

MLB Strengthens Drug Testing Around hGH and Testosterone

Written by Maury Brown
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Major League Baseball and the MLB Players Association today announced substantial changes to the league's drug policy that will now provide for unannounced, random blood testing for the detection of human growth hormone (hGH) beginning with the upcoming season. In a landmark agreement, MLB players began hGH testing beginning with Spring Training in 2012, and all players were subject to hGH blood testing for reasonable cause at all times during the year. During the 2012-2013 off-season, players have already been subject to random unannounced testing for hGH.

Since July of 2010, Major League Baseball has conducted random blood testing for the detection of hGH among Minor League players.

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To add, the league and union for the players addressed elevated testosterone. The sides have agreed to establish a longitudinal profile program, in which a player's baseline Testosterone/Epitestosterone (T/E) ratio and other data will be maintained by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)-accredited Montreal Laboratory currently employed by MLB and the MLBPA. Using Carbon Isotope Ratio Mass Spectrometry (IRMS) analysis on all specimens that vary materially from a player's baseline values, each player will now have a unique profile. In the past, players had looked to skirt the edges of a 4:1 T/E ratio. Now, a player will be evaluated based on their unique baseline. To add further disincentive to use testosterone as a performance-enhancer there will be an increase in the number of random IRMS analysis the league and union's lab conducts on specimens.

Last season, [Melky Cabrera](#) , [Bartolo Colon](#) , and [Yasmani Grandal](#) all tested positive for elevated testosterone, while

[Eliezer Alfonzo](#)

was able to have a 100 game suspension rescinded. In the case of Alfonzo, he raised issues that were nearly identical to those resolved in the arbitration involving Brewer, and NL MVP

[Ryan Braun](#)

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where chain of custody of test samples were challenged. That loophole has since been closed.

Of the changes to the drug policy Commissioner Selig said, "This agreement addresses critical drug issues and symbolizes Major League Baseball's continued vigilance against synthetic human growth hormone, Testosterone and other performance-enhancing substances. I am proud that our system allows us to adapt to the many evolving issues associated with the science and technology of drug testing. We will continue to do everything we can to maintain a leadership stature in anti-doping efforts in the years ahead."

MLBPA Executive Director Michael Weiner added in a statement that, "the Players are determined to do all they can to continually improve the sport's Joint Drug Agreement. Players want a program that is tough, scientifically accurate, backed by the latest proven scientific methods, and fair; I believe these changes firmly support the Players' desires while protecting their legal rights."

Christiane Ayotte, the Director of the Montreal Laboratory where testing will be conducted said, "Although the Montreal Laboratory has made extensive use of IRMS in the past, the addition of random blood testing and a longitudinal profiling program makes Baseball's program second to none in detecting and deterring the use of synthetic hGH and Testosterone. A drug testing program that follows over a thousand steroid profiles and tests over a thousand blood specimens each year compares favorably with any WADA program."

Major League Baseball became the first pro sports league to implement hGH testing. The NFL and NFL Players Association agreed to hGH testing prior to MLB as part of their latest labor agreement but have not yet been able to implement the program.

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