

Successful Steroid Testing Relies On Practicality

Editor Ty Weaver

As the state of Texas embarks on its first year of mandatory student athlete steroid testing, there are some critics with concerns about the legitimacy of laboratories not certified by the World Anti-Doping Agency.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is the certifying body that oversees steroid analysis for major international professional athletes. WADA is headquartered in Montreal, Canada with several laboratories throughout the world. There are two WADA laboratories in the United States. Even though WADA is perceived to be the pinnacle of steroid testing, it is safe to assume that WADA laboratories are not practical for student athlete steroid testing.

Costs of Steroid Analysis in a WADA Laboratory

Steroid testing is the costliest form of substance abuse testing on the market because of its labor-intensive procedures and extremely expensive instrumentation needed to conduct the analysis. The test itself takes, on average, three to four times longer to conduct than a test that detects recreational drugs. Since there are only two WADA laboratories in the United States, costs for these procedures would increase dramatically due to limited testing facilities. Shipping the test specimens to a foreign country would be difficult as well. Passing diagnostic specimens through customs and paying international freight charges is costly enough to consider a different alternative.

Availability of Laboratories and Performance Time

WADA laboratories are found on almost every continent; however, a majority of the testing conducted on Texas student athletes would likely be directed to the laboratories in the United States, which are located on the west coast. If three percent of the student athlete population is tested for instance, that is 22,500 tests. That's more tests than all professional and

NCAA athletes combined.

The state of New Jersey was the first to initiate mandatory student drug testing. The state chose a management provider that utilizes a WADA laboratory. The state tested 500 athletes and the school officials waited weeks to receive the results. If a program must wait weeks for a steroid test result, then how effective is the program? A student athlete using steroids could submit a specimen at the start of the competition season and the result might not be reported until competition had ended.

United States Federal Certification Programs Already Ensure Accuracy

What is the value in having another certifying body if the laboratory already has multiple certifications? WADA would serve as a voluntary certifying body to audit and govern a laboratory's testing procedures. Laboratories with federal certifications already ensure that proper procedures are followed by independent scientists auditing the laboratory every six months. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) set these practices in place 10 years prior to WADA being established. The College of American Pathologist - Forensic Urine Drug Testing (CAP-FUDT) also created these standards several years ago. Furthermore, most legitimate drug testing laboratories in the United States are dual-certified by SAMHSA and CAP-FUDT. There are 48 SAMHSA-certified laboratories and approximately 52 CAP-FUDT-certified laboratories in the United States. These dual-certified laboratories create a network of knowledge, experience and standards unmatched by any other certifying body while generating several billion dollars of revenue annually to further advance drug testing.

The SAMHSA and CAP-FUDT Network of Scientists

The personnel at SAMHSA and CAP-FUDT laboratories participate in proficiency testing programs. These certified laboratories share procedures with competing laboratories to further expand research in the field of toxicology. SAMHSA and CAP-FUDT provide a network of professionals that openly discuss processes and procedures and participate in sample spiking to ensure accurate testing. These profession-

als are willing to call another laboratory to increase research and development. Is there a more centralized network of laboratories available in the world? As a student athlete, a parent, a school administrator, an employer or an employee, you can be assured that a steroid test or a drug test performed at a SAMHSA or CAP-FUDT laboratory was done with due process, accuracy and the most practical means available.

Plano ISD Athletic Director Hired by University Interscholastic League

Odenwald will serve as organization's associate AD

By Randy Jennings - The Dallas Morning News

Cliff Odenwald will leave his position as Plano ISD athletic director to become an associate director of the UIL.

Odenwald, 51, will oversee statewide steroid testing as part of his newly created position, the UIL announced Friday.

"We need to do everything we can to stop the use of steroids," Odenwald said. "It is a problem we need to take seriously. We've been on the front page in the Plano ISD with education for coaches and kids. We're looking forward to taking the message across the state."

Odenwald said the UIL job was one of only a few that could lure him from Plano, where he's been since 2003.

When you work with great people like we have in the Plano ISD, it is tough to leave," said Odenwald. "But at the same time, I'm excited about the new opportunity."

Cliff Odenwald brings to the League a commitment to excellence that he has shown in his work with the students of Texas throughout his career," said UIL assistant director and director of athletics Dr. Charles Breithaupt.

Odenwald said he would fulfill his duties in Plano before joining the UIL staff fulltime.

Join the Forward Edge Staff at the Texas Coaches' Association Conference in Ft. Worth July 29 - August 1.