

Rangers and pot: a survey of usage

By Scott Williams

Due to the recent controversy surrounding the question of drug usage on Mather's sports teams, the Free Press has conducted a survey of the varsity members of the boys' Basketball, Football, Swimming, Tennis and Baseball Teams. Thirteen basketball players, thirty-one football players, nine swimmers, seven tennis players, and sixteen baseball players were individually interviewed on a one-to-one basis. They were told that the survey was anonymous, and they were all asked the same questions. The percentages represent "yes" answers.

Q. Do you use drugs regularly?

Basketball	53 per cent
Football	35 per cent
Swimming	11 per cent (1 out of 9)
Tennis	0 per cent
Baseball	25 per cent

Q. Have you ever used drugs before a game?

Basketball	23 per cent
Football	0 per cent
Swimming	0 per cent
Tennis	0 per cent
Baseball	6 per cent (1 out of 16)

Q. Do you think the usage of drugs slows you down?

Basketball	69 per cent
Football	58 per cent
Swimming	77 per cent
Tennis	42 per cent
Baseball	75 per cent.

While the term "drugs" is rather general, most of the players are referring to their usage of marijuana. But it is also interesting to note that on one question, "Have you ever used drugs before a game in an effort to improve your performance?" which implies the usage of amphetamines, or "speed", only two football players answered "yes".



When statistics were shown to Mr. Chet Ziemba, coach of the football team and Mr. Don Fontana, coach of the basketball team, they questioned the validity of the entire survey. Coach Ziemba said, "I don't know how honest they were in their answers." Coach Fontana said that the players believe its "the in thing to be on drugs," and that peer pressure may have prompted many to falsify their answers in an effort to avoid being called "square" by teammates and friends.

Mr. Tom Radzicki coach of the varsity baseball team says, "I'm not shocked. It's so readily available — they're lured into it. I'm not surprised."

Whether or not the usage of drugs affects the athletes has been questioned by many. The fourth question of the survey asks if drugs slow down the athlete. A surprisingly 64 per cent of the athletes interviewed agree that drugs slow them down — surprising because they continue using drugs and, as athletes, they should avoid anything that is slowing. But this raises another question — do the drugs slow the athletes down only while they're under the influence?

According to Mr. Ray Wineblad the Assistant Athletic Director and Trainer of DePaul University, "Marijuana like alcohol is a mind-altering drug. I've watched kids play who have smoked 2 or 3 hours before and they are slowed down. I don't think there is a long-term affect, but there is a short-term affect."

Mr. Wineblad who is also licensed by the State of Illinois as a physicians' assistant added that a habitual marijuana smoker of 3 or 4 "joints" a day may develop a long term effect.

According to Mr. E.M. Steindler, Director of the Department of Mental Health of the American Medical Association, "Some studies have shown that excessive long-term use has made persons apathetic and lethargic. Also, it has been demonstrated that someone who has been using marijuana continuously becomes psychologically dependent on it. They are continually pre-occupied with it and athletes would suffer from this dependence."

Of course, talent, coaching, and experience are also important elements to be taken into consideration as possible reasons for the success or failure of a team. But it is interesting to note that drug-usage can affect athletes and it is so wide-spread on some of Mather's teams.