

TESTIMONY OF KEITH JONES
V.P. OF BASKETBALL OPERATIONS/ATHLETIC TRAINER
HOUSTON ROCKETS

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 19, 2005

Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee:

I am the Vice President of Basketball Operations/Athletic Trainer for the Houston Rockets of the National Basketball Association, and have served as head athletic trainer for the Rockets since 1996. Prior to that, I spent six seasons as head trainer for the Los Angeles Clippers, one season as assistant trainer for the Orlando Magic, and several seasons working as a trainer with football teams in the NFL, USFL, and NCAA. I also worked as the team trainer for the gold medal-winning United States Senior Mens National Basketball Team during the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia, and in the same capacity for the 1998 World Championship of Basketball in Greece and the 1999 Tournament of the Americas in Puerto Rico.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Committee.

In my role as head athletic trainer for the Rockets, and in conjunction with our team physicians, strength and conditioning coaches, and other staff, I am in charge of our team's efforts to prevent, evaluate, manage, and rehabilitate

injured or ill players. I interact with Rockets players on a daily basis, am present in the locker and training rooms throughout the season, travel with the team, and attend all practices and games. It is my job to be intimately familiar with the health status of every member of our team and to help them perform on the playing court at the peak of their physical and mental abilities.

I have worked as a trainer in the NBA for 17 years, and have learned a great deal in that period about the physical abilities of professional basketball players and the physical and mental obstacles they face over the course of their careers. I also worked as a trainer of various professional and college football teams prior to joining the NBA, and am therefore in a position to compare and contrast the physical attributes that allow players to succeed in basketball and, separately, in football.

During my tenure in the NBA, I have never observed an NBA player using an anabolic steroid or an illicit performance-enhancing drug. I have never been asked by a player to supply such a substance, nor, of course, would I do so if asked. Steroids and other banned performance-enhancers have no place in the NBA. They carry enormous health risks to athletes, provide no significant advantage to NBA players, and are banned by the NBA's drug policy. Any benefits that a player might receive from using such a substance are greatly outweighed by their costs.

In my experience, steroids and performance-enhancing drugs are not part of the culture of NBA basketball. I cannot say with certainty why this is so, but I believe it to be true. It may be because, from the moment a player begins to

develop as a basketball player in AAU and high school, through and including his career in the NBA, the primary emphasis from coaches – and the primary focus from players -- is on basketball skill and ability, rather than physical strength, power, or speed. It may be because basketball rewards quickness, agility, and dexterity, and promotes a lean body type, rather than favoring muscle mass, bulk and the larger body types often seen in football and baseball. It may be because steroids and performance-enhancing substances can have the effect of increasing a player's weight and changing his body structure, making it more difficult for him to feel where he is on the court, in the air, or in relation to other players. It may be because of the increased risk of injury and long-term adverse health effects, and the resulting advice of doctors and trainers in our league to avoid these substances. In more recent years, it may be because the NBA's drug policy serves to deter players from getting involved with these drugs.

No matter the reason, it is my belief that steroids and performance-enhancing drugs are not used in any meaningful amount by NBA players.

Even though the NBA does not currently have a problem with steroids and performance-enhancing drugs, I fully support the NBA's inclusion of these substances within its anti-drug policy. If we want to ensure that these drugs stay out of our game, it is important to send the message to players that steroids and performance-enhancing substances are banned and to have an effective testing program.