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Tougher steroid fines for U.S. sport

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30 September, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Tougher steroid fines for U.S. sport

BNE: A battle is ensuing in the American Congress and the corridors of power in major U.S. sporting organizations over steroid abuse among athletes. The biggest issue is the lenient stance baseball authorities take regarding the use of performance enhancing drugs. Baseball legend Hank Aaron, Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig and Republican Senator John McCain have all weighed in to try and get baseball to clean up its rather steroid-fuelled act. Their request is for tougher penalties to be meted out to players who illegally use drugs to boost their strength and power and get a competitive edge over their rivals. A Senate committee wants to standardize steroid policies in all professional sports, including the NFL, NBA and NHL.

At the center of the debate is the baseball player's union chief Donald Fehr. He is reluctant to move from the present 10-day ban for baseball players caught using steroids. Such a "penalty" would be laughable in any other sport and makes a mockery of baseball standards. Senator Jay Rockefeller singled out baseball players as the biggest violators of steroid abuse. He said: "They have negotiated reluctantly, if at all." A number of high profile baseball players have recently proved positive in drug tests but will probably continue their lucrative careers and accept the glory and accolades. Lawmakers are concerned that such trivial penalties for steroid abuse will send the message to children that cheating is OK.

WARM-UPS

1. SPORTS STAR: You are a famous sports player. Write down which sport you play and how famous you are. Write down three things you have achieved to make you so famous. Talk to the other “sports stars” in the class about fame, sport and glory. Talk also about steroids and other performance enhancing drugs in sport.

2. CHEATING: In pairs / groups, discuss how serious these examples of cheating are. Would you ever do these or have you ever done any of them?

- Use steroids
- Take in hidden notes to an exam
- Look at a classmate’s paper in a test
- Lie on a resume (CV)
- Do something bad to win a game
- Shout “out” when the ball was in
- Claim “extra” money from an employer
- Download music illegally

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Battles / American Congress / corridors of power / steroids in sport / baseball / penalties / bans / drug tests / lucrative careers / glory / accolades / cheating

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. STEROIDS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with steroids. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. PERFORM BETTER: Is it OK to use performance-enhancing drugs in the cases below? Discuss each case with your partner(s).

- a. A baseball player who wants to break the home run record.
- b. A baseball player who simply wants to make the first team.
- c. A 100-meter runner who wants to break the world record.
- d. A 100-meter runner who wants to better his/her own personal best.
- e. A bodybuilder who wants bigger muscles.
- f. A swimmer who needs steroids to be able to swim around the world.
- g. A 50-kg guy who needs an extra few kilos to become a sumo wrestler.
- h. An English student who wants to learn 250 new words every day.

6. WHY CHEAT? In pairs / groups, brainstorm a list of reasons why people cheat. Discuss these reasons. Change partners and share your reasons and ideas.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. There is a controversy in U.S. sport over the use of steroids. | T / F |
| b. Baseball takes a very lenient stance towards the use of steroids. | T / F |
| c. The baseball commissioner said nobody uses steroids in baseball. | T / F |
| d. The U.S. Government wants a standardized steroids policy for sports. | T / F |
| e. The penalty for steroid abuse in baseball is a one-year ban. | T / F |
| f. Penalties for using steroids in baseball are laughable. | T / F |
| g. No baseball player has proved positive in a drug test for a decade. | T / F |
| h. Lawmakers fear stars on steroids will make kids think cheating is OK. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| a. ensuing | position |
| b. lenient | prizes |
| c. stance | advantage |
| d. meted out | unwilling |
| e. edge | money-spinning |
| f. reluctant | condoning |
| g. mockery | minor |
| h. lucrative | developing |
| i. accolades | given |
| j. trivial | laughingstock |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. the corridors | from the present 10-day ban |
| b. lenient | steroid-fuelled act |
| c. the use of performance | accolades |
| d. clean up its rather | edge over their rivals |
| e. get a competitive | as the biggest violators |
| f. He is reluctant to move | that cheating is OK |
| g. makes a mockery | of power |
| h. singled out baseball players | of baseball standards |
| i. accept the glory and | stance |
| j. send the message to children | enhancing drugs |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

SYNONYM FILL: Place the number of the synonym group in the correct gap (It is not important to guess a correct word - any of the synonyms from each group could be put into the relevant gap).

Tougher steroid fines for U.S. sport

BNE: A battle is _____ in the American Congress and the corridors of power in major U.S. sporting organizations over steroid abuse among athletes. The biggest issue is the lenient _____ baseball authorities take regarding the use of performance enhancing drugs. Baseball legend Hank Aaron, Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig and Republican Senator John McCain have all weighed in to try and get baseball to clean up its rather steroid-fuelled act. Their request is for tougher penalties to be _____ to players who illegally use drugs to boost their strength and power and get a competitive _____ over their rivals. A Senate committee wants to standardize steroid policies in all professional sports, including the NFL, NBA and NHL.

At the center of the debate is the baseball player's union chief Donald Fehr. He is _____ to move from the present 10-day ban for baseball players caught using steroids. Such a "penalty" would be laughable in any other sport and makes _____ of baseball standards. Senator Jay Rockefeller singled out baseball players as the biggest _____ of steroid abuse. He said: "They have negotiated reluctantly, if at all." A number of high profile baseball players have recently proved positive in drug tests but will probably continue their lucrative careers and accept the glory and accolades. Lawmakers are concerned that such _____ penalties for steroid abuse will send the message to children that cheating is OK.

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| 1
meted out
given
handed down
imposed on | 2
mockery
laughingstock
joke
sham | 3
trivial
minor
trifling
meaningless | 4
ensuing
developing
arising
emanating |
| 5
violators
perpetrators
offenders
transgressors | 6
reluctant
unwilling
averse
loath | 7
stance
position
viewpoint
posture | 8
edge
advantage
upper hand
head start |

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'trivial'** and **'penalty'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. SYNONYM FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the synonym fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "CHEATING" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about cheating and the use of steroids in sports.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| • ensuing | • center |
| • lenient | • laughable |
| • weighed | • violators |
| • meted out | • reluctantly |
| • edge | • accolades |
| • standardize | • children |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What were your initial thoughts on this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What do you know about steroids?
- d. What do you think about the use of steroids in sport?
- e. Do you think players who use steroids in sports are cheats?
- f. Do you think baseball officials would like more players on steroids to make the game more exciting?
- g. Have you ever cheated?
- h. What do you think of a baseball player who uses steroids to get a potential \$15 million salary?
- i. Would you cheat to get a million-dollar salary?
- j. Do you think there are any sports in which players do not use performance-enhancing drugs?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Are you surprised about anything you read in the article?
- d. Do you think world records achieved by players on steroids are worthless records?
- e. Why do you think baseball authorities take such a lenient stance towards steroids?
- f. What do you think of baseball?
- g. What kind of example should sports stars set children?
- h. Should athletes caught using steroids be banned for life?
- i. In what other areas of society should cheats be banned for life (or imprisoned)?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

BETTER BASEBALL: In pairs / groups, discuss how you can make baseball more exciting. How can players break more home run records and take part in higher-scoring games? Assess the ideas in the left hand column. Write down arguments for and against and your final decisions in the three other columns.

IDEAS	FOR	AGAINST	FINAL DECISION
All baseball players use steroids.			
Make the baseball pitch smaller.			
Increase the number of strikes to four.			
Change baseball bats so hitters can hit the ball farther.			
Give a bonus point for every three home runs scored in a game.			
Ban for life anyone who uses performance-enhancing drugs.			
Set a salary cap of \$1,000,000 a year on all players.			

Change partners and tell each other the good ideas you heard.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on steroids in sport. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. SPORT FOR KIDS: Make a poster showing how your favorite sport is great for kids. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to baseball's commissioner Bud Selig. Tell him what you think he should do for baseball to clean up its act. Read your letter to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. T c. F d. T e. F f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| a. ensuing | developing |
| b. lenient | condoning |
| c. stance | position |
| d. meted out | given |
| e. edge | advantage |
| f. reluctant | unwilling |
| g. mockery | laughingstock |
| h. lucrative | money-spinning |
| i. accolades | prizes |
| j. trivial | minor |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. the corridors | of power |
| b. lenient | stance |
| c. the use of performance | enhancing drugs |
| d. clean up its rather | steroid-fuelled act |
| e. get a competitive | edge over their rivals |
| f. He is reluctant to move | from the present 10-day ban |
| g. makes a mockery | of baseball standards |
| h. singled out baseball players | as the biggest violators |
| i. accept the glory and | accolades |
| j. send the message to children | that cheating is OK |

SYNONYM FILL:

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