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## Expect illegal drugs at 2012 Olympics

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The 2002 Salt Lake City Games, the first Winter Games after formation of the World Anti-Doping Agency in 1999, was dramatically impacted by drug testing and the busts that occurred. To stop athletes from doping during the London Games in 2012, start the drug testing now. Testing the athletes before the Games, and not just on-site during the Games, is the lesson of the Salt Lake City Olympics.

With the 2012 summer Olympics less than two years away, it's time to prepare for an onslaught of illegal drug use during the Games. A review of the Salt Lake Games' drug history teaches an important lesson — the world drug-testing apparatus must be fully prepared to keep the Games clean.

Alain Baxter, an alpine skier who represented the United Kingdom, lost his bronze medal after testing positive for methamphetamine. Russia's Larisa Lazutina and Olga Danilova and Spain's Johann Mühlegg, all cross-country skiers, were found using the drug Darbepoetin and stripped of their medals. Belarusian ice hockey player Vasily Pankov was disqualified after testing positive for the steroid nandrolone. The Belarusian ice hockey doctor, Evgeni Lositski, was banned.

In a final embarrassment, following the Games, blood transfusion equipment was found in the rooms where the Austrian ski team stayed. Team officials claimed the equipment was to prevent the flu, and the world's media collectively laughed.

The real question is how many cheating athletes were not caught before the Games, because most cheating occurs in training, not the competition itself.

Olympic athletes also bypass drug disqualifications with waivers, called therapeutic use exemptions, or TUEs, or come at the last minute to international events to avoid early testing.

A therapeutic-use exemption allows an athlete to use a banned substance for treatment of an illness if a doctor "prescribes" it and if Olympic officials agree it's necessary for health. TUEs are legitimate for illnesses like cancer, but former World Anti-Doping Chair Dick Pound has sarcastically said that it's amazing the world's fittest athletes — Olympians — have six times the colds of the rest of humanity. TUEs are a huge loophole.

Celebrity athletes have been caught up in recent drug scandals. Five-time Olympic medalist Marion Jones — who had been considered the best female sprinter ever — finally admitted to steroid use leading up to the Sydney Games.

Recent busts are coming fast and furious. In July 2009, five Beijing Olympians were banned and lost medals after two tests confirmed use of the blood-boosting drug Cera, including the 1,500-meter track champion. Thirty athletes were banned from the Vancouver Olympics and 70 from the Beijing Games.

In January 2010, a Russian skier was dropped from the Olympic team after she tested positive for EPO. In March, a Polish skier's EPO use was confirmed and she was suspended. A Chinese judo performer tested positive for the muscle-building drug Clenbuterol in May, as did a Chinese swimmer and a British hurdler.

On Oct. 18, American sprinter LaShawn Merritt was banned from competing for 21 months. A medalist at Beijing and Berlin, he tested positive for DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone), which he blames on over-the-counter Extenze. Enlarging body parts notwithstanding, Merritt is now slated to miss the London Olympics.

Track and field and the Olympics are models — they expel athletes who drug cheat, unlike major professional sports such as football, baseball, basketball, and hockey, which find excuses to let them compete after a wrist slap or a short token hiatus. Even a master sprinter over 35 competing only for honor, and not for the massive funding Olympic champions receive, gets banned. Val Barnwell, 52, was busted after testing positive for testosterone at the World Master Championships in 2009 in Italy and was barred when he showed up to race at the 2010 World Masters Indoors in Canada this March.

The athletes competing in London 2012 will be the best in the world. They should be the ones who put in the years of training and effort, not the competitors who use the most drugs.

The triumvirate who created and armed WADA at its creation in 1999 — WADA President Richard Pound, U.S. drug czar Barry McCaffrey, and U.S. Anti-Doping head and Olympic marathon champion Frank Shorter — are no longer involved and pushing the envelope. Yet WADA must continue to assure that each Olympic athlete complies with its standards on banned substances — no exceptions. The 2012 London Olympics can be the



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cleanest Olympics ever.

Drug busts happened in Salt Lake City, in Beijing, in Vancouver, and will occur in London. They do not mean the Olympics are dirty – they mean the Games are being kept clean. London, get ready for a flurry of drug busts.

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