

**National Association of
High School Coaches
6/27/85**

One year ago to the day, my predecessor inaugurated the Sports Drug Awareness Program at your annual meeting in Lexington, Kentucky. The goal of that program was to enroll 48,000 coaches in 22,000 high schools in a team effort to prevent drug abuse among some 5.5 million student athletes.

Thanks to you, this joint effort between the Department of Justice and the National Association of High School Coaches, has been met in the intervening year by extraordinary popularity and success.

That success encouraged us to launch a second, greatly expanded phase in November 1984, to reach 59 million young people, from kindergarten through high school.

As Attorney General, there is much that I could tell you about the efforts which the Department of Justice is making in cooperation with local, state, federal and international law enforcement agencies to control drug distribution and abuse.

We have made better use of existing federal resources by bringing the FBI into the fight and by enlisting the assistance of the Defense Department in our interdiction efforts.

We have added new resources — thirteen regional Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Forces, comprising 1,000 agents and 200 Assistant U.S. Attorneys, plus support staff. These task forces have so far compiled an impressive record of 5,497 indictments and 2,162 convictions.

Only two weeks ago, we requested \$100 million from Congress to fund an additional 2,000 investigators, attorneys and support personnel in the field.

Our attack on drug distribution empires has been innovative. For example, we have proposed tough legislative measures which for the first time define money laundering as a felony and open the way for prosecution of banking officials and institutions, and anyone else who conceals the profits of drug trafficking or other major crimes.

Asset forfeiture provisions enacted in 1984 now enable us to share property confiscated from drug dealers with participating local law enforcement agencies.

And now, we are preparing to launch a major marijuana eradication offensive in all fifty states.

However, while the Administration is making every effort to suppress the supply of illegal drugs, law enforcement is not the final answer to drug trafficking and abuse. As the President himself has said, "Education and prevention are the answer to our drug problem." Put another way, we must stem the demand for illegal drugs.

The Sports Drug Awareness Program, with its potential for reaching nearly all American youth, and beyond into the public at large, represents a major step in this direction.

Sports are a wonderful part of our national life. Few activities command as much time, money and energy, or so completely transcend differences in wealth, education, and social status of Americans. Few activities are as talked about, written about or thought about as are sports. In return for our devotion, sports contribute richly to our collective health and well-being, mentally and spiritually as well as physically. And as the last Olympics clearly demonstrated, Americans excel at athletic competition. In short, sports are a positive, beneficent force at work in our society.

What more effective vehicle then could there be for educating the American public about one of its gravest problems.

We all know the difficulty of getting young people, who have been steeped in a youth culture which distrusts anyone over thirty, to listen to the ugly truth about drugs. Young people, energetic and bright as they are, are impressionable and often poorly informed.

Sports give us an inside track to them. Superior athletes and sports personalities fascinate the young — and the not-so-young. And you, better than anyone else, know that coaches enjoy a special rapport with young athletes.

Through the Sports Drug Awareness Program, we are providing accurate information to you, the coaches. In turn, you can provide a complete picture of drugs to young athletes, whose peers tell them much about the “highs” of drugs but little about the devastating downside of drug abuse.

Let no one dismiss the state of drug use among young people as innocent adolescent inquisitiveness or another passing skirmish in the age-old generational wars. Our youth are developing, literally, bad “habits,” which will scar them long after their teen acne has subsided. We are facing nothing less than an epidemic without precedent in our history.

Currently, the United States has more than a half million heroin addicts. Cocaine use has increased radically, and although overall consumption of marijuana is down, an estimated 20 million Americans smoke themselves into a stupor once or more each month.

Trends at the high school level are mixed. A 1983 National Institute on Drug Abuse survey revealed that 42 percent of high school students used marijuana, 25 percent used stimulants, and 11 percent used cocaine at least once during the year prior to the survey.

Fortunately, we can report that marijuana use in the under-25 age group has dropped significantly. In the past 10 years, the number of high school seniors who use marijuana daily has been halved, while a majority now consider regular use harmful and inappropriate behavior. Yet one-third of those seniors use marijuana on at least a monthly basis and cocaine use is rising. We cannot be complacent.

No nation can long sustain the casualties we are suffering in terms of lives, health, productivity, wealth, crime and, yes, morality, without heightening our vulnerability to aggression from without.

It would be a terrible irony, if our republic were, in the sight of our totalitarian enemies, to impale itself upon its own freedom.

Lenin, in an oft-quoted phrase, said that capitalists would sell Bolsheviks the rope with which to hang them. Well, we are threatened by a rope of hemp, and in a perversion of our

best entrepreneurial traditions, greedy drug merchants are profiting from the seduction of our youth.

If virtue can no longer be depended upon to restrain Americans, the spectre of our nation falling into chemical bondage should move us to save our youth, the hope of our republic.

Cocaine, once touted as a harmless, “recreational” drug, poses the most immediate threat to the American public because of its capacity to unleash reckless urges for gratification — in man and beast alike. Research reveals that monkeys will self-administer up to 60 doses of cocaine per minute, choosing it over food, water, and sex, even to the point of starvation. Other tests have shown that a monkey will press a bar 12,000 times to receive a single dose of cocaine, even when it is accompanied by a painful electrical shock.

Cocaine is equally capable of reducing a human to the level of an animal. Consider the sorry spectacle of a young man or woman, probably white, well-educated, frequently a professional person, earning \$25,000 or more per year, caught in a cocaine trap. This is the profile of a typical cocaine user. On average, these users consume about six grams of cocaine a week, at a weekly cost of \$637. Nine-tenths of those interviewed reported using their cocaine supply until it ran out — no matter how much they had.

Remember that pitiful monkey starving itself for cocaine? Seventy-one percent of human users interviewed said that cocaine was more important to them than food; 50 percent said it was more important than sex; 72 percent said it was more important than family activities; and 64 percent said it was more important than the friends which it had displaced in their lives.

If cocaine sounds like a good way to ruin one’s life, you’re right. Consider for a moment the social and personal problems cocaine users reported:

- 45 percent stole from employers, family or friends;
- 56 percent used up at least half their savings;
- 42 percent had wiped out their monetary assets;
- 38 percent had dealt in drugs;
- 28 percent participated in other illegal activities;
- 40 percent had job/career problems;
- 17 percent lost their jobs;
- 26 percent were divorced or lost a lover, and another 28 percent were threatened with the same thing;
- 12 percent were arrested for possession or dealing;
- 11 percent were involved in traffic accidents; 13 percent in traffic violations under the influence;
- 38 percent believed their only salvation was suicide;
- 9 percent actually attempted suicide;

Two trends make the picture even more grim: first, the spread of cocaine to all levels of the social spectrum, victimizing those who can least afford it, and second, the increasing number of young users. Projections show that by the end of this year, one out of five high school students will have tried cocaine before graduating and 10 percent of suburban high school students will be regular users.

These trends show a national disaster in the making. We must act to educate the public about the problem, particularly our young people. The Department of Justice, and its Drug Enforcement Administration, needs your help, as a friend and role model of the young athlete, in getting across the message that drugs are a bad career choice.

Many other organizations are joining us in this program — for example, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Football League, and the NFL Players' Association. Like you, they can provide proper role models for the young.

Indeed, no person in a position of responsibility can escape the fact that he or she influences others. Young people have their eyes not only on athletes but on doctors, lawyers, politicians, reporters, singers, dancers and actors. Each of these people, among others, has the opportunity to be an influence for good in his or her own way.

The good work that our First Lady or that "Mr. T" does in educating young people about drugs is to be strongly admired. Yet, unfortunately, we must recognize that some figures in the public eye, too many athletes among them, are sending the wrong message to our young people.

It is not too much, I think, to ask those sports figures, held in near god-like esteem by their fans, to abide by laws which apply to the ordinary citizen. Those who cannot are rotten apples, which must be culled from the barrel before they spoil our youth. Those public figures who abuse drugs also abuse the public, and they must and they will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

We should not permit the image of sports — a vital, positive force in our society — to be tainted by sports figures who do not respect the ideals of physical, mental and spiritual soundness, which have guided the dedicated athlete since the time of ancient Greece. And which, I might add, we continue to celebrate every four years at the Olympics.

The directors and presidents of our collegiate and professional athletic organizations owe it to these same ideals, to the public and to the law to put their houses in order.

As Attorney General, I look forward over the next four years to working with the National Association of High School Coaches and all the other organizations involved in the Sports Drug Awareness Program.

Coaches, you can and you have made a difference in preventing drug abuse among our young people. Your efforts are helping us restore this country to its full health. With your continued support, and with that of the general public, we will win this battle against drugs.

Thank you.