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BASEBALL

Suspended Phillies reliever J.C. Romero suing supplement makers over positive steroid test

BY [MICHAEL O'KEEFFE](#) AND [NATHANIEL VINTON](#) / DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITERS

MONDAY, APRIL 27, 2009, 1:38 PM

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Suspended [Phillies](#) reliever [J.C. Romero](#) is suing the makers and distributors of nutritional supplements that he says are responsible for his positive steroid test last August.

The 27-page lawsuit, filed Monday in [New Jersey Superior Court](#) in Camden County, blames the product 6-OXO Extreme for traces of androstenedione found in the pitcher's urine on Aug. 26, 2008.

The numerous counts in the lawsuit include negligence, intentional misrepresentation and consumer fraud. The four defendants named are GNC, [Vitamin Shoppe](#), Ergopharm and [Proviant Technologies](#).

The latter two companies are owned and operated by [Patrick Arnold](#), an [Illinois](#)-based chemist who did time in federal prison for his role in the [BALCO](#) affair. Arnold did not immediately have a comment on the lawsuit.

"I purchased an over-the-counter supplement that I was told and believed would not cause me to test positive," Romero said in a statement released by his legal team Monday. "These events

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have hurt me deeply and placed a cloud over my career, accomplishments and family. It is my hope that I can finally start to put this event behind me and protect the interests of others who rely on manufacturers and retailers to be honest about their products."

Romero tested positive for androstenedione on Aug. 26, 2008, just six weeks before he helped win two games to lead the Phillies to a World Series championship, but his 50-game ban was not made public until January of this year.

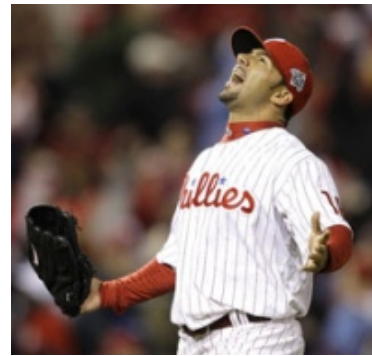
In September, even before the World Series, Romero was notified of the positive test and demanded an arbitration hearing. At the end of that month, the baseball players' union sent the product he used to a [Tennessee](#) laboratory that reported back on Oct. 3 that the product was indeed contaminated.

That doesn't surprise [Gary Wadler](#), a [New York](#) internist affiliated with the [World Anti-Doping Agency](#) who said the Romero situation highlighted a well-known problem with the under-regulated supplement industry.

"We have made it clear that athletes are at great risk when they take supplements," Wadler said. "They have little to gain and a lot to lose. The cost-benefit ratio is costly. Supplements do little for you. You're playing Russian roulette with supplements."

[Major League Baseball](#) announced the suspension in January. Banned for the first 50 games of the season, Romero has been allowed to work out with the Phillies in spring training and in pregame practices, but is not being paid.

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Phillies reliever J.C. Romero

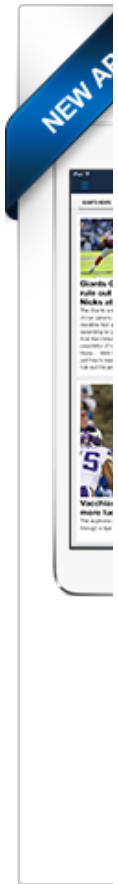


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