

A modest proposal: Solving the problem of steroids in baseball

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In recent years, the issue of steroids in baseball has been the source of much hand-wringing. Some people argue that steroids are ruining the game. Others say that you can't go around trampling the Bill of Rights and punishing people for doing things that are perfectly legal anyway. To resolve this issue, I present this modest proposal. Today, Major League Baseball is divided into two leagues, the National League and the American League, which, aside from the designated hitter rule, are pretty much indistinguishable. (There are other minor rule differences, such as the one regarding batting helmets, 1.16(b).) What we need to do is make these two leagues more distinguished from each other. Enter steroids. One of the leagues could be the "use all the steroids you want" league, and the other could be the "use steroids and we ban you for life (from this league at least)" league. Given the fact that the American League has demonstrated that it is willing to tweak the rules to create a more exciting, higher-scoring game, it seems natural that the American League should be the one to admit steroids (all the better to pop taters out of the park), whereas the National League can fret about defensive substitutions, double-switches and whether you should pinch-hit for your starting pitcher in the sixth inning when down by one with a runner on first and one out or whether you should have him sacrifice the runner over. Players who are juiced up (or want to be juiced up or who don't want to submit to testing) can move to the American League. Players who are willing to be tested up the wazoo can move to the National League. (An alternate proposal is to allow players to take all the performance-enhancing drugs they want, but require them to disclose all the drugs they take. That way, fans could evaluate their performance in an informed manner. You could include the information on their baseball cards.) Hey, it worked for beauty pageants, it can work for baseball. Of course, this means that when there is inter-league play, the American League team will probably clobber the National League team, but then again, that's not much of a change from what we have today already anyway.

Next time (if there is a next time), I'll solve the problem of traffic in Seattle caused by sporting events.

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