

## **Ban For Queensland Rugby Player**

Decision of the Australian Rugby Union (ARU) to impose a four-year ban on Sunshine Coast Stingrays amateur rugby player and coach, Francis Bourke, for the possession and attempted trafficking of growth hormone releasing peptide-6 (GHRP-6) was recently acknowledged by the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA).

The ban slapped on Bourke by the Rugby Union was backdated to the date of his provisional suspension, which means that he cannot participate as an athlete or support person until 25 January 2016 in any sports that have adopted a World Anti-Doping Agency compliant anti-doping policy. Such participation includes, but not limited to management, administration, playing or training as part of a team or squad, coaching, and officiating.

Bourke was found guilty of possession and attempted trafficking of growth hormone releasing peptide-6 (GHRP-6). GHRP-6 is not approved for human use in Australia and the Prohibited List of WADA Code categorizes GHRP-6 under 'S2: peptide hormones, growth factors and related substances, and prohibited at all times. Breaching the code can invite penalties including a lifetime ban for second offences. The WADA Code has permitted sanctions of four years – even lifetime bans – under Article 10.3.2 since 2009 but this power has only rarely been imposed by WADA's signatories.

ASADA, as a government body, works closely with the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (Customs and Border Protection) for investigating the trafficking of prohibited drugs, medications and substances.

A package with GHRP-6 was seized at the Sydney Gateway Facility on 28 November 2010 by the Customs and Border Protection and it notified ASADA. The matter was referred to the Australian Rugby Union following an extensive investigation by ASADA as a potential violation of its anti-doping code.

The performance enhancing drug is used by budding and professional sportsmen to stimulate promote muscle, bone, and organ growth. It has the ability to stimulate the pituitary gland for secreting an increased amount of growth hormone following intake besides stimulating the protein, insulin-like growth factor 1 (known as IGF-1).

The World Anti-doping Agency noted with interest the four-year ban on the player and WADA President John Fahey said the association has been saying for some time now that the Code sanctions are tougher than many people appreciate but they to be appropriately imposed by its signatories to make them effective. The WADA President remarked that the Australian Rugby Union (ARU) has demonstrated that it is realistic to come down hard on a person whose offense is more serious than those which usually result in a sanction of two years.

Fahey added that the ban of four years imposed on the amateur rugby player-coach also indicated that how seriously a member of an entourage, in this case a coach, will be dealt with if he or she is involved in supplying substances to athletes. Mr. Fahey added that this case is a good example of the growing efficacy of intelligence sharing between anti-doping agencies and other law enforcement authorities

that have become an important pillar for the anti-doping community. He further said the World Anti-doping Agency would continue to look for ways to improve this aspect of anti-doping.