

**ELECTIVE PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT SURGERY<sup>1</sup> FOR ATHLETES:  
SHOULD IT BE RESISTED? SPORT HISTORY REVEALS THAT ATHLETES WILL  
USE ANY MEANS POSSIBLE TO GET AN EDGE<sup>2</sup>. [...]**

Genetic engineering is advancing upon us and will create massive ethical complications in the performance enhancement debate. Meanwhile another performance enhancing practice, generally neglected as part of the discussion, has been around for over [a] decade with new forms of it  
5 being rapidly advanced: elective performance enhancement surgery.

Surgical procedures are being employed to enhance general human performance in memory, concentration, vision, strength; it is naïve to ignore these advances in sports competition. Ethical considerations of these procedures should be pursued.

10 The most common form of surgical performance enhancement is LASIK<sup>3</sup> eye surgery. Its results have been very convenient for professional baseball players or golfers who no longer need to wear glasses or contacts; some have even claimed it has made them more effective players. The Tommy John<sup>4</sup> surgery on the arm [...] has been  
15 done on many professional baseball pitchers with over 90% returning to pre-injury form. As this procedure has been refined it has also become common knowledge that some pitchers are actually increasing their pitching speed after the surgery. [...]

The uncritical acceptance of this rather benign<sup>5</sup> [...] surgery, along  
20 with the advances in surgical techniques [...] and the lessening of recovery times opens the door to the possibility of athletes having elective surgeries to enhance their senses or to become bigger, stronger, or faster. Someone will soon choose to have advanced surgery to enhance  
25 performance, such as electively having the Tommy John surgery with the hope of throwing a baseball harder afterwards. The possibilities of elective surgery seem endless. [...]

Picture this scenario: You are a twenty-seven-year-old professional minor league athlete or high-level amateur. You have been knocking on the door to become a true professional in your sport and to make a very  
30 substantial income. Your options are beginning to run out and the end of your professional dreams is nearing.

You ask management for an explanation. They tell you they like your mental approach to your sport, it's just that you lack a little ability to

35 really become successful. If you were a baseball pitcher and threw several  
miles an hour more there would be a place for you on a big league  
poster<sup>6</sup>. [...] You are shattered. You've already overachieved.

What options are left now? What about surgery on a tendon<sup>7</sup> or a  
ligament<sup>8</sup> to increase driving distance or foot speed? What about optional  
Tommy John surgery to increase pitch speed?

40 These surgeries have little risk and there would actually be the chance  
of coming out of it in a year or two a faster runner or with a stronger than  
ever arm. [...] Knowing the mentality of doing anything to "make it",  
athletes will obviously consider this type of surgery to enhance  
performance to achieve the highest levels possible. This is particularly  
45 true as the financial incentives skyrocket<sup>9</sup> [...].

It is self-evident that surgical practices which enhance the athlete  
beyond what is considered to be normal could certainly give the  
surgically enhanced athlete a competitive advantage.

Surgery has historically been seen as means to correct or heal for  
50 therapeutic reasons. But as cosmetic operations have become acceptable as  
a non-therapeutic means of surgery, so it seems that what is now  
beginning among athletes is enhancement surgery for non-therapeutic  
means. And it has become an acceptable practice without much critical  
thought or established policy. The Professional Golfers' Association  
55 allows for enhanced eye surgery, but there could be great controversy if  
they allow a surgically enhanced swing where a golfer's drive is  
lengthened by fifty yards. The possibilities seem endless.

*Source:*

Mark Hamilton: Elective Performance Enhancement Surgery For Athletes: Should It Be Resisted? In: Acta Univ. Palacki. Olomuc., Gymn. 2006, vol. 36, no. 2.

**Annotations:**

- 1 performance enhancement surgery – leistungssteigernde OP
- 2 to get an edge – sich einen Vorteil verschaffen
- 3 LASIK – eine Laser-Korrekturoperation am Auge
- 4 Tommy John – ein Werfer, an dessen Ellenbogen ein gerissenes Band durch eine Sehne ersetzt wurde
- 5 benign – gutartig, hier: harmlos
- 6 big league poster – Spielerliste eines Profiteams
- 7 tendon – Sehne
- 8 ligament – Band
- 9 to skyrocket – steil ansteigen