

Essendon Players May Not Even Miss Training

A generous clause in the [Australian Football League](#)'s anti-doping code means the chances of any Essendon player even missing a training session may be significantly reduced.

The clause is expected to give great comfort to Essendon players who have been fighting the battle against doping allegations. This clause deals with delays in hearings that are outside the control of players. It is rumored that this is the same clause about which AFL chief executive Gillon McLachlan talked about on the possibility of backdating penalties and serving suspensions in the off-season. Updated in March, Rule 14.7 clause (A) of the code emphasizes on the timing of player sanctions. The code addresses likely options for the anti-doping tribunal to consider under the heading *"Delays Not Attributable to the Athlete or other Person."*

This clause reads, the tribunal determining the sanction may start the period of ineligibility at an earlier date commencing as early as the date of sample collection or the date on which another anti-doping rule violation last occurred where there have been substantial delays in the hearing process or other aspects of doping control not attributable to the player or other person. The last "anti-doping violation" under rule 14.7 would have to relate to season 2012 as there are no positive tests involved in the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority inquiry into Essendon. If that was not all, the ban would lapse under clause (A) in rule 14.7 even if the players were given a suspension of two years for taking prohibited substances.

It was recently indicated by players' association acting chief executive Ian Prendergas that they would continue to fight against allegations included in the show-cause letters rather than seeking the reduced penalty. Prendergast added [Essendon players](#) had done nothing wrong and had fully cooperated throughout the process of 16 months.

The Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority sent show-cause letters to 34 footballers who were at Essendon in 2012 and twenty of those footballers still remain on the Essendon playing list. This letters were sent in response to the club running a controversial and possibly illegal [supplements program](#) under former Sport Science Chief Stephen Dank.

New ASADA chief executive Ben McDevitt said clubs do have huge legal capabilities behind them but he have got to do this without fear or favor and I am not about to balk because of the potential cost or duration of any litigation. McDevitt added we believe there is a case to answer and we are going to proceed along those grounds and added that we have started this and he intends to see this through to a resolution one way or another. He also added these processes can be, by their nature, protracted because they involve complex investigations being conducted to compile briefs of evidence, which then need to be very carefully considered by legal entities. A few days back, McDevitt remarked that sanction could be reduced to six months if the players could

prove there was no intent to breach Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority rules and they gave all the assistance they could to the authority.