

How Did MLB's Drug Testing Fail with Alex Rodriguez and Others?

Written by Maury Brown
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Barring a last minute change, [Alex Rodriguez](#) and up to 12 other players, including [Nelson Cruz](#) of the Texas Rangers, [Jhonny Peralta](#) of the Tigers and [Francisco Cervelli](#) of the Yankees, will be suspended as part of the Biogenesis PED scandal on Monday. Rodriguez is expected to be suspended immediately via a provision in the collective bargaining agreement. While a life-time ban from the game has been discussed, multiple reports now say that he will be suspended for the remainder of the 2013 season and the 2014 season. All told it would come to 214 days without pay or \$34 million. The remainder of his contract would be in place and worth \$61 million, but it is likely the Yankees will release him at that point as he will be 40 years old.

While testosterone will surely be one of the substances that Rodriguez used, there are signs

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that he possibly used other substances to increase performance. [Tom Verducci reports](#) :

Rodriguez, as reported by SI in 2009, did fail a 2003 test for steroids, but testing in that season was undertaken for survey purposes only with no penalties attached. Rodriguez subsequently admitted that he used PEDs from 2001 through 2003 — again, when no testing with penalties existed — though the evidence obtained by MLB in the Biogenesis case has been reported to detail the use of PEDs by Rodriguez at least in 2010, 2011 and 2012. Documents said to be the logbooks of Bosch and published by the Miami New Times in January detailed an extensive doping regimen associated with Rodriguez's name, including at least 19 different drugs to be taken morning, noon and night through multiple delivery systems, including pills, injections and lozenges.

While the focus has been on the players and the suspension process involved, which due to non-analytical findings through the investigation has meant broad interpretation by the league on suspension lengths, the idea that players could have dodged coming up positive in testing is a question that needs to be asked. If the labor agreement gets tweaks around suspension lengths for non-analytical suspensions (and that seems very likely), then looking at where the testing process has come up short needs to be in the picture, as well.

This isn't to say that MLB's drug testing program isn't good; it is considered to be the best in all of professional sports. It's to say that if Alex Rodriguez and others such as [Ryan Braun](#) used PEDs recently, how did they slip by undetected?

The key is baseball's efforts to reach the "biological passport" level. This is a way to capture a player's set of biological markers over a period of time. So, instead of all players being measured by say, a 4:1 ratio for testosterone, each player would have their own marker. Some players may have a marker for testosterone higher, some lower, but being measured by that unique set of markers would be how a player winds up being clean or potentially doping.

As much as Rob Manfred and Michael Wiener will undoubtedly discuss changes to the drug agreement around suspension lengths, there needs to be a good look in the mirror by the league and MLBPA to say, "How did we miss this? What can help us avoid the BALCOs and Biogenesis scandals of the world from happening again?" It may be a technology hurdle. It may be a political matter between the players and the league. But, just as there is strengthening through suspensions, the best way to avoid the messiness that is now in our midst is to have the drug testing program catch the players in the first place, not through investigations. If Alex

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Rodriguez truly doped for this long, he passed potentially hundreds drug tests. While MLB's drug testing is considered the best, it still is not foolproof. Biogenesis is proving that.



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