

## **Steroid Abuse Off-The-Scale In Grassroots' Welsh Rugby**

Figures disclosed by UK Anti-Doping have revealed that abuse of anabolic androgenic steroids is "off-the-scale" in Welsh grassroots and semi-[professional rugby](#).

It was further disclosed that players from Wales make up 33 percent of all sportsmen and women who are serving doping bans. About 17 Welsh rugby union and league players, from grassroots to semi-professionals are presently banned with a majority of them testing positive for traces of anabolic steroids in their systems. Ten of these players are from rugby union and form the majority of the 16 players banned from the sport across the United Kingdom. According to a revelation by UK Anti-Doping, the other seven are among 14 players banned from rugby league.

An ex-player, who admitted to using drugs, said he is surprised to learn that many have not been banned. Speaking to BBC Wales' Week In Week Out program, the unnamed player said steroid abuse is totally off-the-scale. The player also remarked he thinks people are probably blind to it and if the truth came out he thinks there would be probably a lot more players who are banned from playing.

The BBC Wales' Week In Week Out program questioned 100 players from grassroots rugby union clubs and came to the conclusion that 15 players admitted to using some form of performance enhancing drug. Only 5 of the 100 interviewed players said they had been tested for drugs in the past three years.

A few days back, Rugby Club player Owen Morgan and Glynneath RFC's Greg Roberts were banned for four years and two years respectively. Morgan tested positive for the [anabolic steroid Drostanolone](#) and the stimulant Benzoyllecgonine, a metabolite of cocaine and Roberts tested positive for Tamoxifen.

Anti-doping expert Prof Yannis Pitsiladis, from the University of Brighton, remarked players can be quite confident when they go into testing that they won't be caught because the current testing will not be able to detect those drugs, because they are no longer in the system. However, Pitsiladis added anti-doping technology improvements

and the ability to now keep samples for a period of up to 10 years means athletes who are presently cheating may be caught in the future.

However, [Welsh Rugby Union](#) chief Martyn Phillips remarked he is not overly concerned as the number tested is proportionately higher than in other rugby unions and sports. Phillips added doping has become a problem in society to start with and remarked he would not sit here and say that it is not an issue in rugby because the fact that one player getting banned is one too many as far as he is concerned.

Chris Thair, chief operating officer of Wales Rugby League, termed the figures as a "wake-up call" and said it is not just a rugby issue but a huge global issue for all sports.

UK Anti-Doping's chief executive Nicole Sapstead admitted that staying ahead of drug cheats is a constant battle. Sapstead said she thinks people who want to cheat the system would find a way and also commented that we would be testing all sports all the time in an ideal world but that is not a reality for any anti-doping organization in the world.