

Claire Hoy ? Other sports should do likewise

As the old saw goes, it's a funny old world. The big news story last week, of course, was that Major League Baseball suspended 13 players ? some of the biggest stars in the game ? for 50 games for using drugs from the now-defunct Biogeneses Clinic.

In addition, they nailed New York Yankees star Alex Rodriguez for the 50 games left in this season plus the entire season next year, claiming that he not only used the stuff ? after having solemnly declared he didn't ? but got others to use it too and, when MLB got onto it, tried to interfere with their investigation.

Rodriguez, unlike the other 12, has appealed ? which anybody is entitled to do, regardless of how big a jerk he really is ? and as such gets to play until his appeal is resolved, likely after the season ends.

As a life-long baseball fan ? more specifically a Yankees fan ? my first instinct was to applaud MLB Commissioner Bud Selig for taking action against the cheaters. About time.

Indeed, for years baseball was legitimately criticized for not doing anything about the drug cheaters. But with these suspensions and several others before them, Selig and Company are serious about cleaning up the game.

Odd though, that many of the same people who dumped on baseball for turning a blind eye now argue that last week's suspensions are a black day for baseball. One letter writer to The Globe and Mail complained about Rodriguez getting a ?slap on the wrist.?

Some slap. Yes, he's made a lot of money and is still owed a lot in his contract, but if he ultimately serves his penalty he'll lose something like \$30 million, hardly a slap, even for a rich guy like A-Rod.

But surely taking action against cheaters is a good thing for baseball, not a bad thing. How can people on the one hand criticize them for doing nothing, then dump on them when they finally do something? Beats me.

And another thing, what are the other major sports doing about drug cheats? you may wonder. The answer: next to nothing. And why isn't the media and the public on their case?

Do you really believe that some NHL players aren't juiced up? And the NBA and NFL? Please? Can anybody really believe that some 400-pound linemen can run 50 yards in just a few seconds without artificial help? Come on.

So while the media loves to beat up on baseball, they collectively turn a blind eye to hockey, basketball and football, all of which are doing nothing, or at best, very little, to combat drug use in their sports.

In its editorial, the Globe and Mail took baseball to task, using the Olympic movement as the yardstick for first-time offenders.

Okay. But being booted out of the Olympics doesn't cost anybody \$30 million. And if you want to make comparisons with other sports, why not compare professional sports? You can argue none of them are as tough as they should be, but the fact is, baseball comes out miles ahead of the others.

Even the Toronto Star ? in a rare moment of editorial clarity ? commended the suspensions as ?good news for anybody who likes clean ball. This is the most sweeping action yet against cheaters.?

The Star goes on to say, quite reasonably, that some think it should be more severe, adding ?It's a debate well worth pursuing.? Yes, it is.

My favorite headline on the issue appeared over Star baseball columnist Richard Griffin's column. He wrote there is little sympathy in the Toronto clubhouse for A-Rod and the dirty dozen, in a column headed: ?Jays want no truck with cheats.?

That would be the same Jays who were delighted earlier this year to welcome convicted drug cheat Melky Cabrera to their team, despite the 50-game suspension he served last year for being a drug cheater. Geez.

This corner is not only cheering the baseball suspensions, but looking forward to the other professional sports organizations doing the same thing.

No league is perfect, but at least MLB is trying. Why don't people expect the NHL, NFL and NBA to make the same effort?

Beats me

