

NRL Confirm Doping Bans Accepted By 12 Cronulla Players

National Rugby League (NRL) boss has confirmed that 12 past and current [Cronulla players](#) have accepted backdated 12-month doping bans.

Dave Smith said there is no room for illegal substances in rugby league and the NRL will take whatever action is necessary to protect the integrity of the game. The NRL chief added the evidence in this case supports the fact that players were misled about the nature of the substances administered to them by people at the club who they should have been able to trust. Smith also remarked the suspensions recognize the fact that the players were misled, that the investigation has been ongoing for the past 18 months and that players made timely admissions after being provided with evidence earlier this week. The NRL Head also remarked controversial biochemist Stephen Dank has also been banned over his involvement in the supplements program and would never again be permitted to practice in the competition.

Cronulla captain Paul Gallen is one of 10 current NRL players alongside Cronulla teammates Nathan Gardner, Wade Graham, and Anthony Tupou. Newcastle's Jeremy Smith and Kade Snowden, Titans halfback Albert Kelly and prop Luke Douglas plus North Queensland centre Matthew Wright are all understood to have accepted the deal. The suspension means Gallen would be ruled out of the upcoming Four Nations tournament for Australia and Smith will be unable to represent New Zealand. Wright will miss the finals with the Cowboys and the Four Nations tournament for Samoa. The offer was rejected by Super League-based players Paul Aiton and Ben Pomeroy.

In another development, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has been urged to overrule the "light" punishments handed out to past and present Cronulla Sharks players. News Corp reported that the chief executive of WADA is yet to review the evidence from the 17 doping cases despite lawyers for the players saying they received a guarantee from the [Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority](#) (ASADA) that WADA would not interfere in the sanctions process.

John Fahey, former WADA boss, remarked the "light" penalties imposed by ASADA made a joke of anti-doping integrity in Australia. Fahey strongly urged WADA chief executive David Howman to review and overrule the sanctions. Fahey expressed anger over the backdated penalties and said nobody has had their record expunged and they did not hand back their earnings from this year nor did they have their names wiped from the record books as so many convicted athletes are forced to do under the WADA code around the world.

Backdated 12-month ASADA doping bans were accepted by Cronulla captain Paul Gallen and nine of his current and former Sharks teammates. The players reluctantly agreed to doping rather than face the prospect of facing an even-lengthier suspension over the club's supplements program.

Newcastle coach Wayne Bennett blasted the ASADA investigation. The legendary coach said the public nature of the investigation and the hyperbolic claims at a media conference helped no-

one. Bennett remarked the bottom line is, right or wrong or whatever, the deal that finished up being cut for them at the end, if they believe there's been [performance enhancing drugs](#) involved, it's been a pretty fair deal.