**[U.S. Athletes Are Drug Tested Constantly](http://www.athleticbusiness.com/drugs-alcohol/u-s-athletes-are-drug-tested-constantly.html)**

by Christine Brennan

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One of the best-kept secrets in sports is the way U.S. Olympic athletes such as Michael Phelps allow their privacy to be invaded on a regular basis for the honor of representing their nation at the Olympic Games.

There are the knocks on the door, sometimes as early as 6 a.m., requesting urine and blood samples on the spot, Phelps told a congressional hearing Tuesday. To refuse -- to know it's the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency and to not answer the door, or to tell them to go away -- is to risk a four-year suspension.

You read that right. Phelps willingly -- even happily -- lived this way for 16 years, and he's not alone. Katie Ledecky does it. Simone Biles, too. Fencers. Figure skaters. Archers. Skiers. They all do.

This is how U.S. Olympians -- and those Americans simply trying to become Olympians -- live their lives to try to prove to the world they are not cheating. They know that any day, a knock or a call could come, altering their plans for hours as they run through the most rigorous of drug testing paces.

Phelps proudly told the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations that he was tested 13 times in the six months before last summer's Rio Games. Compare and contrast that with this eye-popping statistic from a World Anti-Doping Agency report quoted by USADA CEO Travis Tygart at the hearing:

In the 10 sports with the worst history of doping -- including swimming, track and field, wrestling and weightlifting -- 1,913 athletes from around the world who competed in Rio had no record of being tested even once in 2016.

In all, 4,125 of the 11,470 total athletes in Rio were not tested before those Olympics.

This is astounding information that should trouble everyone involved with the Olympics: the International Olympic Committee, NBC, Olympic sponsors, even the poor souls who bought tickets in Rio on the quaint notion that they could trust what they were watching.

I'm not sure why I just mentioned the IOC, because we already know it doesn't care about the crumbling credibility of its Games, considering it allowed Russia to send two-thirds of its athletes to Rio while knowing full well that it had engaged in the worst state-sponsored doping since the days of East Germany.

Think about those numbers for a moment. Phelps certainly has.

"I don't think I've ever in international competition felt it's clean," he said. "In U.S. competition, I do feel it's clean."

It's not just Phelps and the Americans. It's athletes from nations like Germany, Japan and England, all of whom are taking drug testing more seriously today than they ever have.

Does this mean these nations have no cheaters? Of course not. Exhibit A from the good ol' US of A: Lance Armstrong and Marion Jones, the worst his-and-her drug cheats in Olympic history.

We of course have no idea who is cheating and who is not. But if you're going to trust anyone in international sports, trust the athletes who are constantly being tested. They're your best bet.

For the first time in public, 31-year-old Phelps -- who won 28 medals at five Olympic Games and was drug tested a total of 167 times by USADA in his career -- spoke in detail about what was required of him for drug testing.

"You're filling out paperwork quarterly, stacks of paper," he said. "There are forms to fill out every single day if my whereabouts change. Now I go to the (USADA) app: What plane I'm on, what hotel I'm in, what room. That's what I've gone through for the past 15-16 years."

Phelps said that while training in Colorado Springs, he was awakened by a USADA tester at 6:05 on a morning he didn't need to get up early to work out. He welcomed the tester in and provided the samples that were needed. Of course he did.

"Those are the things that we're doing as athletes to make sure the sport's clean," Phelps said. "I wish I could say that about everyone else."