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A SUMMIT ON THE COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC EXPERIENCE

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3) Presentation by Frank Uryasz, President, The National Center for Drug Free Sport

FRANK URYASZ: Doctor Wharton, thank you and thank you to the Knight Commission for having me here this morning.

I've been asked to cover the topic of drug use in intercollegiate athletics, and last week I was at a conference at the University of the Pacific, where we spent an entire day on this subject, and I've been asked to cover it in eight to ten minutes, so it's a bit of a challenge but I will do my best and most likely will go very quickly through the information this morning.

The Center for Drug Free Sport, for those of you who are not familiar with it, is the organization that athletics groups use to develop and administer their drug testing programs. We are the administrator for the NCAA's drug testing program as well as the drug testing programs for about 150 colleges and universities. We also operate the drug testing program for minor league baseball and conduct a number of programs in drug education and supplement education in professional and intercollegiate sports.

Now, for those of you who think that it's kind of a sexy, thrilling job to work in intercollegiate athletics, I don't know if a few months ago you followed USA Today, but they voted on the ten worst jobs in sport and we were following this and we discovered that those of us in drug testing had been elected to the fourth worst job in sport. And just to give you an idea of where we rank, the fifth worst job in sport was being a sled dog in the Iditarod and then we drug testers there are right below the sled dogs, but only slightly above rodeo clowns. So when you talk about the pecking order in sport we know exactly where we stand.

We take seriously the work that we do because it's important work. We work with athletes to help them maintain a safe and healthy environment and we've seen significant improvements in the area of drug use in sport. And so we're very pleased with the work that we do and how far we've come in this area.

I want to cover four areas very quickly this morning. Number one, I'll talk about the research regarding drug use in sport. Secondly I'll talk a little bit about over-the-counter dietary supplements, drug testing and then finally identifying what is our role in deterring the use of banned drugs in sport.

What we know about the use of drugs and supplements among intercollegiate comes almost exclusively from the studies that the NCAA does periodically. In fact, those studies started in 1985 and they've been conducted every four years since then, the most recent one conducted in the 2004-2005 school years on well over 20,000 college student-athletes.

And it's very important that we remember that in these studies, time after time the studies tell us that most athletes do not use performance-enhancing drugs and supplements and that perceptions are not reality. And I stress this every time I talk

with audiences because, although we spend a lot of time talking about those individuals who do violate our rules regarding drug use, most athletes are drug and supplement free and it's very important that we continue to spread that message.

Especially as we come against the Olympic Games in a few weeks we will be hearing unfortunately about the few cases of athletes who are caught doping in the Olympic Games in Turin, but again we must focus on the fact that most athletes have made a decision to remain drug and supplement free.

Drug use among the collegiate athlete population has been on the decline since the late '80s and drug testing is supported to a very large extent by the college community.

Just to give you an idea of where our college students athlete lie right now, most of our freshmen this year were born in 1986 and 1987 and workplace drug testing was implemented in the early 1980s and in fact the NCAA started drug testing in 1986, so our college athletes have grown up in a world where athletes are tested for drugs and it's just a way of life for them. In fact they're very supportive of it.

Also to give you a perspective, Len Bias died in 1986 and when I talk to college audiences about drug use most of them do not know who Len Bias is, or was. And when I talk to them about Ben Johnson testing positive in the Olympic Games they're not quite sure who Ben Johnson is, or was. Also I was speaking at a school out in Utah and I made a reference to Nancy Reagan and Just Say No, and they knew who Nancy Reagan was so I was pleased about that but they weren't quite sure what Nancy Reagan had to do with drugs and Just Say No.

So we have to remember that although they've grown up in a world of drug testing, they don't know the experiences that we had in sport prior to the advent of drug testing. We do know they're supportive of drug testing. The collegiate athletes in the NCAA study tell us that pros should be tested, Olympic athletes should be tested and they believe that the collegiate should be tested, that that's appropriate and most importantly a majority now believes that drug testing deters the use of banned substances. And that's why we do it. We don't do it to catch people, it's an effort to deter the use of banned substances.

We also know that drug use differs by sport. When we do education oftentimes we talk with the entire student-athlete population, but their drug use habits are very different. Even among men's or women's sports we see differences in the use of supplements. We see differences in the use of drugs among a population, comparing collegiate basketball players to collegiate baseball players. So we've become much more targeted in our drug and supplement education in our collegiate audience because their use patterns, their use behaviors are much different, depending on their sport.

I am a firm believer that drug testing deters the use of banned substances. I think the NCAA data from the national drug use studies show that. In 1989 we had close to ten percent of our collegiate football players using anabolic steroids within the previous year. Since the NCAA implemented a year round, short notice steroid testing program we've made significant improvements in the level of steroid use. And, yes, we'd like that number to be zero, but we've seen a significant decline in football and in other NCAA sports and I think that's due in part, in large part to the advent of drug testing.

We've been reading a lot about high school athletes and we are seeing increased steroid use in high school athletes. I believe that starts initially with the use of dietary supplements among young people and then leads to anabolic steroid use and other performance-enhancing drug use. There is disagreement among the researchers about the extent of steroid use among our high school athletes. You'll see numbers as high as six or seven percent. The study that we use at Drug Free Sport is the Monitoring the Future Study out of the University of Michigan that

reports about two to three percent of twelfth graders have at one point in their lifetime used an anabolic steroid.

Also, some of the states have begun doing research on the extent of steroid use in the high schools. This is a report out of Iowa where they found about four percent of their high school seniors reported the use of anabolic steroids within the last year. If you believe that steroids are difficult to obtain, the student-athletes will tell you differently and in fact a report that came out in November by the GAO reported that anabolic steroids are coming into this country on a very constant and consistent nature, ordered primarily over the internet by high school and college athletes and in fact the GAO actually ordered internet steroids, placed orders for internet steroids and actually received shipments of the steroids in overnight mail. Those that came from foreign countries were actually anabolic steroids. The four that came from the U.S. were not anabolic steroids, so I guess the lesson to be learned is that if you're going to buy, you should buy from foreign sources.

But what they found is they came primarily from Italy, Shanghai and Athens and that you could purchase steroids for as little as a hundred dollars to anywhere to a few hundred dollars. So those of you who believe that it's too expensive for a high school athlete or college athlete to obtain steroids, they're actually fairly inexpensive. The picture you see is just an example of how some of the steroids came into the country. A book had been hollowed out and the oil base injectable steroids then had been placed in the book and in this case were caught by customs. But in many cases they're not caught at all.

I can't spend a lot of time on dietary supplements. I will tell you that the current supplement laws in this country make it very difficult for us to deter the use of supplements, especially those that contain performance-enhancing drugs. The one significant was that the NCAA combats this problem is that they have a drug and supplement hotline. It's called the Resource Exchange Center and any student-athlete, before he or she takes any substances, may write or call and talk to a live human being through the hotline to obtain up-to-date and reliable information on dietary supplements and banned drugs.

It's probably one of the finest educational tools we have for the collegiate athletes. And we also have a number of educational products that are available for schools regarding supplement and drug education.

Just very quickly on drug testing programs. We test to protect the health and safety of athletes, to protect the integrity of our sports and to assure equitable competition. The NCAA as I mentioned started drug testing in 1986 and has been consistently at its championships for both men's and women's Division 1, and since 1986. In fact this will be the 20th year of NCAA drug testing.

In 1990 the NCAA moved to a year round steroid testing program and in fact this year that will include summer sports and athletes in the summertime. It includes all Division and sports and Division is considering adopting a year round steroid testing program, perhaps effective in 2006. So these programs continue to evolve, they continue to improve and as a result I think we continue to see decreases in performance-enhancing drug use.

At the high school level drug testing is less common. A study that we did with the High School Federation in 2003 said about thirteen percent of high schools were drug testing. We're seeing an increase in drug testing in high schools and in communities so I think you can expect that number to increase.

Also note that the NCAA schools operate their own drug testing programs. It's much more common at Division 1-A and then as you move across the divisions it becomes less common where about nine percent of our Division programs are operating their independent drug testing programs.

And finally what would be our recommendations to schools and individuals regarding the deterrence of banned drugs? Certainly organizations have to have a drug testing policy and it also has to deal with the use of dietary supplements. We also believe that the schools should be providing drug education and nutrition education to their student-athletes. We ask the athletic departments to continue to investigate what's going on in their own departments to make sure that coaches are not involved in any way in supporting or ignoring the use of banned supplements or performance-enhancing drugs. In the NCAA studies the athletes tell us that in many cases they believe that their coaches know that they're using these substances, and so we need coaches' education is critical if we hope to continue to deter the use of these compounds.

Testing programs: Testing, I believe, is a significant deterrent to the use of banned substances and the testing programs are increasing in number, not only at the collegiate level but certainly at the high school level.

Athletes have a very important role to play in deterrence. They need to continue to educate themselves about banned substances, what's appropriate, what's in appropriate, what's legal, what's illegal. I tell them that it's very simple to pass a drug test.

All you have to do is refuse to use banned drugs and dietary supplements and passing a drug test is a very easy thing to do and luckily a majority of them believe that. We tell them they must use the Resource Exchange Center and it's very important that the athletes establish a non-use norm on their teams, and I think they're doing a better job of that.

Also, and athletes have a very difficult time with this, we stress to them that they need to report suspected drug use to someone in authority to change what's going on at institutions. Whether that's alcohol abuse or performance-enhancing drug use, athletes often have a difficult time letting someone know about their concern.

Regarding the role of coaches, I don't know any stronger deterrent than strong non-use messages from the coaches. So many times the coaches don't talk about the use of drugs, don't have policies, they have unwritten rules and coaches I think have a tremendous role to play in deterrence. We also tell coaches that they need to be supportive of the drug-testing program and that they also need to make sure that their coaching methods are based on good research.

Unfortunately we have a number of strength coaches who will push the use of dietary supplements without significant and reliable information that in fact they actually work. Coaches again have a tremendous role to play and we're growing our coaches' education every year.

And then finally the parents. We're constantly asking the parents to help their athletes to achieve performance enhancement in the ways that we know really work. Good nutrition, good coaching, plenty of rest, hydration and not the use of performance-enhancing drugs. We're asking parents not to provide money for dietary supplements. In many cases the supplements that kids are buying are obtained from the parents. And finally we are asking our parents to set reasonable expectations regarding performance enhancement in their sons' and daughters' participation in sport.

So with that it's a lot of information but thank you very much.