

**Mitochondria, Metabolism and Athletic Performance:
Blood Boosting in Sports – Part III**

by John S. Peters, Ph.D., College of Charleston, Dept. of Biology

Dr. Armstrong continued with his lecture, “Although some of you may be shocked by Jim’s suggestion that we should not bother to regulate blood boosting, his questions are quite insightful and have been asked by many others. Jim’s questions have highlighted many of the difficulties involved with drug monitoring. In fact, others have suggested that the use of banned substances or practices continues seemingly unabated in most sports and have therefore questioned the effectiveness and high costs of monitoring. Of over 8400 competitors tested for banned substances at the Seoul Olympics at a cost of over 2 million dollars, only 10 were banned for failing the drug test. Perhaps you remember Ben Johnson, the Canadian sprinter who had won the gold medal, was one of those ten? An anonymous inquiry by the Canadian government following the Olympic Games uncovered evidence that as many as half the athletes were actually using performance enhancing drugs. Even more alarming is the fact that when 198 world class athletes were asked if they would take a drug that would allow them to win all competitions for five years, was undetectable, but would be fatal 5 years after taking it, 103 (52%) said they would. The question I pose, and perhaps Jim was also thinking along these lines is, ‘Are we winning the war on drugs in sports, or merely encouraging athletes to use dangerous drugs or practices secretly or perpetuating the myth that performance enhancing aids are required in sports?’ If we are not prepared to invest more time, money and effort into drug testing in athletics, the answer, however unpalatable, may be to eliminate testing, or invest more of the current money into more proactive solutions.”

Dr. Armstrong paused to let the enormity of this question sink in and then continued...

“What are your thoughts on these topics class?”

Questions to consider:

1. What do you think Dr. Armstrong means by investing in more “proactive solutions” to deal with the abuse of performance enhancing aids?
2. What recommendations do you have for addressing this issue proactively in the sport your team has chosen?

References

Dawson, 2000. The War on Drugs in Sports. BMC News and Views, 1:3.