes and youth with tools for living and competing healthy and drug-free; we conduct research to advance the anti-doping science; and we have developed effective partnerships with law enforcement agencies to ensure that all parties to doping activity are held accountable.

All these efforts are part of a commitment to defend the integrity of sport in America. Ultimately, the fight for the soul of sport most directly im-

pacts the clean athletes. They deserve the assurance that the rules apply evenly to all athletes, including high-profile, high-dollar superstars. And they deserve the protection of their right to compete on a level playing field. Equally as important, our youth deserve the right to dream that they can rise to the heights of athletic success in America without having to resort to cheating through the use of drugs.

While much has been done, in a perfect world additional steps would be taken to further protect clean athletes. Funding would be provided to implement a national in-school program built on a broad-based educational foundation for the importance of healthy living, ethical decision-making, and the dangers of performance-enhancing drugs.

From a policy perspective, increasing the penalties for the illegal use or distribution of human growth hormone (HGH) would strengthen law enforcement efforts to enforce these laws. Prohibiting online pharmacies from selling controlled substances over the Internet without a valid prescription would further enhance the control of these dangerous drugs and make it more difficult for them to end up in the hands of our children. Finally, additional funding is needed to continue to advance scientific research in the field of anti-doping.

The effort to protect clean sport is not an easy task, but the implications of our failures or successes are monumental. While at its core, sport is rooted in fun, entertainment, and achievement, sport also has a fundamental and far-reaching impact on the value of our society. For that reason everyone who is involved in sport, whether as a competitor, coach, parent, or fan, has an obligation to support the effort to ensure that our children learn the lessons that will help them grow into the strong, ethical, conscientious members of our society that we all hope they will become.

Turn to page 54 for this month's feature, "Shades of Gray" that tells a personal story of doping in sports.

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