



## Schu's Crossing

### Ryan Braun's Brewing Controversy

Steroid acquittal turns both personal and political *BY STEVE SCHUSTER*

Despite being recently acquitted of a steroid charge, one of Major League Baseball's Most Valuable Players, Milwaukee Brewers Outfielder Ryan Braun, just can't catch a break.

First, Braun was deemed guilty for steroid use after a positive drug test. He was handed a 50-game suspension.

As if being charged with steroid use and given a 50-game suspension wasn't enough, people have been spreading rumors via blogs accusing Braun of having a sexually transmitted disease, a claim which Braun outright denies --- AND then just to make his life a little more exciting, political figures are using his situation to advance their causes too.

His recent steroid acquittal is significant.

"Braun's case marks the first time a baseball player has successfully challenged a drug-related penalty in a grievance," [ESPN reported](#).

Braun's "beating the rap" was based on a chain of custody issue, not faulty test results.

So what exactly was the chain of custody issue?

Braun took issue with the fact that the urine sample was taken back to the collector's home before being sent to the lab via FedEx.

Well, on Feb. 28 the collector (Dino Laurenzi, Jr.) [defended the collection procedures](#) which Braun criticized.

Laurenzi said "I completed my collections at Miller Park at approximately 5:00 p.m. (Sat. Oct. 1). Given the lateness of the hour that I completed my collections, there was no FedEx office located within 50 miles of Miller Park that would ship packages that day or Sunday. Therefore, the earliest that the specimens could be shipped was Monday, Oct. 3."

#### FACT CHECK -

During an interview with *Schu's Crossing* on Feb. 28, Scott Fiedler a FedEx spokesperson confirmed the last collection time from FedEx locations within a 50 mile radius of Miller Park on Sat. Oct. 1 was 5 p.m.

It would appear that Laurenzi's story --- about the collection times --- holds to be true.

But questions still remain ---

Why did Laurenzi wait until so late in the day to collect the samples in the first place?

How often does MLB conduct these types of drug tests?

And, what else would have caused elevated levels of synthetic testosterone to show up on Braun's steroid test?

Well, according to [The Washington Post](#), Braun declined to comment on the matter (regarding the testosterone levels). But, it's worth noting that media markets outside of Wisconsin are approaching Braun's story at very different angles.

Not surprisingly, local news coverage in Wisconsin seems to be focusing mainly on the positive including Brewers fans' excitement for Braun's "good news."

But what's the rest of America reading and hearing about our Milwaukee Brewers outfielder? Suffice it to say, it's not all positive.

In response to Braun's statement - "There were a lot of things that we learned about the collector (of the steroid test), about the collection process, about the way the entire thing works, that made us very



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concerned and very suspicious about what could have actually happened."

On Feb. 26 - [The N.Y. Daily News defended the urine sample collector saying](#), "... So you know, (the collector) is a 52-year-old health care professional who has a B.A. in athletic training from the University of Wisconsin, a master's in medicine/athletic training from North Carolina and an MBA from Loyola-Chicago. He has done the sort of collecting work he did with Ryan Braun for three professional sports leagues."

Sound familiar? A similar statement was given by Laurenzi himself on Feb. 28.

And, on March 1 in New York, the media has reported attorneys have joined in on the action. Braun's lawyer has [criticized the drug test collector](#).

But back to Braun -

The news farther south on I-95 also wasn't completely positive for Braun either.

[A Washington Post story said](#) "it was impossible to know whether Braun was, as he said, a victim — of either sloppy chain-of-custody procedures or straight-up sabotage — or a very good liar who took illegal synthetic testosterone last fall and beat the charges on a technicality."

Clearly, both [The Washington Post](#) and [N.Y. Daily News](#) stories raise a number of issues --- but perhaps the biggest issue is why Braun declined to comment further.

It sounds like the answer might be personal. Should the media and blogs respect that and not take it any further?

For better or for worse, Talk Sports Philadelphia along with several sports blogs tenaciously pursued.

But just how personal does this get for Braun?

Well, not much gets more personal than a part of man's anatomy.

What does this have to do with a Milwaukee Brewer's outfielder (Braun)? Everything, if you believe what Talk Sports Philadelphia has to say to be true.

"Braun will be let off because he tested positive for Herpes and the medication given to him by his doctor (legal to fight this) is what caused the spike. Braun and his lawyers plan to go after whoever leaked the story because of HIPAA laws. That is why Braun has not made a statement and that is also why in Mark's statement he referenced it being a "personal issue," [a Brewers official was quoted](#) on [talksportsphilly.com](#).

But, Braun himself flat out denied the allegation during an interview with [Milwaukee ABC's affiliate WISN-TV](#).

"There's never been a personal medical issue, never had an STD. Many of the stories that were erroneously reported by the initial network continue to live on, and it's sad and disappointing that this has become a PR battle and people continue to leak information that's inaccurate," Braun told ABC.

The irony surrounding all of Braun's blog chatter is that it was a blog in the first place that first broke Braun's "good news."

[Milwaukee's Fox News affiliate \(FOX 6\)](#) reported last week that [a Wisconsin blog](#) run by a high school junior was the first to break the story that "Braun's drug test that tested positive for increased levels of synthetic testosterone was mishandled, thus likely altering the results of the test."

Sports blogs are not the only arena where Braun's situation is being discussed. This has also become political.

Wisconsin Democrats Chair Mike Tate, one of the leaders of the Gov. Scott Walker recall, recently [posted a blog](#) on the subject.

"Whatever the case (for Braun), none of this would have been possible without collective bargaining protections won not through the goodness of the baseball owners' hearts, but because men that came before Braun stood in solidarity for something bigger than themselves. ... As Braun's victory displays in dramatic fashion, collective bargaining is not merely about wages and benefits, it is the foundation for basic dignity in a workplace, and it radiates outward to all workplaces, whether it be a major league dugout or a welding shop, whether it's a police precinct or a classroom," Tate said.

But ironically, [didn't Braun fight against the players union regarding the drug testing program?](#)

Maybe even more ironic --- Back in March of 2011, Gov. Walker made headlines for winning his battle against unions on collective bargaining.

"The new legislation, which Walker signed into law Friday (March of 2011), represents a major setback for organized labor, but the political battle over public employees and their rights to bargain is likely to continue — not only in Madison," [The Washington Post reported](#).

Despite Braun's acquittal and Gov. Walker's win against unions, challenges remain for both Braun and Walker.

Will they hit the ball out of the park?

Stay tuned.

Note: This blog has been updated.

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