

Mount Allison plans annual drug-checks for athletes

BY MICHAEL CONNORS

Sackville (CUP) — Varsity athletes at Mount Allison University can expect to be tested for performance-enhancing drugs at least once a year as the result of a new testing program introduced by the school's athletic department.

Details of the plan were released at a press conference in Sackville, NB last week, although the university has been testing its athletes since September through an agreement with a local laboratory.

Jack Drover, Mount Allison's athletic director, says the school decided to implement its own, independent program because the one used by the Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union (CIAU) tests only a small percentage of athletes.

"It's not working because everybody is not screened," Drover said. "And until you adopt a process in which everybody is screened, it's not a perfect system."

This past month, four university football players — three in Ontario and one in Nova Scotia — tested positive for steroid use, and Drover says this shows the need to test all athletes.

"[The positive results are] from testing a very limited number of student athletes," he said.

But Drover says, Mount Allison has not lost confidence in the CIAU's program, adding that the new program is intended to complement it. Mount Allison will still be subject to the CIAU's drug testing policy, and will use CIAU criteria in defining banned substances.

Mount Allison athletes who test positive or refuse to be tested will be given a four-year ban from competition — the same penalty given by the CIAU.

Drover says, however, that Mount Allison will not publicly

release the names of students who test positive. The CIAU does.

Casey Wade, spokesperson for the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport — which tests university athletes on behalf of the CIAU —

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says there are dangers in not disclosing names.

"It's a closed system whereby they're testing their own athletes,"

Wade said. "It's not open to public scrutiny. They may or may not issue names of athletes who test positive, so an athlete who tests positive at Mount Allison might go and play for another university and no one would ever know about it."

Wade adds that mandatory testing for all athletes establishes a system in which athletes are considered guilty until proven innocent.

"Doping control in Canada is founded on the principle that all athletes are considered drug-free until there's clear and conclusive evidence to the contrary," he said.

"This system seems to suggest, by testing all athletes, that basically you have to prove your innocence."

Still, Wade says he supports the aims of the Mount Allison program.

"They want to try to address the problems with drug-free sport, and they're doing something pro-actively. [But] they're going about it in a flawed manner."

The centre conducts random testing of approximately 300 university athletes every year, focusing on high risk sports, such as football, during times of the year when steroid use is most likely. Wade says it is not necessary to test all athletes if the tests are random and unannounced.

"Right now, 80 per cent of our tests are unannounced, [so] athletes don't know when we're going to show up," he said. "[Athletes are] playing Russian roulette if they think they can take steroids and get away with it."

Mount Allison is the only school in Canada to have its own independent drug-testing

program. The University of Calgary ran a similar program in the mid-80s, but later cut the program because it became too expensive.

According to Drover the total cost of Mount Allison's drug-testing program is still not known.

University of Ottawa football coach Larry Ring says very tough measures are called for in the fight against banned substances, especially since two of the recently suspended football players were from the U of O.

Ring says all varsity athletes should be given a lie-detector test at the beginning of each season, asking them if they have taken steroids in the past year. Anyone failing the polygraph would automatically be tested for banned substances.

"We need some sort of policy which tells athletes there's no way around it, and that's why I like the polygraph test," he said.

Ring says that such a system is used in professional body-building in Canada and the United States, and that the chances of beating the lie-detector are one in 10,000.

Students irate about youth work experience program

BY KIP BONNELL

ST. JOHN'S (CUP) — Student leaders in Newfoundland are questioning the legality of a government funded work-experience program for youth and may pursue the matter in court.

The Student Work and Services Program was introduced in the summer of 1994 to give Newfoundland students an opportunity to earn money and gain career-related experience.

The program, run jointly by the provincial and federal governments, consists of paid employment and community service.

And the community service component is what has student leaders upset.

Under the program, students work for non-profit organizations that, ideally, are related to their field of study. They receive \$50 per week plus a tuition voucher for \$1,400 at the end of the work placement.

Dale Kirby, chair of the Newfoundland component of the Canadian Federation of Students, says he is troubled by the fact that students receive small cash

payments during the work term, and in the end receive funds that can only be used for tuition.

"I don't think that people should be forced to be paid [by] voucher," Kirby said. "Students should have the freedom of choice."

Kirby says students should be given the option of taking the tuition voucher or be paid the equivalent amount through cash instalments during the work period.

Kirby also said the federation is working with labour groups and lawyers to determine if there are grounds to challenge the program under Canada's labour codes.

"We're in the process of investigating the legalities of paying someone \$50 per week, and whether or not that is under minimum wage labour," he said, adding that if the program is run again next year, a legal challenge may be launched.

A spokesperson for the program, Jill Sooley, says the provincial government is quite pleased with the program, and that students have gained much-needed experience in the

workforce through it.

"It's actually one of our most successful programs," she said.

But she says that doesn't close the door for anyone who feels there is need for some improvements.

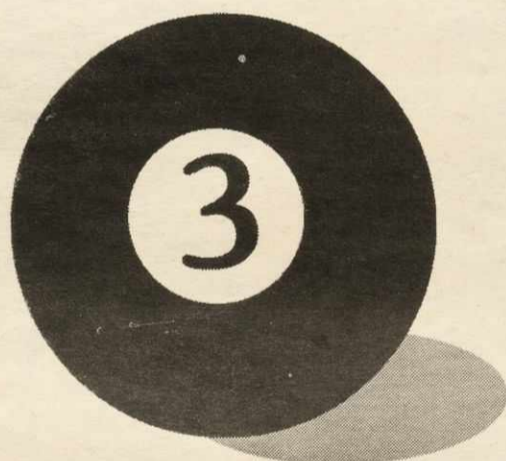
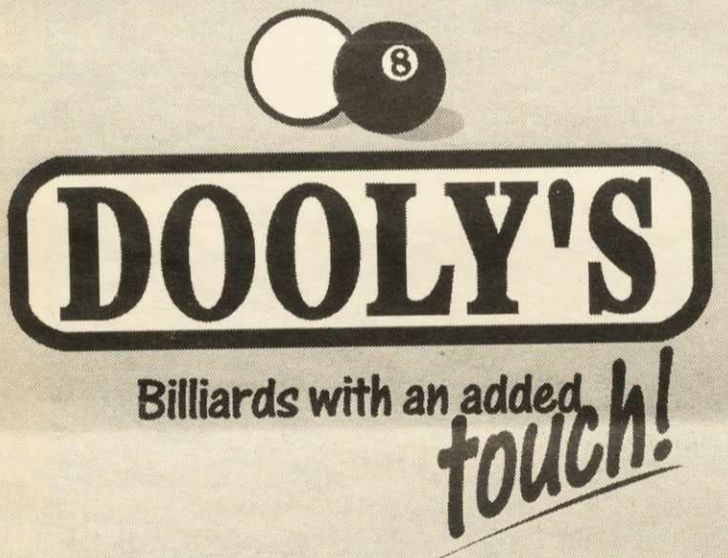
"We're happy with the way [the program] is going, however, if there are any concerns that we can accommodate, we'd be [willing] to look at them," said Sooley.

On Oct. 23, representatives of the federation and the Memorial University of Newfoundland student union will be meeting with the organizers of the program.

Glenn Beck, president of the student union, says he hopes the meeting will be productive, but that students are willing to take more drastic action if they think it is warranted.

"We're trying to play [the government's] game right now, by sitting on the committees and things like that to ensure student representation," Beck said.

"If that fails, I guess we'll have to revert back to some more militant activities to get our message across."



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