

THE GREAT STEROID MYTH!

By Dr. Greg Shepard

We at Bigger Faster Stronger are unalterably opposed to anabolic steroid use by any athlete, bodybuilder, or competitive lifter. We applaud the stand taken by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) at the Seoul Olympic games. Stripping the Gold Medal from Track and Field's greatest star, Ben Johnson, and others demonstrates not only the earnestness of the IOC but also the sophistication of present drug testing. The IOC has banned "Performances Enhancing Drugs," which refers to anabolic steroids.

Anabolic Steroids should be banned because they are downright dangerous. In fact, there are about 70 health reasons not to take Steroids. These reasons should be enough to scare any clear-thinking individual to death: Severe heart and liver problems are a real possibility. Sexual dysfunction in both males and females is prevalent. Acne, which can lead to facial scarring, seems to be minor when compared to life-threatening Steroid complications. "Roid Rages" are a not-so-cute way of describing mood changes which have led to violence and even murder. Anabolic Steroids should be banned primarily because they present a very real danger to one's health; and secondarily, because of the so-called illegal advantage Steroids are supposed to give in competition.

I believe that calling Steroids "performance enhancing" is, for many athletes and sports, incorrect. Steroids are perhaps even debilitating to performance. However, everyone from athletes, to doctors, to the general public has automatically assumed that Steroids create a tremendous advantage. That's the great Steroid myth.

Many people simply shrug and say, "You can't compete without them." This is dangerous thinking. This creates an urge in the average person to take them because nobody tests an average person. In the past it has created an urge for the great athlete to find a way to mask or conceal his or her Steroid use. Perhaps the Ben Johnson scenario will discourage some, but you can bet some very smart people are in a lab somewhere right now trying to figure out a way to beat the new sophisticated tests used in Seoul.

Ten to fifteen years ago doctors would say that Steroids don't help strength or size. Bodybuilders and competitive lifters knew differently. As a result, the scientific community and doctors were virtually ignored. It was a mistake on both sides. But now the pendulum has swung too far the other way. Doctors, physiologists, and scientists take great care in agreeing that Steroids give a great advantage. Many Steroid users and potential users may have more faith in scientific statements, but these statements may also put more fuel on the Steroid fire. Let's bring the pendulum back to the balanced center and analyze things more closely. Steroids will help in some areas but not markedly in other areas. For example, many

women bodybuilders take steroids, in spite of extreme dangers. Anabolic Steroids contain testosterone, or the male growth hormone, and thus a woman starts taking on male characteristics—increased body hair, lowering of the voice, increased size of the sexual organ, decreased body fat, and, of course, manly-type muscles. Obviously, Steroids can help a woman in bodybuilding competition. For the sake of limited fame and winning, some women accept the risk. However, would steroids help a woman be a better golfer? How about a better volleyball player, a 3,000-meter runner, or a high jumper? Would Steroids make a difference in a tennis, baseball, hockey, or basketball player?

I will expose the Great Steroid Myth.

Q - What happens when a person begins taking Steroids?

A - Usually, an immediate jump can be seen in one's lifts, and one can also expect an increase in body weight. The increased strength gain is due in part to the increased body weight and increased muscular size. There is also, in many, a placebo effect. If you expect to be stronger, you will be stronger. A more intensive workout usually takes place, and perhaps a quicker recovery.

Now before you run right out and juice up on some "roids," read on and discover the Great Steroid Myth.

Q - What happens after several weeks?

A - All these marvelous improvements stop; and when dosages are stopped, the improvements then begin to reverse themselves. Then depression hits and performance decreases. Many cannot tolerate this situation so the Steroid use begins anew; but alas, the effects are not as dramatic. Desperate to continue these dramatic improvements, the obvious solution is to increase the dosages. Doesn't this sound like other harmful, addictive drugs? Steroid users normally start out with 10 to 20 milligrams per day. This can escalate to 500 milligrams per day, with the user spending hundreds of dollars per month. The user is hooked and the myth is alive.

Q - Can the positive effects of Steroids be gained naturally?

A - Yes—but a qualified 'yes'. You may have to really eat nutritionally sound foods, and plenty of them. You may have to mentally gear yourself to have intensive workouts and really plan them intelligently. You may have to study the technique of lifting and the methodology of correct training principles with more diligence, but you will get bigger and stronger. I found out some amazing truths during my BFS Clinics. When an athlete has confidence in his technique, and the adrenalin starts to flow because his teammates are loudly yelling encouragement, he will lift more than ever before. It is very common to see 50-pound jumps in the Power Clean, 20-pound jumps in the Bench, and 100-pound jumps in the Dead Lift and Squat. One

clinic day can be like a year of Steroids

I believe that much of the intensity that is attributed too Steroids in psychological. Most users work out by themselves and their Steroid is their pal, their teammate, and their coach. When athletes work out at school with their real teammates and with an enthusiastic coach, one of the very few positives associated with steroid use is virtually eliminated.

Q - *What is the bottom line?*

A - One bottom line is winning, but another is learning positive things about yourself that will help you be happy and successful throughout life. In bodybuilding, winning is derived from muscular size, symmetry, vascularity, and a posing routine. Most bodybuilders agree that Steroids give them an edge in winning.

In powerlifting, winning is derived on the demonstration of pure strength. There is very little technique to be learned, especially when you compare it to the skill required in shooting a jump shot accurately and correctly. Many powerlifters insist that Steroids are essential to winning. However, Bigger Faster Stronger does not concern itself with bodybuilders or powerlifters. We are dedicated to helping athletes succeed. We concentrate on sports like football, wrestling, basketball, baseball, track and field, etc.

Q - *What does it take to win in these sports?*

A - It's complicated. It takes many things, and for this reason Steroid use becomes of very minimal importance in winning and may actually decrease the chance of winning!

To win in football takes much more than size and strength. For example, flexibility is very important. An athlete should work on agility, speed, and plyometrics. These all interact together to make an athlete faster and more explosive.

Powerlifters don't stretch, sprint, jump, or do agilities. All they have to do is slowly move a heavy weight a couple of feet.

Steroids do not make an athlete more flexible or more agile. Nor do they make a Quarterback throw more accurately or a Linebacker read his keys more intelligently.

Steroids may make an athlete less confident in a crucial situation, or even less effective. When it is fourth and one, I believe a non-user who has gotten his gains by his own hard work will perform better. In the back of a user's mind, a thought may flash for an instant: "Where's my pill, my crutch, to help me?" If it does, the user becomes a loser.

There is also the constant worry about being tested. The user must have nightmares about what to take to mask his use. How to flush them out of the system. Will it work? When should I stop? And if I stop will I be able to handle the effects of losing some strength?

You see, even the water-soluble Steroids must be eliminated weeks before a sophisticated test. The stress of focusing on "Will I get caught?" has to be detrimental. An athlete should be concentrating on strategy and mentally preparing to win.

Q - *Just how strong do you need to be?*

A - Can anyone look me in the eye and tell me that a 450-pound Bench Presser is going to be an inferior football player to a guy who Benches 550 pounds? Obviously, that's ridiculous. You must be strong, but unlike powerlifting there is a point of diminishing return.

For example, I say that when a college or pro lineman or a thrower in track can Squat 600, Power Clean 350, and Bench 400, he has arrived in the strength category. To take Steroids just to push strength levels beyond those numbers is ludicrous. Most men who have the talent to play at that level have the ability to reach the above numbers naturally.

The strength level to be a great Quarterback, Receiver, basketball player, or baseball player is obviously less. It is sheer stupidity for these kinds of athletes to take Steroids. These athletes can easily attain productive strength levels naturally, and do it rather quickly.

My last point is that Anabolic Steroids do help increase muscle size, but tendon and ligament strength is affected differently and at a different rate. Thus, it has been reported that athletes who take Steroids are more susceptible to injury, especially in joint areas.

Most athletes, the IOC, the scientific community, the media, and the general public believe that Steroids are performance enhancing. That is a myth—*The Great Steroid Myth*. The truth is that for most sports, the sports played in our high schools and colleges, Anabolic Steroids are inhibitors to winning. Great athletes like Barry Sanders, Tommy Hodson, Todd Collins, and Chad Hennings are not on Steroids. Taking Steroids decreases your chances of winning while creating enormous potential health problems.

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