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# Helton defends NASCAR's current drug-testing policy

By Mike Harris, The Associated Press  
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AVONDALE, Ariz. -- The call earlier this week for regular random drug testing by some of NASCAR's biggest stars apparently will not change the sanctioning organization's current policy of testing only for "reasonable suspicion."

But NASCAR president Mike Helton said the reaction by the drivers to the published report that former Truck and Nationwide driver **Aaron Fike** used heroin the same day he drove in some races is a positive sign for the stock-car sport.

Referring to the story in the April 21 edition of *ESPN The Magazine*, Helton said, "When you have a headline like that and the other athletes rare up on it and react like they did, that's a positive thing.

"The [NASCAR] community polices the community," Helton added in an interview with *The Associated Press*. "The positiveness of all the drivers talking and everything, I think, echoes the responsibility that exists in this sport to avoid all that and to police all that. That's why we think that the reasonable suspicion policy works as an umbrella from a NASCAR perspective."

Helton said he does not know of any policy that can guarantee that no driver will ever race while under the influence of some substance any more than anyone could guarantee that an athlete in another sport will not abuse something on game day.

"The other part though is the fact that when we do find a situation and we do authenticate the abuse of a substance, it is a severe reaction," Helton said. "It's not just a couple of weeks off, it's a very severe, career-changing reaction from us that I think speaks loudly."

Helton added the substance-abuse policy that NASCAR has had in place for more than two decades has worked very well, with the help of the teams and the drivers.

"There are a lot of random drug testing policies or substance-abuse policies in our sport and they come through the car owners," he said. "We're different than other sports where we have multiple layers of independence. That's why we feel like the reasonable suspicion element that NASCAR implements has served its purpose and works well.

"But we know of car owners that have random testing programs with their employees. So those elements are already there. ... There's a lot of ways to attack this animal and a lot of ways to do it, but the shared responsibility between the competitors, the car owners and NASCAR, I think, works."

## Find this article at:

<http://www.nascar.com/2008/news/headlines/cup/04/13/mhelton.defends.drug.policy.ap/index.html>

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