

Competitive gaming group tightens grip on anti-doping measures

July 25 2015, by Nancy Owano



Credit: Cristie Guevara/public domain

'Hey, not fair.' We are accustomed to headlines year after year of athletes called out after rumors, revelations and exposes of their taking

performance-enhancing drugs to gain an unfair edge on their competition. Swimming, baseball, football, running, cycling—but playing electronic sports? Doping has even become an issue there. This time around it isn't to build physical powers but to prop up mental abilities.

In fact, doping was said to be a "big problem," a game expert told the *BBC News*. To understand the problem, it helps to understand what has happened to gaming on the professional sports level.

Competitive gaming, or eSports, is a growing [phenomenon](#), said *BBC News*. Thousands of gamers attend eSports events to watch their favorite players. Those who take part in global tournaments and win are able to cash in on prizes of up to \$500,000.

The nature of eSports combines abilities such as hand-eye-coordination, [dexterity](#) and reaction speed as well as tactical understanding. Players are organized in teams ("clans") which take over the functions of associations and often are sponsored internationally.

Drugs might tempt such competitive players. The *BBC News* report quoted Tom Phillips, deputy news editor for the Eurogamer website, who said a number of games are about the number of interactions per minute, and one needs fast reflexes. "I think it's a big problem," said Phillips, "if the sport is going to be taken seriously."

Now the problem is indeed being taken seriously and there are moves to do something about it. The Electronic Sports League (ESL), which has almost 6 million members, is to work with the World Anti-Doping Agency to create a "fair, feasible and conclusive" policy.

They have launched an anti-doping scheme; gamers face tournament drug tests, said the *BBC News* on Friday. Procedures to come: the ESL is

to introduce checks for [performance-enhancing drugs](#). With the next tournament scheduled in August, skin tests will be administered.

According to the ESL organization release, "we are going to administer first randomized [PEDs](#) skin tests at the ESL One Cologne event this August." They also said, "The growing visibility and popularity of esports, as well as increasing prize pools make it not only more tempting for teams and players to break the rules, but also more damaging to our [sport](#) as a whole when they do."

The ESLGaming.com magazine similarly ran a story headlined "ESL leads anti-PED initiative for esports with the support of NADA," by Ella McConnell, Senior Editor. (NADA is the Nationale Anti Doping Agentur, headquartered in Bonn.)

She said, "we are announcing the beginning of the steps we'll be taking as an organization in order to determine enforce guidelines and rules surrounding the use of performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) at ESL [events](#)."

ESL has taken the stops of (1) partnering with NADA) and (2) ESL will be meeting with WADA (the World Anti Doping Agency, based in Montreal). She said the expertise of NADA and WADA will help them come up with a prevention program that encompasses all players participating in ESL competitions.

What ESL gamers can expect: Updates on changes to tournament rules. These will include a list of banned substances, methods of testing and potential disciplinary actions for [players](#) caught using PEDs and/or admitting to having used them .

Ars Technica's senior gaming editor, Kyle Orland, noted testing will not require a blood sample, simply a check for the presence of drugs via a

swab across the [skin](#).

Hopefully, more vigilance will help players who are still unaware of negative health effects of abusing a stimulant. They may hope that a pill will serve as a cognitive booster to increase alertness and the ability to concentrate but they may not know about risks.

New Scientist last year ran a helpful article about gameplay and drugs. A neurologist at Harvard Medical School was quoted in the article as saying there was a danger in the temptation to escalate, taking high doses or using the drugs in risky [ways](#).

Meanwhile, the ESL recognizes the physical and emotional pressure of professional gaming; its prevention program hopes to provide structural support to help them manage the pressures, said the BBC.

© 2015 Phys.org. All rights reserved.

Citation: Competitive gaming group tightens grip on anti-doping measures (2015, July 25)
retrieved 9 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2015-07-competitive-gaming-group-tightens-anti-doping.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--