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Latest PED Gives Sports Deer-In-Headlights Look

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Deer antlers? Yes, deer antlers.

They harvest the so-called velvet antler (a soft coating that covers deer antlers) in New Zealand, freeze-dry it and then grind it into a powder. It then gets shipped to the United States, where it gets put into either capsules or liquid extracts that can become a simple mouth spray. You can buy it for \$68 a bottle.

For the elite athlete, experts say it's essentially a human growth hormone, one of the substances organized sports is trying to keep out. The difference here is deer antlers are natural, not synthetic, and properly discovering it in a test falls somewhere between extremely challenging to virtually impossible.

Best anyone can figure, first you need to run a blood test (which leagues such as the NFL or Major League Baseball don't do). Then you need to run a blood test at the exact proper time. Otherwise, nothing comes up.

"You can find it," Jonathan Danaceau, a director at a World Doping Agency approved lab, **told ThePostGame in its report about new Raiders coach Hue Jackson's connection with a supplement company that produces the spray.** "But saying whether this is synthetic or natural is hard to determine. It's only detectable in blood, and most anti-doping tests are done in urine."

It's a loophole for the athlete – turning drug tests into intelligence tests. You have to be stupid to fail one. The benefits of deer antler – or more specifically the substance IGF-1 that comes from it – are clear. IGF-1 is banned by everyone.

"It's one of the proteins that is increased in human growth hormone ... it's considered performance-enhancing," Danaceau said.

"It's similar to HGH in that it aids in recovery. It helps build tissue, and strengthen tissue – more than you can ever do by training alone. Any preparation that is not naturally occurring is banned. Taking IGF-1 through deer antler is banned as well."

So it's banned, but difficult to detect, which leaves sports leagues in a quandary.

How the heck do you stop this?

"I use the spray all the time," Bengals safety Roy Williams said. "Two to three times a day. My body felt good after using it. I did feel a difference."

Williams never tested positive for anything. Considering various NFL assistant coaches, including new Oakland Raiders head coach Hue Jackson (pictured below) have been associated with a company that admits shipping it to NFL players, it stands to reason the stuff is all over the league.



The NFL wants to claim it is fighting performance-enhancing drugs. A look around any locker room will tell you there are more than a few holes in the system. Guys will do pretty much anything to play in the NFL – the money, the fame, the competition. Now this?

The NFL is already in the collective bargaining fight of its life – you want to put blood testing on the table with the Players' Association? Who even knows if this stuff is all that bad? Cheating is cheating but, maybe some of this stuff shouldn't be considered cheating. If it can't be enforced, why not make it legal for all?

Besides, the NFL is a brutal sport and recovering each week so you can get back on the field is a major part of it. If spraying ground up deer antler into your mouth helps, are we supposed to be outraged? Don't you want players to recover from injuries?

Fans don't seem to care what NFL players take – the game, in and of itself, is a health risk. Only the most naïve believe it's clean anyway.

Yet according to Nielsen, a remarkable 53.2 million people watched the end of the New York Jets-New England Patriots game Sunday. That's essentially one in every six Americans, babies included.

And while there is an inherent unfair advantage if one player keeps staying healthy while another doesn't, what we haven't seen in the NFL is what plagued baseball – over the top performances.


Some fans aren't comfortable with players coming along and suddenly slugging 20 percent more home runs than anyone ever had. Since no one is suddenly throwing a football 100 yards in the air or rushing for 3,000 or kicking 80-yard field goals, it's easy to overlook.

Ray Lewis (notes) is linked to this controversy through text messages with a supplier. Here's guessing most fans will just shrug. Or laugh. The meanest linebacker of this generation might be playing with Bambi in him?

Some will actually applaud the resourcefulness of a veteran prolonging his career; after all, the game is more exciting with Ray Lewis in it.

If this was Albert Pujols, the reaction might be different. Or maybe at this point it won't. Baseball doesn't take blood tests either. IGF-1 can make the punishment of the season easier though. It's the same for the NBA or NHL.

This is the new challenge for the leagues, the next level for those looking to circumvent the rules.

It's "natural." It's easy – no messy needles. It's secretive, no accomplices to shoot you up who can one day turn on you (right, Roger Clemens?). It's effective,  essentially HGH without the risk, because you probably aren't getting caught.

Freeze-dried, ground up, liquid extract, New Zealand velvet deer antlers. That's the level the athletes will go to gain an advantage. Anyone got any good ideas how far the leagues have to go to stop it?

Tags: [Deer Antler](#), [HGH](#), [Hue Jackson](#), [Jonathan Danaceau](#), [MLB](#), [NFL](#), [PED](#), [Ray Lewis](#), [Roy Williams](#), [Velvet Antler](#)
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The Slant.

“*Angles And Opinions*”

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