

# Medford-native pitcher's death linked to ephedrine

**Bob Brookover**

Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

CLEARWATER, Fla. — A medical examiner said on Tuesday that a weight-loss drug containing ephedrine probably contributed to the death of Baltimore Orioles pitcher and Medford native Steve Bechler, who collapsed from heatstroke Sunday during a spring-training workout in Fort Lauderdale and died Monday morning.

That finding by Dr. Joshua Perper, Broward County's chief medical examiner, leaves baseball's drug policy open for question from outsiders once again.

"At this time, I don't have a complete or sufficient degree of toxicology results that I can say precisely what was in the blood and at what levels," Perper said during a news briefing. "But it's very difficult to believe, in view of all the circumstances, that anything else was really of importance."

Ephedrine has been banned by the NCAA, the NFL and the International Olympic Committee, but not by Major League Baseball.

The drug, which is a stimulant used for losing weight and minimizing fatigue, was found in the system of football player Rashidi Wheeler of Northwestern University after he collapsed during drills and died in August 2001.

Korey Stringer of the Minnesota Vikings, another football player who collapsed during practice and later died, tested negative for the stimulant. However, a product containing the substance was found in Stringer's locker after his death in July 2001.

While no one will argue that the death of a 23-year-old man with a wife who is seven months pregnant



Susan Stockton South Florida Sun-Sentinel (KRT)

Pat Bechler (left) holds son Steve Bechler's jersey as family members surround her.

is tragic, a debate should be opened about ephedrine's harmful-causes.

"If that's the cause, then obviously some drastic steps need to be taken to stop this," Phillies manager Larry Bowa said. "All I know is what I've read in the papers, but by the way the doctors are talking, it sounds as if it is widespread."

The harmful effects of supplements such as creatine and androstenedione came to light five years ago, when the Cardinals' Mark McGwire was chasing Roger Maris' single-season home-run record, but baseball still has no testing for either of those substances.

Anabolic steroids have also been

an issue of debate and were finally addressed last year, when the owners negotiated a new collective bargaining agreement with the players' union. Critics believe the agreement isn't nearly strong enough.

Phillies trainer Jeff Cooper, who is avid in educating players about the damaging effects of smokeless tobacco, does not believe drug testing is the answer to baseball's or society's problems.

"I think a lot of guys take things and they don't even realize what they are taking," he said.

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# Canseco will likely serve jail time for violating probation

**Lisa Arthur**

Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

MIAMI — Former Major League Baseball most valuable player Jose Canseco could spend the next month in a Miami-Dade County jail after admitting to a judge Tuesday that he's guilty of violating probation on assault charges.

When he finally gets back to court for a sentencing hearing on March 17, he could face up to 15 years in prison.

Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Leonard Glick dismissed Canseco's pleas for mercy and freedom on bond while awaiting the sentencing hearing.

Jailing probation violators is standard procedure. Because of his celebrity status, Canseco will be held in an isolation cell for his own protection, jail spokeswoman Janelle Hall said.

The former slugger, wearing a double-breasted dark suit, looked stunned as he sat in the jury box with his hands cuffed in front of him.

His father, Jose Sr., and twin brother, Osvaldo, "Ozzie" Canseco, looked on in disbelief from the gallery.

His father said Jose had been treated unfairly.

"The United States should be proud to have such a man as Jose Canseco in this country," Jose Canseco Sr. said. "This is very, very unfair."

The Canseco twins, 38, grudgingly pleaded guilty in November to aggravated battery and battery

for allegedly breaking the nose of an Opium Garden patron and splitting the lip of another during a 2001 brawl. Jose was also charged with battery on a bouncer at the Miami Beach nightclub.

The brothers maintained they were protecting Jose's date, who they said was harassed by two men from California, Christian Presley and Alan Cheeks, who were in town for a business convention.

Lage said the brothers were accepting the plea deals to get the case over with and protect their families, not because they were guilty.

Glick placed Jose Canseco on probation for three years and ordered him to perform 250 hours of community service and take an anger management course.

He also ordered Canseco to pay court costs.

According to an arrest warrant issued Friday, Jose Canseco failed to make monthly reports to his probation officer, failed to begin the community service hours and failed to take the anger management course.

Another term of the probation prohibited him from leaving South Florida for longer than 30 days at a time. He violated that, too, according to the warrant.

He's also behind on court costs and supervision costs. He owes \$247.91.

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## Men's

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After sitting out one game — against Washington State on Jan. 25 — Jackson returned to the lineup wearing a special-made glove against UCLA the next week and scored a team-high 27 points. Since

**"If I can ... just get healthy, that's the main thing I'm concerned with right now. I'm just going to have to play through a little pain."**

**Luke Jackson**  
Oregon forward

then, though, Jackson has struggled. In the last two games, he has averaged seven points, while shooting a combined 6-of-22 (27.3 percent).

"He hasn't gotten back to himself yet, but this week we'll hopefully bring him along a little further," Kent said.

Jackson played just 19 minutes Saturday in the Ducks' 80-63 win at Oregon State. He said he will play this weekend against the Washington schools, and bring the glove just in case.

"It's really weird — I didn't think it would be that bad, but it's tough," Jackson said. "If I can sit and just get healthy, that's the main thing I'm concerned with right now. I'm just going to have to play through a little pain."

### Bracketology

In this week's Bracketology, ESPN.com's Joe Lunardi kept Oregon as a projected No. 7 seed in the NCAA Tournament, with a first-round matchup against 10th-seeded Michigan State (14-9) in Nashville, Tenn., on March 21.

Contact the senior sports reporter at adamjude@dailymerald.com



Luke Ridnour, a Blaine, Wash., native, will head home this weekend as the Ducks face Washington and Washington State.

Adam Amato  
Emerald

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