UNDER MOUNTING PRESSURE: A HISTORY OF MEDIA INFLUENCE ON MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL STEROID POLICIES

Dan Deluliis & David Deluliis

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Research Problem
The first section of the paper will analyze recent Supreme Court cases and current federal legislation to determine if Congress acted legally in investigating baseball. Section II, beginning in the mid-1980s with the surfacing of these media reports and ending with baseball’s toughest policy implementation in 2005, will track the pattern of media coverage and legislation influencing the enactment of tougher penalties in baseball. Finally, section III will examine the goals and justifications of a specific piece of legislation, the Clean Sports Act of 2005. This research is interested in the relationships among media coverage, governmental legislation and MLB’s anabolic steroids testing policies. This article would most likely be useful to administrators who are interested in becoming more well-versed in Congressional legislation about steroids, and the media coverage that influenced it, at the professional level so they can more effectively combat the problem at the high school and college level where steroids are most deadly.

Issue
The issue, although seemingly fading, remains timely because anabolic steroids are a problem for not only professional sports and athletes, but also teenage and amateur athletes as well. A 2005 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey of American high school students revealed that 4.8 percent reported using steroids without a prescription, and a 2008 survey conducted jointly by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported that as many as 1.2 percent of eighth-grade students reported using steroids. Use has been associated with a wide range of short and long-term negative health effects. Short-term effects range from acne and development of female breast tissue in men to psychological issues such as increased aggression and irritability. Steroid abuse has also been associated with heart attacks, strokes and other cardiovascular diseases. Congress’ ability to investigate and regulate MLB stems from both federal laws regulating steroid use and several Supreme Court decisions upholding baseball’s antitrust exemption. By examining these laws and concurrent media coverage of steroids in baseball, this papers hopes to increase responsibility in both media coverage and regulation of anabolic steroids at all levels.

Summary
The article first explored the legality of Congress and the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform’s investigating MLB by analyzing their attempts to regulate anabolic steroids through the Controlled Substances Act of 1970 and the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988. The Controlled Substances Act has been amended twice. First, the Anabolic Steroids Control Act listed anabolic steroids as Schedule III controlled substances and later, the Anabolic Steroid Control Act of 2004, added 32 precursors and several other substances to the list of banned steroids. This federal regulation is combined with the 1922 Supreme Court ruling in Federal Baseball Club of
Baltimore v. National Baseball Club that exempted baseball from antitrust laws, its subsequent 1953 upholding in Toolson v. New York Yankees and, despite the ruling that baseball does engage in interstate commerce, a 1972 affirmation in Flood v. Kuhn. The article then traced the history of media reports influencing the enactment of tougher penalties in baseball from the mid-1980s to 2005. Finally, it showed how the Clean Sports Act of 2005 targeted teenagers by citing the link between media exposure of professional athletes using steroids and the likelihood of use among adolescents. This topic is of extreme significance due to the ongoing nature of anabolic steroids investigations in MLB, negative health effects associated with abuse of the substances, and the increasing pervasiveness of the sports media. MLB and the MLBPA’s being subject to antitrust laws would allow the government to directly regulate its steroids policies, and associations have therefore taken action following legislative and negative media coverage to protect their public images. Although sports themselves can be a displacement activity for the negative effects of media exposure, teenagers may feel increasing pressure to use anabolic steroids because it is the only way to become the major leaguers they see in the media – whether or not it is for a positive test.

**Analysis**

The article has two major implications. First, it provides an understandable overview of the impact of Congressional legislation on Major League Baseball steroid policies. Second, it shows how influential the media can be in bringing about both legislation and policies. While both are beneficial in their own right, the goal of this article is, by providing this overview, to allow for sports administrators at the college and high school levels to more effectively deal with the problem of steroids where it is the most deadly, among the young.

**Discussion**

This article is useful for not only sports administrators, but also media professionals. Too often, communications research overestimates small experimental findings while ignoring its more impactful, and seemingly obvious, sociological and ideological influences. An understanding of how the media impacted Congressional legislation and Major League Baseball steroid policies will allow administrators to more efficiently combat the problem, and media professionals to more effectively cover it.