

Are the Best Allowed to Cheat?

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Among fans and competitors of professional Brazilian jiu jitsu Gordan Ryan is widely considered the best to ever compete. He is the Micheal Jordan of the sport, and he is also openly using steroids and other performance enhancing drugs. In a video uploaded to his YouTube channel, Gordan Ryan (2024) makes several points to justify the way he uses steroids. Ryan says that because there is no singular governing body that oversees BJJ unlike the NBA, MLB, or NHL to make steroids illegal in competition it is allowed, he claims that even without steroids he would still win. Ryan makes the claim that in a few years no one will remember that he used steroids and only that he was the best to compete. Ryan also claims that he is willing to do anything he can to be the best even if it is detrimental to his health. In this essay I will be breaking down how steroid use is negatively affecting sport and athletes' health as well as how the more we accept steroids as a part of sports and put those that use them at the top of the sports icons list, we risk the young generation of athletes getting involved in it. As a fan of and a practitioner of BJJ I feel that having someone openly encouraging steroid use is doing more harm than good to the growing sport. The top athletes of any sport are role models to everyone coming up in the sport and they have a responsibility to guide those people in a healthy way.

Gordan Ryan makes the claim that steroids are or were legal in the organizations he competes in. This point is true only on face value. When you examine this claim, you will find that steroid use was not strictly prohibited within the origination. However, they are still criminally illegal to abuse. The organizations also made rules to prohibit them after it was discovered athletes were abusing them. In addition, there is the ethical argument that steroids and other PEDs are a clear violation of competition between athletes. Bringing an outside advantage like drug use sullies the spirit of competition. “The illicit use of banned drugs (doping) to influence the outcome of a sporting contest, constitutes a fraud against competitors, spectators,

sport, sponsors, and the public no different from other personal, professional, or commercial frauds.” (Handelsman PhD, 2020)

Ryan makes the claim that he would have won without using steroids. Ryan asserts that this drug use did not affect the outcome of his matches. Handelsman PhD (2020) breaks down all sports being a balance between four major categories: skill, strength, stamina, and recovery. It is further broken-down which drugs to take to enhance these categories androgen doping increases strength and blood doping increases stamina. With all these advantages in the four main categories of sport, performance over a clean athlete, it is hard to imagine that it would not have an impact on his record. There is of course the obvious counter argument to his claim that if it did not have any effect why he would have done it. Gordan Ryan is a highly skilled athlete who has an impressive career with many prestigious accolades no one can deny that however once you are caught or in Ryans case admit to using steroids each award and each win gets put into question. Every close round Ryan has had people are going to ask if without the steroids would he have won. Maybe Ryan would be in the same place without the use of steroids, maybe he still would have won every tournament but know that we know he cheated we can never know for sure if he could have accomplished all of it while clean.

In addition, Gordan Ryan makes a statement that him using steroids is overblown and that in a few years people will forget the controversy and all anyone will remember is that he won so many tournaments. The claim that everyone will forget the controversy about Ryans steroid use feels like a desperate argument he is making to convince himself. People do not just forget about blatant cheating in high level sports. Take Lance Armstrong for example he was once a household name for cycling and cancer research, however once his blood doping came to light it would be hard to find anybody who says that is not what comes to mind first when you hear the name Lance Armstrong. Barry Bonds is another example that people now exclusively

recognize him because of his scandals with cheating. When an athlete gets caught cheating it is like a dark cloud over the whole career and achievements, Ryan will not be any different.

In a rather dark statement within the video Gordan Ryan says that he would do anything to be the best. He says that if a drug can help him compete at a higher level but takes 20 years of his life he would not care and take it. A mindset like this is dangerous for anybody that participates in sports. If Ryan had his way and steroid use was legalized it would be a requirement to compete at the highest level. I don't think that most normal people would be willing to sacrifice 20 years of time to play a sport and that would lead to our favorite athletes living short tragic lives. If steroid use becomes prevalent in professional sports, it stands to reason that we would start seeing more and more use in minor league and youth sports. With the amount of money professional contracts and college scholarships are worth many people would turn to steroid use to increase the chance to achieve contracts and scholarships. The people that now would disagree with Ryans mindset of sacrificing health for performance may be swayed to use steroids if they become more common place. The risks associated with steroid use are one of the main reasons they are illegal and banned in most sports. The risks are severe especially for young impressionable youth that look up to professional athletes. Risks of weaker circulatory system, heart issues including increased wall thickness that reduces ability to pump blood effectively, high cholesterol, blood clots, heart failure, mood disorders like roid rage, psychosis, depression and increased chance of cancer are just some health risks. (Handelsman PhD 2020) With all these risks I think even if one person is willing to risk it for a better chance at victory, we need to protect our young athletes from these dangerous shortcuts.

The role models of our children should be encouraging healthy habits and positive views, not openly admitting to cheating and risking health problems. When I first started this essay, I did not know much about the risks associated with steroid use. I only knew of the common ones of

heart issues and acne but after doing more research I found it is even more serious than I thought. I have become even more passionate to protect the younger generation from falling into the pitfall of steroid use like Gordan Ryan has. The reason I care so much about this topic is that when I was in high school track, I saw firsthand my teammates being persuaded to use steroids by others. Many of them were in track to get into college and knew that a track scholarship was the only way to pay for it. I don't blame them for falling for it, but I do blame people like Gordan Ryan who claim it is not a big deal and glorify its use.

References

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