

THE STRIVE FOR A CLEAN IMAGE OF TENNIS

Lupta pentru o imagine curată a tenisului

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Abstract

Why do people see tennis as a clean sport? The simple answer is that very few players ever test positive for banned substances.

The ITF spends \$4m a year on anti-doping. Over \$50m is awarded in prize money at the US Open alone, with each champion this year taking home \$3.7m. Given how much financial value is placed on the appearance of cleanliness, you can see why the sport might think this economic model works.

Keywords: tennis, clean sport, banned substances, anti-doping

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to inform on what the efforts of ITF consist of when it comes to the fight against doping, on tennis stars that violated drug policies and on the economical stake of the clean reputation of the sport.

Men's and women's pro tennis carries a decades-long, pristine image in large part because it has never faced a damaging, ongoing and widespread performance-enhancing drug scandal. That cleanliness has paid dividends: Annual sponsorship revenue is north of \$250 million; long-term broadcast rights fees will top \$1 billion in the coming years; and star Novak Djokovic this year became the first player to bank more than \$100 million in career prize money.

ATP chairman and president Chris Kermode said: „Tennis is in the best place it's ever been. Sponsors view it as a premier sports product, as sort of a high-end sports product.... People see it as a clean sport.”

Itf's mission

The Tennis Anti-Doping Programme is a comprehensive and internationally-recognised programme that applies to all players who hold an ATP or WTA ranking, or who enter or compete in events organised, sanctioned or recognised by the ITF.

This includes Grand Slam tournaments, Davis Cup and Fed Cup ties, Olympic and Paralympic Tennis Events, ATP and WTA tournaments, ATP Challenger Tour tournaments, ITF Pro Circuit tournaments, ITF Junior events, ITF Seniors events, ITF Wheelchair events and ITF Beach Tennis Tour events.

The purposes of the Tennis Anti-Doping Programme are as follows:

- Maintain the integrity of tennis
- Protect the health and rights of all tennis players.

The Tennis Anti-Doping Programme maintains a common set of rules and procedures that apply across all levels of tennis. Players are tested for banned substances in accordance with the prevailing version of the World Anti-Doping Agency's Prohibited List. The Tennis Anti-Doping Programme is fully compliant with the World Anti-Doping Code.

There are five main categories of drugs that are prohibited from sports:

- Anabolic steroids - these help athletes build muscle, and to recover faster from training.
- Peptide hormones - these are substances that occur naturally in the body. They produce similar effects to anabolic steroids.
- Beta-2 Agonists - these relax the smooth muscle that surrounds the lungs permitting more air to enter the lungs.
- Stimulants - these raise the heart rate and may improve performance.

- Diuretics - these help the body to lose fluids and are often used to mask the presence of other drugs.

In addition to the five main performance enhancing drugs classes above, local anaesthetics, cortico-steroids used to treat medical conditions such as asthma, and beta-blockers used to treat heart conditions, are subject to restrictions on their use.

Anabolic steroids are the most common performance enhancing drug in sport.

Anabolic steroids are drugs related to the male sex hormone testosterone. The word 'Anabolic' refers to muscle building and 'steroids' refers to the class of drugs.

Anabolic steroids were developed in the late 1930s with the main aim of treating a medical condition in men where the testes do not produce sufficient testosterone for normal growth, development and sexual functioning -hypogonadism. Medical uses of steroids include the treatment of delayed puberty, some types of impotence, and wasting of the body caused by HIV infection or other diseases.

During the 1930s, scientists discovered that anabolic steroids could facilitate the growth of skeletal muscle in laboratory animals, which led to use of the compounds first by bodybuilders and weightlifters and then by other athletes.

More than 100 different anabolic steroids have been developed, but they require a prescription to be used legally in most countries.

High-profile doping cases

Sharapova is far from the first tennis player to become embroiled in a drug scandal after she tested positive for meldonium. Meldonium is a metabolic modulator that aids blood flow and is used to treat patients suffering from heart failure and cardiac issues. While it is used to treat cardiac and vascular diseases, it was found to have a positive influence on healthy athletes given it can increase endurance and aerobic capabilities, with Wada finding evidence that it had been abused for that purpose.

Despite taking meldonium for a decade, Sharapova will only be deemed to have been breaking Wada's regulations since it was banned at the start of the year, though she did compete with the substance in her body at the Australian Open in January.

Marin Cilic

The Croatian was given a nine-month ban in 2013 after the International Tennis Federation (ITF) said traces of banned stimulant nikethamide were found in a sample he gave at a tournament in Munich. Cilic claimed the failed test was a result of taking over-the-counter glucose tablets, but argued only a by-product of the banned substance had been found. He took his case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) and the ban was reduced to four months. Cilic won his first grand slam title at the US Open the following year.

Viktor Troicki

Another recent and controversial case. Troicki refused to take a blood test at a tournament in Monte Carlo in 2013, claiming he was feeling unwell and had a phobia of needles. He was banned for 18 months, reduced to 12 on an appeal to CAS. Troicki vociferously maintained his innocence, claiming he had been told by the doping control officer he could take the test the following day. Novak Djokovic spoke out in impassioned defence of his friend, calling it an injustice and claiming he had lost faith in the system.

Richard Gasquet

Gasquet tested positive for cocaine in 2009 and was banned for 12 months by the ITF. He also took his case to CAS and successfully argued that he had ingested the substance inadvertently after kissing a woman in a nightclub. He was cleared of any wrongdoing.

Andre Agassi

Agassi made the shocking revelation in his post-retirement autobiography that he failed a test in 1997 after taking crystal meth and then lied to tennis authorities to escape punishment. He told the ATP in a letter he had taken the drug accidentally. The governing body believed him and the failed test remained a secret for the rest of Agassi's playing career.

Greg Rusedski

The former British number one was among a number of players to test positive for the steroid nandrolone in 2003. He was cleared of wrongdoing after a tribunal ruled he, along with the other players, had taken the drug inadvertently in contaminated pills handed out by ATP trainers.

Martina Hingis

Having initially retired in 2003 at the age of 22, Hingis returned to tennis two years later only for her comeback to be abruptly ended in 2007 by a positive test for a metabolite of cocaine at Wimbledon. She was suspended from tennis for two years but made another comeback in 2013 and is now ranked number one in the world in doubles.

Wayne Odesnik

Probably tennis' most notorious doping offender. In March 2010, the American pleaded guilty to importing human growth hormone into Australia and was suspended for two years. The ban was later reduced to one year after the ITF said he had fully cooperated with its investigations. Odesnik became something of a pariah and was banned for 15 years in March last year after a second offence, this time testing positive for a number of banned substances, including steroids.

While these few examples reveal that the game is far from being entirely clean, tennis remains highly regarded as the field of endless work, dedication, sharpness of the mind and technique and strive for perfection.

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