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Unfair advantage: the importance to clean athletes of preventing HGH abuse in sport

The US Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) has known, since first opening its doors in the days following the final ceremonies of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, that scientific and research programmes that advance effective and reliable science are the cornerstones of effective anti-doping programmes. The sport world now recognizes this.

For this reason, when USADA was established, the world's scientific and other leading anti-doping experts launched an effort to identify the biggest threats to clean sport. The issues identified were:

- the development of a reliable assay to detect recombinant human EPO
- the implementation of carbon isotope ratio (CIR) analysis into doping control
- the development of a reliable assay for homologous blood transfusion
- the reasons why people cheat with drugs in sport
- the development of an assay to test for synthetic human growth hormone (hGH).

Significant progress has been made on these agenda items but there is still a long way to go to finally return *all* of the playing fields in America to clean athletes. For that reason, one of USADA's core initiatives remains to encourage the advancement of scientific research in the area of anti-doping. Most recently, in furtherance of that goal, USADA joined with Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Football League (NFL), and the US Olympic Committee (USOC) to form a new research effort called the Partnership for Clean Competition (PCC). Its goal is to pool resources, expertise, and influence in order to further advance anti-doping science toward developing and implementing broader, more effective and less costly anti-doping tests.

When the possibility of organizing an hGH Summit was presented, USADA was, at first, rather hesitant. Our concern was

that when it comes to hGH, what was needed was more action and resources, not more discussion. However, in the spirit of cooperation born out of PCC and with the hope that this summit would lead to action, USADA was pleased to participate in this cooperative effort to give clean athletes renewed hope that the problem of hGH abuse in *all* sports in America has a very short half-life.

Many obstacles remain to stopping the illicit use of hGH and other banned performance-enhancing substances by a small number of unethical athletes at all levels of sport, but this summit serves as an example of the ever-increasing level of focus, determination and cooperation displayed by those organizations and individuals committed to defending clean sport in America. Most importantly, clean athletes are now standing up for their right to compete in sport unadulterated by cheating by lining up to be tested more and by volunteering to provide their urine and blood for anti-doping testing. That level of cooperation from the athletes brings with it both a big opportunity and a tremendous responsibility in the fight against doping sport.

America's clean athletes deserve to know that everything possible is being done to overcome the inherent practical, legal and scientific challenges and to end the abuse of HGH in all sports in America. The articles set forth herein are a broad and thoughtful treatment of the challenges and the potential strategies for stopping hGH abuse. The US Anti-Doping Agency looks forward to working with all of the sports organizations and scientists involved to assist in transforming the research, ideas and discussion from these articles and the summit into a viable and effective strategy for ending hGH's tarnishing impact on sport in America.

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