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Former truck racer Fike admits using heroin on race days

By Ryan McGee
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Suspended NASCAR driver [Aaron Fike](#) now admits that he not only secretly struggled with drug addiction for years but also shot up heroin on some race days.

In his first in-depth interview since being arrested for heroin possession last summer, the 25-year-old said he had been using heroin for eight months and suffered from a dependency on painkillers for six years before that. In the weeks prior to his arrest, his once-a-week experiment with heroin had become a daily routine, including the days he was competing in the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series.

NASCAR officials, when informed of Fike's admission, said the league has kept an eye on the more proactive random drug testing policies recently ramped up by the "Big Four" major league sports but point to the list of recent suspensions as proof that the current policy is working.

"No system is perfect," said Jim Hunter, NASCAR vice president of corporate communications. "Our current policy has served us extremely well. We do have discussions from time to time regarding possible alternatives, so I wouldn't rule those out. But I think what our policy has allowed us to do up to this certain point in time, it has served us well."

Fike said he hopes that his admissions will force NASCAR officials to rethink their current drug testing policy.

"I just want people to know that I am still alive," Fike told ESPN The Magazine from his hometown of Galesburg, Ill. "And I want to make sure some changes get made."

On July 7, 2007, Fike and fiancée Cassandra Davidson were arrested in the parking lot of Kings Island amusement park outside of Cincinnati. Security guards knocked on the window of Fike's Toyota SUV after realizing that a black sheet was preventing anyone from seeing into the back seat. At first the couple attempted to flee, but a search of the vehicle turned up a haul of drug paraphernalia, including a 100-count box of syringes, bloody napkins and black tar heroin.

"It was pretty obvious what we were doing," Fike admitted. "So when they tapped on the window I tried to get the hell out of there. Now I know that being arrested saved both of our lives."

Only seven days earlier Fike had posted a career-best fifth-place finish in the O'Reilly 200 at the .75-mile Memphis Motorsports Park. The run boosted the rookie of the year favorite to eighth in the NCTS championship standings. He said he used heroin earlier that day.

"I had no idea," said Tom DeLoach, co-owner and general manager of Red Horse Racing, who fielded Fike's No. 1 Toyota Tundra. "None of us did. Not those of us that worked beside him every weekend or, to the best of my knowledge, any of the people that we race against every weekend."

Fike said he believes his ability to race while under the influence of illegal drugs is proof that NASCAR's longtime "reasonable suspicion" drug policy doesn't work. Since 2000, seven NASCAR drivers have been suspended indefinitely for substance abuse problems, four after either failing or missing tests administered under reasonable suspicion. The other three, including Fike, were caught by police. Fike believes that such a reactive policy allowed him, and others, to race when they shouldn't have.

"I think it was easier to [enforce] it that way a long time ago," he said. "But I was able to race with it in my system, so it didn't work with me."

Fike has returned to USAC's Midget series, where he is tested upon arrival at the track. He is currently serving a two-year probation and continues rehabilitation and counseling. Later this month he will launch [www.onthewinningtrack.com](#) as part of his court-agreed youth drug education program. He has also talked briefly with NASCAR officials about beginning the arduous reinstatement process, but realizes that his once-promising stock car career may be over.

"It certainly wasn't my goal when I started racing," he said when asked about becoming the possible catalyst for a drug policy change. "But if the problems I have had can end up saving some lives and opening the eyes of the people that run racing, then that's not all bad."

Ryan McGee, a senior writer for ESPN The Magazine, is the author of "ESPN Ultimate NASCAR: 100 Defining Moments in Stock Car

Racing History." He can be reached at mcgeespn@yahoo.com.

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