

THG Scandal Explained

-- Dozens of athletes, including baseball's Barry Bonds and Jason Giambi and boxer Shane Mosley, are called to testify to a grand jury probing a nutritional supplements lab. --

BACKGROUND:

Tetrahydrogestrinone is a banned steroid which had been tweaked by chemists to make it undetectable by normal dope tests. It is believed that up to 20 American athletes tested positive for the drug at June's US championships. If reports are to be believed, the athletes who have tested positive for THG include Olympic champions and world record holders. If found guilty of doping, any athletes who won medals at this year's World Championships would have them taken away, and their performances scratched from the record books. Add to this the fact that THG could not be taken unintentionally and was designed to evade existing drug tests, and you have the ingredients for a drugs story to rival the Ben Johnson scandal at the 1988 Olympics.

The US Anti-Doping Agency was contacted by an anonymous athletics coach who claimed that several top athletes were using THG. The coach then gave USADA a syringe containing THG, which USADA used to develop an effective test for the substance. Urine samples taken at the US championships were then re-tested - which led to the positive tests revealed that weekend.

Anabolic steroids can improve the body's capacity to train and compete at the highest level. They reduce the fatigue associated with training and the time required to recover after physical exertion. They also promote the development of muscle tissue in the body, with an associated increase in strength and power.

The only name to come out so far is Kevin Toth, the US shot put champion. John Nubani,

Toth's agent, said the shot putter was unaware that his package of supplements contained a banned substance because he did not know THG was a steroid and it was not on the International Olympic Committee's banned list. No other names are expected to be officially released until December.

Balco is the Bay Area Laboratory Cooperative, a company which makes nutritional supplements. It has been identified by the United States Anti-Doping Agency as the source of THG. The company analyses blood and urine from athletes and then prescribes a series of supplements to compensate for vitamin and mineral deficiencies.

Among its clients are top athletics stars Marion Jones and Tim Montgomery, as well as baseball star Barry Bonds and the NFL's Bill Romanowski. Bonds has been a Balco client since the winter of 2000, and has credited the company for a personalized program that includes nutritional supplements.

The federal grand jury are currently investigating Balco for alleged tax evasion. There is no investigation under way at present into the use of THG in sport.

Jones and Montgomery are listed as clients of Balco, but are not the focus of the probe. The grand jury wants to question them - and the other 39 sportsmen subpoenaed - about financial relationships with Balco's president, Victor Conte. Victor Conte is the founder of Balco. A former bass player with soul group Tower of Power and jazz pianist Herbie Hancock, he founded Balco in the early 1980s. One of the bands in which he played was called Pure Food and Drug Act.

When Jones' former husband, shot putter CJ Hunter, was found to have 1,000 times the allowable amount of the steroid nandrolone in his system and was banned by the IAAF prior to the last Olympics, Conte took the blame. He said the

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 3 [Californians Head Home After Fires](#)
- 5 [Iran Arms Sales / Elliot Smith Dies](#)
- 6 [P. Diddy Finishes Marathon / Interview](#)
- 7 [Civil War: Part IV](#)
- 8 [Of The Week/ Order Information](#)

positive test was the result of contaminated iron supplements he had supplied to Hunter.



Kelli White, the world 100m and 200m champion, tested positive for banned stimulant modafinil at the World

Championships in

Paris in August. White claims to have taken modafinil to combat the sleep disorder narcolepsy. She was prescribed it by Dr Brian Goldman, a psychiatrist who has worked with Balco president Conte for almost 20 years. Reviews of earlier urine samples revealed that White tested positive for the same drug at the US Championships in June. She has also been called to give evidence before the grand jury.

The IAAF has already announced plans to re-test all the samples given at this year's World Championships with any positive tests. The athletes who have tested positive for THG will now have their "B" samples tested. If these also prove positive, they face bans from the sport of up to two years.

STORY:

(AP) - Two U.S. track and field champions, 1,500-meter runner Regina Jacobs and shot putter Kevin Toth, were among the first group of athletes to testify to a grand jury probing a nutritional supplements lab. Jacobs and Toth were among four track and field athletes who appeared before the federal panel on Thursday. Both Jacobs and Toth have been customers of the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative, or BALCO, which is the target of the probe. Dozens of other athletes, including baseball's Barry Bonds and Jason Giambi and boxer Shane Mosley, have been subpoenaed in the case.

An appearance before the grand jury, or being subpoenaed to testify, does not imply any of the athletes is a target of the probe. Federal officials have refused to discuss the scope of the

grand jury or its secret proceedings. But a source familiar with Thursday's daylong proceeding said the athletes were asked whether they had taken the newly discovered designer steroid THG or the endurance-boosting hormone EPO.

The source, who requested anonymity, said the athletes were asked whether they had obtained THG or EPO from BALCO. An attorney for Victor Conte, BALCO's founder, has said his client is the target of the grand jury probe and is innocent of any wrongdoing. The source also said the athletes were asked whether they had knowingly purchased steroids from BALCO, or whether they thought they were buying legal nutritional supplements.

"Did you meet Conte?" the source said the athletes were asked. "Did he tell you to be quiet?"

Jacobs and Toth were among four U.S. athletes who tested positive for THG at the U.S. track and field championships in June at Stanford, according to another source close to the investigation who spoke to The Associated Press on Thursday on condition of anonymity.

Jacobs and her attorney, Douglas Schwartz, refused to comment Thursday when asked outside the grand jury room whether she had tested positive for THG at that meet. Jacobs, 40, won her 12th national outdoor title in the 1,500 at Stanford. Toth, who has the longest throw in the world this year and won his first national title in June, would not comment after his grand jury appearance.

BALCO was raided by the Internal Revenue Service and local drug agents in September. Conte also has been accused by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency of supplying athletes with the designer steroid tetrahydrogestrinone, or THG. Conte also was fingered by British sprinter Dwain Chambers, who admits he tested positive for THG during an out-of-competition test Aug. 1 in Germany. Chambers said through an attorney that he was assured by Conte the supplements he was given were within international rules.

Authorities in track and field, and other sports, have begun retesting samples for THG

since the discovery of the previously undetectable steroid. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday declared THG an illegal drug.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has recently been made aware of a substance called tetrahydrogestrinone (THG), which is reportedly used by athletes to improve their performance. Based on the agency's analysis of this product, FDA has determined that THG is an unapproved new drug. As such, it cannot be legally marketed without FDA approval under the agency's rigorous approval standards that are meant to ensure that drugs that are sold to American consumers are safe and effective.

FDA is concerned about the marketing and use of this unapproved product and is working with other Federal law enforcement agencies to aggressively engage, enforce, and prosecute those firms or individuals who manufacture, distribute, or market THG. "Our mission is to protect the American public from this potentially harmful product," said John Taylor, FDA's Associate Commissioner for Regulatory Affairs.

In the meantime, FDA is warning consumers that while little is formally known about the safety of this drug, its structure and relationship to better known products leads FDA to believe that its use may pose considerable risks to health. Although purveyors of THG may represent it as a dietary supplement, in fact it does not meet the dietary supplement definition. Rather, it is a purely synthetic "designer" steroid derived by simple chemical modification, from another anabolic steroid that is explicitly banned by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency.

The use of THG by athletes, as an alternative to other banned anabolic steroids, was recently disclosed by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency. This substance is closely and structurally related to two other synthetic anabolic steroids, gestrinone and trenbolone. Anabolic steroids, which build muscle mass, can have serious long-term health consequences in men, women, and children.

Californians Head Home After Fires

-- Residents and firefighters displaced by Southern California's wildfires returned home as a weekend of cooler, calmer weather helped firefighters begin to contain the fires. --

BACKGROUND:

The fire that started Oct. 25 in Upper Waterman Canyon on the edge of the San Bernardino National Forest, consumed 91,285 acres. In the last week, that blaze and a half-dozen others across Southern California have burned about 750,000 acres, destroyed nearly 3,400 homes and killed 20 people.

Authorities say an arsonist started that fire on Old Waterman Canyon Road, a winding two-lane leading from San Bernardino to Upper Waterman Canyon, a community of 66 homes and a seasonal fire station. All but eight of those homes and the fire station were destroyed.

Despite a reward of \$110,000 and the distribution of a composite sketch, the arsonist has not been caught.

STORY:

(AP) - A second wave of residents displaced by Southern California's wildfires returned home Sunday as a weekend of cooler, calmer weather helped firefighters begin to get the upper hand. As the threat began to diminish, authorities also sent home some of the thousands



of firefighters who have been battling blazes scattered from San Diego County to the suburbs of Los Angeles.

In San Bernardino County, some firefighters were beginning to head to home, said U.S. Forest Service spokesman Bob Narus, although he couldn't say exactly how many. In San Diego

County, firefighters were expected to begin leaving after spending a few hours resting on Sunday morning, said California Department of Forestry spokeswoman Barb Daskoski.

Though fog, lower temperatures and even snow slowed the spreading flames, more than 12,000 firefighters were still on the lines Sunday.

Firefighters across the region took advantage of the weather to build firebreaks near communities that could be threatened again next week with the expected return of hot Santa Ana winds. Firefighters near Sugarloaf burned piles of dead trees and dry brush.

"With this inclement weather, they feel they can burn that stuff safely, which will provide increased fire safety for communities later on this week when the wind and weather conditions are expected to change," said U.S. Forest Service spokeswoman Anne Westling.

The weather has also brought drawbacks. Snow and rain that fell overnight Friday caused a mud and rock slide that closed Highway 18. One firefighter, part of a team that cuts down burnt trees, suffered a broken arm and leg when a large branch fell on him.

In San Diego County, the 281,000-acre Cedar Fire — the largest individual blaze in California history — was 90 percent contained Sunday after burning for six days in the mountains northeast of San Diego.

In all, five fires were not yet fully contained yet Sunday in three California counties.

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge, who visited a relief center in Claremont on Saturday, said he was unsure if the nation had ever seen such destructive wildfires. The major blazes alone have cost more than \$50 million to fight.

The secretary also defended a Bush administration decision not to declare Southern California forests an emergency tree-removal zone before the current fires erupted into one of the state's worst disasters.

Ridge, speaking with Gov. Gray Davis, said it was understandable that California asked for \$430 million in emergency aid to rid forests of trees killed by bark beetles. But he said it was equally understandable that the Bush administration, after allocating \$43 million, declined to provide any more.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Long after California's raging wildfires have finally been extinguished, they will still be wreaking havoc on the lives of Californians, setting off a dangerous wave flash floods and mudslides. With firefighters just beginning to make inroads against the biggest-ever wildfires in the state, scientists, forestry officials and other experts were already warning that residents lucky enough to have escaped the fury of 10 infernos that scorched southern California could fall victim to mudslides, floods and landslides that will follow in their wake.

"California never just gets a fire. When the rain comes, then you get the mudslides and a further cycle of disasters, maybe not on the same scale, but you almost certainly are going to lose more homes and have more property damage," said University of California, Irvine history Professor Mike Davis.

When the wildfires scorched more than 750,000 acres of southern California, an area just slightly smaller than the U.S. state of Rhode Island, they destroyed all vegetation on mountains and hillsides. Now when heavy rain falls this winter, there will be nothing to stop it from penetrating directly into the soil. In addition, waxy compounds in plants and soil that are released during fires create a natural barrier in the soil that prevents rain water from seeping deep into the ground. The result is erosion, mudslides and excess water running off the hillsides, often causing flash flooding in the communities below.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY:

November 3, 1986

IRAN ARMS SALES

The Lebanese magazine *Ash Shiraa* reports that the United States has been secretly selling arms to Iran in an effort to secure the release of seven American hostages held by pro-Iranian groups in Lebanon. The revelation, confirmed by

U.S. intelligence sources on November 6, came as a shock to officials outside President Ronald Reagan's inner circle and went against the stated policy of the administration. In addition to violating the U.S. arms embargo against Iran, the arms sales contradicted President Reagan's vow never to negotiate with terrorists.

On November 25, controversy over the administration's secret dealings with Iran deepened dramatically when Attorney General Edwin Meese revealed that proceeds from the arms sales were diverted to fund Nicaraguan rebels--the Contras--who were fighting a guerrilla war against the elected leftist government of Nicaragua. The Contra connection caused outrage in Congress, which in 1982 had passed the Boland Amendment prohibiting the use of federal money "for the purpose of overthrowing the government of Nicaragua." The same day that the Iran-Contra connection was disclosed, President Reagan accepted the resignation of his national security adviser, Vice Admiral John Poindexter, and fired Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, a Poindexter aide. Both men had played key roles in the Iran-Contra operation. Reagan accepted responsibility for the arms-for-hostages deal but denied any knowledge of the diversion of funds to the Contras.

On Christmas Eve, 1992, shortly after being defeated in his reelection bid by Bill Clinton, President George Bush pardoned six major figures in the Iran-Contra affair.

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SPORTS:

**Songwriter Elliott Smith
Dead at 34**

(AP) - Elliott Smith, a singer-songwriter whose dark, introspective songs won him critical acclaim and an Academy Award nomination, has apparently committed suicide, his publicist and coroner's officials said Wednesday. He was 34.

Smith's body was found by his live-in girlfriend Tuesday, Los Angeles County Coroner Records Supervisor Marsha Grigsby told AP Radio. He sustained a single stab wound to the chest that appeared to be self-inflicted, she said.

Smith released five solo albums that received widespread acclaim from rock critics and garnered modest commercial success. "Miss Misery," recorded for "Good Will Hunting," was nominated for an Oscar in 1998. Smith's songs often were compared with those of Alex Chilton, Nick Drake and the Beatles, his favorite band. Lyrically, they addressed dark subject matter such as drug addiction, troubled relationships and loneliness — though Smith tried to distance himself from the label of confessional songwriter.

Smith was born Steven Paul Smith in Nebraska; his mother was a singer and his father was a psychiatrist. He spent most of his childhood with his mother in the suburbs of Dallas and then moved to Portland, Ore., while in high school to live with his father. He studied piano and guitar as a youth and began composing songs when he was 13. He began calling himself Elliott in middle school because Steve sounded too "jockish."

A graduate of Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass., he later joined a Portland punk band called Heatmiser. In 1997, he moved to NY, where Van Sant approached him with an offer to use several of his songs on the soundtrack to "Good Will Hunting." The movie was a hit, bringing his music to a mainstream audience.

ENTERTAINMENT:**'P. Diddy' Combs Finishes
NYC Marathon**

(AP) - Running on a bum right knee and after just two months of training, hip-hop entrepreneur Sean "P. Diddy" Combs completed the grueling New York City Marathon, raising \$2 million for children — double what he had planned. "Never in my life have I ever experienced anything as crazy as this," Combs said Sunday at a news conference. "It was a beautiful experience."

Combs' official race time was 4:14:54. It was his first marathon. The producer-rapper said he had raised \$2 million since announcing in September that he would run. The money will be divided among two children's charities and New York City public schools.

Combs said he gained support from an NBC reporter covering the race who ran with him, as well as from children in Harlem who cheered him on. "I definitely wanted to stop," Combs said. "This is definitely a life-changing experience for me because I did not stop." Known on the course simply as No. 30,972, Combs kept a respectable pace for much of the 26.2-mile race. As he crossed the finish line, he raised both arms in triumph. Among his donors: Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who pitched in \$10,000; rapper Jay-Z, who gave \$25,000; and gossip-column regulars Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez, who gave a combined \$78,000.

Combs shed about 15 pounds in training, and developed severe tendinitis in his right knee. "Twenty-six miles isn't a publicity stunt," he said after the race.

P. Diddy: <http://www.diddyrunthecity.com>

Marathon: <http://www.nycmarathon.org>

BIOGRAPHY:*Chat with Sean Combs***What is the hardest part about marathon training?**

I think the hardest part of training for me has been changing my lifestyle. Cutting back on being out late, partying, working in the studio late, changing my diet. I've lost about 12 pounds and I hope to be lighter by the marathon. I was not the type of person that was into running before. I've grown to love it. It's given me time to think, clear my head and be alone. But most importantly, I've been extremely motivated by what this all means to kids.

What does marathon mean to you?

It has always been a personal goal of mine to run in the New York City marathon. It's been one of those goals that kind of intimidate you. People think it's crazy, but it's something I was just scared to do to be honest.

What's your running history?

I ran track in high school, but man, I was a quarter-miler, never long distance. I never ran longer than a quarter mile. So when I got up to completing one loop around the park - six miles - I was so proud of myself and so happy.

What goes through your mind when you're running?

I just like the time alone, hearing myself breathe, letting myself think. I get to look at myself and how crazy the world I live in is. So I just get some clarity on the things I should be doing, things I shouldn't do and just how crazy the world of entertainment may look. The things we may do, or just the way I may look, the whirlwind that I'm caught in, it really helps me to analyze and make the right decision. I need the time to think 'cause I definitely live in a crazy environment.

FEATURE:

Civil War:

Part IV

FIGHTING IN THE WEST Fighting had also begun farther west. In St. Louis, Missouri, on May 10, 1861, a Union force captured a large band of men believed to be training for Confederate service. The seizure of the men caused a riot in the streets where 30 people were killed. Thereafter, Missouri, torn between North and South, would be a state with a civil war of its own. On August 10 a Union Army under Nathaniel Lyon attacked a pro-Southern force under Ben McCulloch and Sterling Price at Wilson's Creek, near Springfield, in southwestern Missouri. Lyon and the Union forces were decisively defeated. For the remainder of 1861 Missouri continued to be a battleground for both Northern and Southern sympathizers.

As early as April 22, Union forces had begun to concentrate at Cairo, Illinois, where the Ohio River flows into the Mississippi. By fall, Kentucky, which had remained neutral for several months, had shown that it would definitely remain in the Union. Neither side needed to respect Kentucky's neutrality any longer. In early September the Confederates grouped troops at several places in Kentucky, with the largest number in Columbus, on the Mississippi River. When the Confederates occupied Columbus, the Kentucky legislature asked the U.S. government for help. In response to the Confederate troop movements, a Union force under Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant occupied Paducah, Kentucky, at the mouth of the Tennessee River. On November 7, Grant occupied Belmont, Missouri, opposite Columbus. The Confederates quickly threw a strong force across the river. After a sharp battle, Grant succeeded in withdrawing most of his 4000 men, and the battle ended

without a clear victory for either side. Belmont was the Union commander's first battle of the war.

SOUTH CAROLINA FORTS Also on November 7, 1861, a federal naval officer, Flag Officer Samuel F. du Pont, took 17 wooden cruisers into Port Royal Sound on the South Carolina coast. Du Pont's guns pounded the shore batteries at Fort Beauregard and Fort Walker so effectively that after several hours the defenders evacuated the forts. Du Pont sent in convoy transports, supply ships, and 12,000 men under General Thomas W. Sherman. The men landed with little opposition late in the afternoon and took possession of the forts. Thus, early in the war, the Union established an important base for operations along the southern coast.

TRENT AFFAIR Simultaneously the Union met and survived its first diplomatic crisis of the war, known as the *Trent* Affair. In the fall of 1861 the Confederacy sent James Murray Mason and John Slidell as commissioners to Britain and France. The two men ran the Northern blockade to Havana, Cuba. On November 7, 1861, they left Cuba on the British ship *Trent*. The next day, Captain Charles Wilkes of the U.S. vessel *San Jacinto* stopped the *Trent*, searched it, and took the two Confederate representatives on board his own ship and later to Fort Warren in Boston Harbor.

The North hailed Wilkes as a hero, but by seizing the commissioners from a neutral ship, he had violated principles of international law that the United States had upheld for 50 years and had even gone to war for in 1812. The British ministry demanded an apology and the release of the two men. Many in the North clamored for war with Britain. Lincoln, however, was cautious, and in England, Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's consort, used his influence on behalf of peace. After allowing time for the war fever to cool, the United States admitted that Wilkes had acted without authorization, disavowed him, and liberated the Southern commissioners. A war that might have been fatal to the Union was thus averted.

Stay Tuned...

Quote of the Week:

All things come to him who will but wait.
-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
Tales of a Wayside Inn

Word of the Week:

Scion (si'on) *n.* A shoot or twig cut for the purpose of being grafted upon some other tree; or for planting; *fig.* a descendant, an heir

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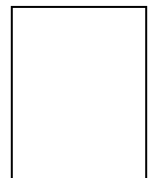
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