

Monaghan Player Banned Over Doping

A joint statement from the [GAA](#) and Irish Sports Council has outlined that Monaghan GAA player Thomas Connolly has been found guilty of a doping offense.

Connolly, who has represented Monaghan at minor, U21 and senior level, tested positive for Stanozolol (3'-hydroxystanozolol glucuronide). [Stanozolol](#) is commonly used by athletes to lose fat while retaining lean body mass.

The Monaghan footballer tested positive in an out-of-competition test on 13 February, shortly after he joined the senior panel for the 2015 National League. The ban imposed on the Gaelic footballer from Monaghan has been backdated by the GAA anti-doping hearings committee to March 18, when he was provisionally suspended by the GAA.

The statement said the GAA and the Irish Sports Council jointly announce that the GAA Anti-Doping Hearings Committee determined that player Thomas Connolly has committed an anti-doping rule violation. It was further added that the GAA player from Monaghan has been sanctioned by a period of ineligibility of two years commencing on the March 18, 2015 – the date on which he was provisionally suspended by the GAA, subject to rights of appeal within 21 days under the Irish Anti-Doping Rules. The committee said it had come to the view that the violation was not intentional. It pointed out that Connolly chose to accept tablets from someone with no medical qualifications and did not seek advice from a doctor, pharmacist, nutritionist or anyone in the Monaghan set-up that suggests he has taken no steps to identify what it was that was provided to him.

It was also disclosed that this was a reduction from the standard period of four years' ineligibility because the GAA Anti-Doping Hearings Committee was of the view that the anti-doping rule violation was not intentional, under article 10.1.3 of the Irish Anti-Doping Rules.

Connolly, who tested positive for the anabolic steroid Stanozolol last February, has received a suspension of two years. Stanozolol is listed as an exogenous anabolic androgenic steroid on the prohibited list of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). Connolly said he was given tablets by a "work colleague" after he complained of "pain and stiffness" as a result of the training he received as a new member of Malachy O'Rourke's Monaghan football panel.

Malachy O'Rourke and county board chairman Pdraig Sherry testified that Thomas Connolly had not been informed of [anti-doping rules](#). However, it was established that Connolly is responsible for educating himself about banned substances. The committee was convinced by Connolly's

testimony and legal argument by his barrister, Aaron Shearer, that Connolly unknowingly took steroids and this reduced the four-year ban to a two-year ban.

The GAA anti-doping hearing committee was chaired by Adrian Colton QC and other committee members were former Dublin manager Dr Pat O'Neill and former GAA president Nickey Brennan. The GAA Anti-Doping Hearings Committee expressed concern about the apparent lack of understanding and application of the anti-doping rules and processes at county level in this case. It urged the GAA to intensify its work to ensure that all players, county officers, coaches, managers, medical and allied sports science personnel and players representatives are fully cognizant of their obligations under anti-doping rules of the association.