

## A-Rod gets 211-game ban, 12 others get 50 games

Written by Associated Press  
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### Associated Press

NEW YORK — Alex Rodriguez was suspended through 2014 and All-Stars Nelson Cruz, Jhonny Peralta and Everth Cabrera were banned 50 games apiece Monday when Major League Baseball disciplined 13 players in a drug case — the most sweeping punishment since the Black Sox scandal nearly a century ago.

Ryan Braun's 65-game suspension last month and previous penalties bring to 18 the total number of players sanctioned for their relationship to Biogenesis of America, a closed anti-aging clinic in Florida accused of distributing banned performing-enhancing drugs.

The harshest penalty was reserved for Rodriguez, the New York Yankees slugger, a 3-time Most Valuable Player and baseball's highest-paid star. He said he will appeal his suspension, which covers 211 games, by Thursday's deadline. And since arbitrator Fredric Horowitz isn't expected to rule until November or December at the earliest, Rodriguez was free to make his season debut Monday night and play the rest of this season.

The other 12 players agreed to their 50-game penalties before they were announced, giving them a chance to return for the playoffs.

MLB ruled A-Rod's drug penalty was for "his use and possession of numerous forms of prohibited performance-enhancing substances, including testosterone and human growth hormone over the course of multiple years."

His punishment under the labor contract was "for attempting to cover up his violations of the program by engaging in a course of conduct intended to obstruct and frustrate the office of the commissioner's investigation."

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Rodriguez admitted four years ago that he used PEDs while with Texas from 2001-03 but has repeatedly denied using them since.

Sidelined since hip surgery in January, Rodriguez was due to rejoin the Yankees five hours after the suspension, in a series opener at the Chicago White Sox. He was scheduled to play third base and bat fourth.

"I am disappointed with the penalty and intend to appeal and fight this through the process. I am eager to get back on the field and be with my teammates in Chicago tonight," Rodriguez wrote in a statement.

He arrived at U.S. Cellular Field in a dark Cadillac, wearing a dark suit. A-Rod waved at fans about 100 feet away behind barricades and went into a side entrance.

The suspensions are thought to be the most at once for off-the-field conduct since 1921, when Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis banned eight Chicago White Sox players for life for throwing the 1919 World Series against Cincinnati: Shoeless Joe Jackson, Eddie Cicotte, Happy Felsh, Chick Gandil, Fred McMullen, Charles "Swede" Risberg, Buck Weaver and Claude "Lefty" Williams. They had been suspended by the team the previous year and were penalized by baseball even though they had been acquitted of criminal charges.

As for the modern-day All-Stars, Cruz, an outfielder, leads Texas in RBIs and Peralta has been a top hitter and slick-fielding shortstop for Detroit, a pair of teams in the midst of pennant races. They will be eligible to return for the postseason.

Others agreeing to 50-game bans included Yankees catcher Francisco Cervelli and outfielder Fernando Martinez; Philadelphia pitcher Antonio Bastardo; Seattle catcher Jesus Montero; New York Mets infielder Jordany Valdespin and outfielder Cesar Puello; Houston pitcher Sergio Escalona; and free-agent pitchers Fautino De Los Santos and Jordan Norberto.

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While the players' association has fought many drug penalties over the past three decades, attitudes of its membership have shifted sharply in recent years and union staff encouraged settlements in the Biogenesis probe.

"The accepted suspensions announced today are consistent with the punishments set forth in the Joint Drug Agreement and were arrived at only after hours of intense negotiations between the bargaining parties, the players and their representatives," union head Michael Weiner said. "For the player appealing, Alex Rodriguez, we agree with his decision to fight his suspension. We believe that the Commissioner has not acted appropriately ... The union, consistent with its history, will defend his rights vigorously."

Fighting a brain tumor diagnosed a year ago, Weiner spoke in a raspy voice during a conference call and said the union's executive board will consider stiffer drug penalties when players meet in December.

But the union will fight Rodriguez's discipline.

"We've never had a 200-plus (game) penalty for a player who may have used drugs," he added. "And among other things, I just think that's way out of line."

A-Rod intimated Friday that New York did not want him to return; Yankees answered Monday with a prepared statement:

"We are compelled to address certain reckless and false allegations concerning the Yankees' role in this matter," the team wrote. "The New York Yankees in no way instituted and/or assisted MLB in the direction of this investigation; or used the investigation as an attempt to avoid its responsibilities under a player contract; or did its medical staff fail to provide the appropriate standard of care to Alex Rodriguez."

Rodriguez is making \$28 million this year and his salary drops to \$25 million next year and \$21 million in 2015. If the 211-game penalty is upheld, his lost pay could range from \$30.6 million to \$32.7 million, depending on when exactly the suspension is served.

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Players have often succeeded at persuading arbitrators to overturn or shorten drug suspensions. In the era before the drug agreement, LaMarr Hoyt, Ferguson Jenkins, Pascual Perez and Willie Wilson were among those who had success in hearings; Steve Howe's lifetime ban for a seventh suspension related to drugs or alcohol was cut to 119 days.

Weiner felt a settlement prior to Horowitz's decision is possible but not likely. David Cornwell, an attorney for one of Rodriguez's three law firms, called the penalty an "unprecedented action."

"Major League Baseball has gone well beyond the authority granted to its Joint Drug Agreement and the Basic Agreement," he added, using the labor deal's formal name. "Consequently, we will appeal the discipline and pursue all legal remedies available to Alex."

Though they lose part of their salaries, stats and awards are safe for baseball players penalized in drug cases. Nothing is stripped from any record book.

That's not always the case in other sports.

Doping cost Lance Armstrong his seven Tour de France cycling titles and stripped away Olympic gold medals from sprinters Ben Johnson and Marion Jones.

Cruz attributed his action to a gastrointestinal infection, helicobacter pylori, and said he had lost 40 pounds following the 2011 season.

"I made an error in judgment that I deeply regret and I accept full responsibility for that error," he wrote in a statement. "I should have handled the situation differently, and my illness was no excuse."

Peralta can rejoin Detroit for a season-ending 3-game series at Miami — not far from the former

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office of Biogenesis.

In a statement released by the Tigers, Peralta revealed in “spring of 2012, I made a terrible mistake that I deeply regret.” Peralta apologized to his teammates and “the great fans in Detroit,” saying he knows he let “many good people down.”

MLB’s investigation began last year after San Francisco outfielder and All-Star game MVP Melky Cabrera tested positive for elevated testosterone, as did Oakland pitcher Bartolo Colon and San Diego catcher Yasmani Grandal. The probe escalated in January when the Miami New Times published documents obtained from former Biogenesis associate Porter Fisher that linked several players to Biogenesis.

MLB announced Melky Cabrera, Colon and Grandal will not receive additional discipline and it found no violations for Washington pitcher Gio Gonzalez and Baltimore infielder Danny Valencia, both linked to Biogenesis in media reports.

In June, baseball struck a deal for Biogenesis founder Tony Bosch to cooperate. After holding investigatory interviews with the players, MLB presented evidence to the players’ union along with its intended penalties, starting the final round of negotiations.

“Those players who have violated the program have created scrutiny for the vast majority of our players, who play the game the right way,” baseball Commissioner Bud Selig said. “We continue to attack this issue on every front — from science and research, to education and awareness, to fact-finding and investigative skills.”

### **Rodriguez to reporters: ‘fighting for my life’**

CHICAGO — Rodriguez says he’s fighting for his life.

The embattled Yankees’ slugger did not deny using performance enhancing drugs on Monday

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in a news conference after MLB suspended him through the 2014 season. He said he will talk about whether he used PEDs at another time, when he is free to speak his mind.

He did, however, dig in for a battle, saying no one else will defend him unless he stands up for himself.

“There’s nothing about it that’s been easy,” Rodriguez said. “All of it has been challenging. I’m sure there’s been mistakes made along the way. We’re here now. I’m a human being. I’ve had two hip surgeries. I’ve had two knee surgeries. I’m fighting for my life.”

Prior to his first game since last Oct. 18, Rodriguez signed autographs and drew a crowd — of both fans and photographers.

Rodriguez said “a lot” went into his decision to appeal his case but added “I’m not going to get into any of that today.

“What we’ve always fought for was for the process and I think we have that and at some point we’ll sit in front of an arbiter and give our case. And that’s as much as I feel comfortable telling you right now.”

Asked if he denies using PEDs, Rodriguez replied, “Like I said, we’ll have a forum to discuss all of that and we’ll talk about it then.”

If he hasn’t used PEDs since then, why not say it?

“There’s a lot of things that have been thrown to the wall and I think when the time is right, there will be an opportunity to do all of that,” he replied. “I don’t think that time is right now. And I don’t want to interfere or get in the way of anything that — with the process.”

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On Friday, Rodriguez hinted that the Yankees did not want him back and were trying to avoid paying him the \$94.5 million they still owe him through 2017.

Weiner said those comments were probably out of frustration and that Rodriguez would probably agree they were “counterproductive.”

Weiner added he and Rodriguez have talked since then — but not about those comments.

“But I would guess that all things considered and having thought about it a little bit, he’s probably not very happy with those comments,” Weiner added.

Rodriguez, meanwhile, brushed off a question about his comment on Friday, saying “Today is another day and I’m focused on what my job is and my responsibilities to the New York Yankees and to the fan base of New York.”

He thanked the fans, media, people from the Dominican Republic and Hispanics “all over the world” for the support.

Whether he has the Yankees’ support is another issue.