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Andre Berto's positive steroid test yet another pitfall for Golden Boy Promotions



Kevin Iole, Yahoo! Sports • May 19, 2012



A lot of rivals are laughing at Golden Boy Promotions chief executive officer Richard Schaefer. For the second time in a matter of weeks, a Golden Boy-promoted show is at risk after a fighter failed a random drug test.

On Friday, it was Andre Berto, who was supposed to meet Victor Ortiz on June 23 at the Staples Center in Los Angeles in a rematch of what had been one of 2011's greatest fights.

Last month, it was super lightweight Lamont Peterson who tested positive for synthetic testosterone. That test failure ultimately forced the cancellation of his Saturday title bout with Amir Khan.

This, though, is far more than a Golden Boy problem. It's a problem that plagues not only boxing, not only mixed martial arts, but sports across the spectrum.

And so, those who are laughing at Schaefer's plight may find themselves in his shoes in the near future.

Berto tested positive for a metabolite of the anabolic steroid nandrolone. What makes his case unique is that not only was Berto the one who requested the Olympic-style blood-and-urine testing regimen, but he used Victor Conte as a nutritionist.

Conte served a three-month prison stint in 2005 for his role in the notorious Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative (BALCO) scandal.

Conte had been operating as something of a white hat in recent years, speaking out on anti-doping issues as a way, he said, of making amends for a mistake he made in his life.

It was hard, though, not to question Conte when Berto's urine turned up dirty. Conte immediately took to Twitter on Friday and insisted that most positive tests for Nandrolone come as a result of



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contamination.

He released a statement via e-mail in which he denied providing Berto with anything illegal. He had been a consultant for and a very vocal public advocate of the Voluntary Anti-Doping Association founded by Dr. Margaret Goodman. VADA ran the testing for both the Khan-Peterson fight and the Berto-Ortiz II fight.

"I had absolutely nothing to do Andre Berto's positive drug test for nandrolone," Conte wrote. "Andre enrolled in the VADA drug testing program in early 2012. While using my nutritional products and protocols, Andre's blood and urine were randomly tested twice before his recent biceps injury and all tests were negative. After his positive test was revealed, Andre admitted that he recently took some supplements that were not provided by me and did so without my knowledge. It is possible that one these supplements was contaminated with trace amounts of nandrolone and caused his positive test result."

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Conte went on to say that because nandrolone is the longest-lasting anabolic steroid, "... it is unlikely that any elite athlete would use it in an attempt to cheat."

Berto's lawyer is Howard Jacobs, a noted expert in anti-doping matters who has successfully argued contamination cases after nandrolone tests in court.

In a telephone interview with Yahoo! Sports, Jacobs said he hadn't received the full laboratory report detailing Berto's failed test. He also declined to say which lab conducted the test.

"I have had a number of athletes who have been able to prove through independent testing that their vitamins or supplements were contaminated with nandrolone or nandrolone precursors," Jacobs said. "A number of those athletes ultimately pursued the supplement companies in civil litigation. [Nandrolone] is one of the more common substances that we would historically find in the supplement contamination cases."

Guillermo Coria, an Argentine professional tennis player, made a settlement with a multivitamin manufacturer in 2007 after the sides agreed that Coria's positive test result was because of a contaminated vitamin.

A jury awarded swimmer Kicker Vencill \$500,000 in 2005 after he proved a multivitamin he took was contaminated by a steroids precursor. A judge vacated the jury's award and Vencill and Ultimate Nutrition, the drug manufacturer, reached a confidential settlement.

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Contamination happens, without question. But so does flat-out cheating. And that's a problem that all those who make a living from the fight game have to work together to solve.

It sounds melodramatic to say that one could die at the hands of an athlete chemically enhanced by performance-enhancing drugs, but superstar fighter Floyd Mayweather Jr. said earlier this month it's why he won't fight anyone who doesn't agree to the testing.

"When my career is over, anything can happen and my health is more important than anything," Mayweather said prior to his May 5 bout in Las Vegas with Miguel Cotto. "I'm not saying nobody is, or nobody is not doing it. But my health is more important than anything. Guess what? When my career is over, if I'm hurt, or something is going on, because something has happened in a fight, I can't come to you and say, 'Yo, I need you to pay my rent for this month. I need you to pay my bills for this month. I need you to pay my car note. I need you to put my kids through school.' So, my health is more important."

It's a health problem and a financial one. Schaefer estimated Golden Boy would lose more than \$250,000 after having been forced to cancel the Khan-Peterson show. He said Friday he plans to go forward with the June 23 card and would find a new opponent for Ortiz, but there is no one out there who could make for remotely the same kind of bout on such short notice.

On Friday, all of his rivals were laughing at Schaefer.

A warning to all those who took joy in Schaefer's plight: Be prepared. One day soon, it will happen to you.

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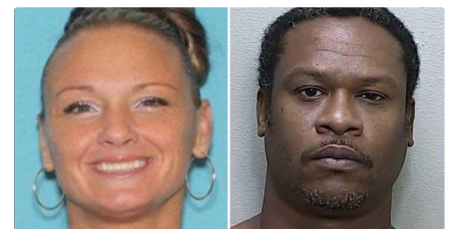
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