FEATURE STORY

**Pros Crack Down on Tainted Supplements**

Sophisticated drug testing is forcing professional sports to crack down hard on tainted supplements.

Let’s face facts. Food supplements will not make up for poor training or practice habits. They will not compensate for nutritional deficiencies or toxicities caused by a generally inadequate diet. And they cannot fundamentally change your physique.

What supplements can do is give you the edge you need to pull ahead of the pack. On the other hand, they can create a world of trouble for an unsuspecting athlete.

The IOC has been concerned since 1997 about the possibility of performance-enhancing contaminants in food supplements, given the lack of FDA scrutiny of such products, in contrast to the scrutiny given drugs. Given this concern, the IOC retained an independent lab to evaluate the ingredients in 634 nutritional supplements from 215 different suppliers in 13 countries.

The results indicated that fully 14.8 percent of the supplements were found to contain prohormones that were not declared on the labels. These banned prohormones were of 11 different anabolic androgenic steroids, primarily of testosterone and nandrolone. When the excretion rate of these prohormones was evaluated, the results showed concentrations exceeding the IOC cutoff limit for several hours—a positive doping result. Such findings have come to the attention of professional sports organizations, such as NFLPA, the National Football League Players Association.

Established in 1956, NFLPA is the union that represents the best interest of the players. Toward this aim, NFLPA has told its members that they are prohibited from participating in any endorsement agreement with any of the following supplement companies “because they manufacture products that are on the banned substance list.”

If you have decided that a particular supplement might be helpful to you as an athlete, consider subscribing to a consumer service that evaluates supplements for just such a purpose and according to IOC standards. ConsumerLab.com (CL) has tested products for purity and accuracy of labeling at the request of the US Olympic Committee. The results of these initial tests are available on CL’s website at www.ConsumerLab.com. CL continues to test supplements of all types to evaluate which are safe for athletes to take.

As an athlete, you will always be responsible for the negative consequences of your actions, from training lapses to bad supplementation or doping choices. If you decide appropriate food supplements could be helpful, make sure you carefully evaluate them beforehand. After all, your goal is to improve your performance, not to jeopardize your health and your athletic career!
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