

More than 2,500 NFL players Jackson undergo 'degrading' drug test

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NEW YORK (AP)—Over the period of a month this summer at NFL training camps across America, a strange ritual was acted out.

More than 2,500 young men stripped themselves nude inside a tent, were handed a cup by a representative of SmithKline Laboratories, and told to urinate in it so they could be tested for the presence of illegal substances.

"It was one of the most degrading things that ever happened in my life," said one New York Giant, who asked not to be identified, after it was disclosed that his teammate Lawrence Taylor had tested positive for a similar test.

Taylor, who voluntarily underwent drug rehabilitation in the winter of 1986, was one of nine players disciplined by the NFL this summer for violating the league's substance abuse policy.

He and seven others were suspended for 30 days for second-time violations — voluntary submission counts as a first time.

The ninth player, Tony Collins of Indianapolis, was suspended for the season for a third-time violation.

Under NFL policy, agreed to by the union in the 1982 contract that expired last Sept. 1, drug testing is permitted at the start of training camp and for cause.

The latter usually means a previous positive test, a history of drug use in college or behavior that would

lead a team to believe a player is using illegal drugs.

That provision continues to be enforced despite the lack of a new agreement following last year's strike.

In its new contract proposal, which remains in limbo while the labor dispute is in court, the NFL wants random testing for all players, something strongly resisted by the NFLPA.

This season marked the third year the tests have been administered by Smith-

Kline Laboratories of Norristown, Pa. under the direction of Dr. Forrest Tennant, the NFL's drug advisor. For the first time this year, steroids were included with such illegal drugs as cocaine and marijuana as substances whose use would subject those who took them to league discipline.

The tests began in July and continued through August, usually at the convenience of the team, which is why Taylor's suspension came later than the others.

The Giants were not tested until Aug. 15.

Under the system, the players must urinate under the eye of a SmithKline employee five feet away — to prevent what Taylor described in his 1987 book, "L.T. — Living on the Edge."

In the book, he said he would smuggle "clean" urine obtained from a teammate into a lavatory stall and substitute it for his own.

If only nine of the more than 2,500 players in camp tested positive, the NFL has an enviable record — that represents just .0036 percent positive. But that cannot be assumed.

Under league policy, the names of first-time offenders are not even given to the league, nor are they made public.

Discipline is up to the team, which can either send him for 30 days of rehabilitation or keep him on the active roster if it deems the substance abuse to be a one-time thing.

When Taylor and Washington's Dexter Manley were caught again this year, it was known they had been to rehabilitation facilities in the past, and Collins' previous violations were known.

But that wasn't the case for two other prominent players suspended — running back Robb Riddick of Buffalo and defensive end Greg Townsend of the Raiders, who had never previously been identified as substance abusers.

"I think it would safe to speculate that there were others," one league official, who asked for anonymity, said Tuesday. "But you'll never know who they are unless they test positive again."

doesn't mean he's a worse player than the others, it's just a matter of someone having to be on the bench. And that somebody is Basil Jackson.

"None of the guys is any better than the others," he said. "I don't think they think I'm any worse than they are."

The attitude is especially unusual for someone like Basil at a time like this week. The game of the week for A&M is at Louisiana State, and he's still lives there and is expected to hit Tiger Stadium *en masse*.

"The last time I was home was early May," he said. "I'm really looking forward to going back there."

Column

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types of this condition, made their way onto Kyle field and proceeded to taunt Aggie fans with their jubilant spirit (similar to my Dad's condition).

For some reason, to football fans around this country, a victory by one team over another means the winning team's fans are better than those of the defeated team. Most fans will deny this in the off-season,

but he said that doesn't really fire him up to perform any more than any other game.

"Just the game itself provides the incentive," he said. "The crowd in general gives incentive to play."

And it doesn't matter whether the crowd is favorable or not. In fact, to Basil it might even be more invigorating to play in front of a crowd that hates his guts.

"I get more turned on by boos than by cheers," he said.

To make matters even worse, he might not even get to play. He injured his shoulder in the Kickoff Classic and is listed as questionable for the game.

"As of now I will be playing," he said. "It doesn't hurt. It would hurt if I took a direct shot right on the

shoulder. If it should give me any more trouble, I may not be as active as I would like to be."

The main emphasis is on winning, not playing. And winning, in this case particularly, is of prime importance. LSU has beaten A&M in the Aggies' season opener each of the last two years, and he said frankly, the team is getting tired of it.

"It's past time for a victory," he said. "The attitude now is that we're going to prove to everyone that we're not a fluke — to prove we're serious about victory."

He said the loss to Nebraska in the first game won't affect that attitude.

"It's just that — the first game. It's a learning experience."

But in the game or not, he remains supportive of his teammates.

but the truth comes out immediately following a game, such as the A&M-LSU game.

As the Tiger fans did their nannynanny-na-nas on the field, good Aggie blood boiled in the stands and on the sidelines. Those who didn't suffer from the condition were enjoying the fact that the walk to their cars or dorms was less crowded.

On the other hand, those of us

who were suffering from the usually violent type of the condition were still hanging around to see if a valiant 12th Man contingency could somehow reverse the mental strain of a loss to those Louisianians.

Unfortunately, the only way to change the condition from the violent type to the happy type is by a victory, which we had to wait two weeks for because of an open date in the schedule.

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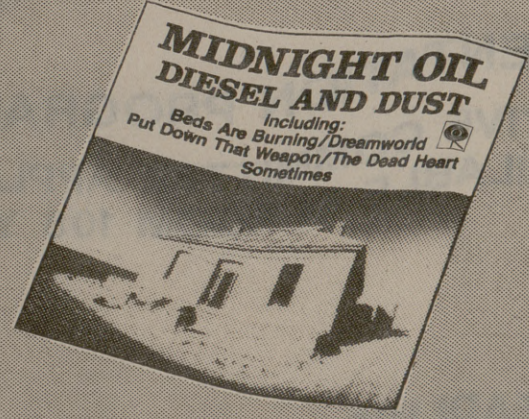
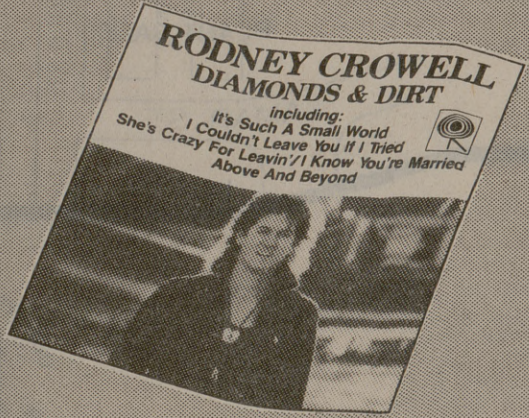
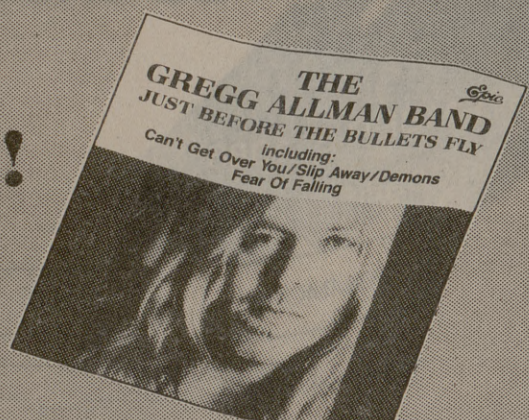
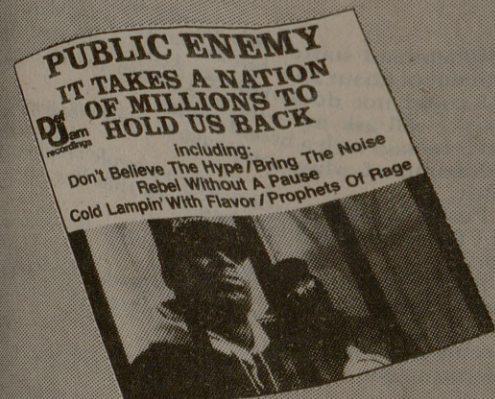
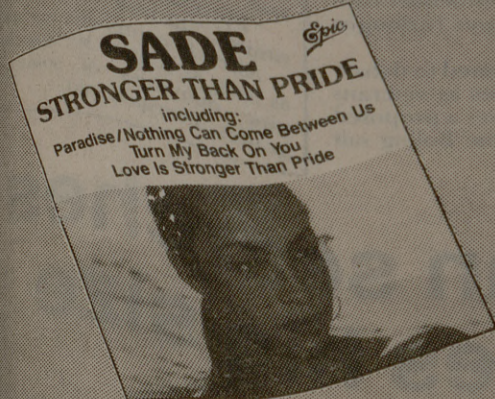
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