

NEWS



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NFL, NFLPA REACH AGREEMENT ON ADDITIONAL IMPROVEMENTS TO STEROIDS PROGRAM

The National Football League and NFL Players Association have reached agreement on a series of improvements to their policy and program on anabolic steroids and related substances, it was announced today.

The modifications include a 40 percent increase in the number of players randomly tested each week during the preseason, regular season and post-season from seven to 10 per team. Last year, the number of random off-season tests was increased from a maximum of two per player to six per player. These changes bring the total number of steroid tests conducted annually by the NFL to 12,000.

Other changes in the program are the following:

- The additional use of carbon isotope ratio testing on a random basis to detect low doses of testosterone. All specimens now will be subject to random selection for CIR testing. Previously, CIR testing was only used to confirm positive tests for testosterone.
- The addition of erythropoietin (EPO) to the banned substance list. Testing for EPO will begin with the 2007 annual test that is administered in the spring or summer.
- A minimum \$500,000 NFL grant to the UCLA Olympic testing laboratory and other researchers for the development of new testing methods for HGH. In addition, a working group will be established to study the issues related to deterring the use of human growth hormone (HGH).
- Enhancement of the unpredictability of the year-round testing schedule to address the perception of gaps in the testing periods.
- A new feature of the Collective Bargaining Agreement that provides for automatic forfeiture of a prorated portion of a player's signing bonus if he is suspended for violating the steroid or substance abuse policy.

These changes are effective immediately. Further review of the policy by the NFL and NFLPA will continue and more changes may be made prior to the start of the 2007 season.

In addition to these steps, the NFL Youth Football Fund, jointly endowed by the NFL and NFLPA, also recently approved a \$1.2 million steroids education grant to the Center for Health Promotion Research at the Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) in Portland, Oregon.

The grant will be used to launch OHSU's nationally recognized ATLAS and ATHENA steroids and substance abuse prevention programs to 20,000 high school athletes and 800 coaches in 40 high schools during the 2007-2008 school year.

Four AFC teams and four NFC teams will sponsor five local high schools each to create the 40 "NFL Schools" that will teach the ATLAS and ATHENA programs to athletes, coaches, and administrators. All athletic teams of each school will participate in the program. The participating NFL teams and high schools will be announced at a later date.

OHSU and the ATLAS and ATHENA programs are directed by Dr. Linn Goldberg and Dr. Diane Elliot. For more information on these programs, contact Melissa Durham at 503-594-4516 or durhamme@ohsu.edu.

"It is important that the NFL and its players continue to be leaders on the issue of illegal and dangerous performance enhancing drugs in sports," Commissioner Roger Goodell said. "These latest improvements will help ensure that we continue to have a strong and effective program. As we have done in the past, we will review and modify the policy on an ongoing basis."

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