

# IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF

## EDITOR'S COMMENTS

We at Bigger Faster Stronger are unalterably opposed to anabolic steroid use by any athlete, bodybuilder or competitive lifter. 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 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 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**.

Last year I wrote about this subject in several publications. I have since come up with 13 facts or statements which support my claim.

**Steroids are not performance enhancing. Taking steroids decreases your chances of winning** while creating enormous potential health problems at the same time.

Let us examine these 13 facts and statements as we read the true story of Eric Dickey:

### **I. Bodybuilders, Powerlifters and Athletes From Main Stream Sports are Not the Same:**

Bodybuilders don't run, jump or score goals. Powerlifters are interested in only three things: the bench, squat, and dead lift. Training programs for athletes, bodybuilders and powerlifters are as different as night and day. Eric's first contact with steroids was through older bodybuilders. Why would any athlete take advice from someone who stands and flexes?

## ERIC DICKEY: TRAGIC / HAPPY

Story By Dr. Greg Shepard

The story of Eric Dickey is both tragic and happy. It is his true story of how he first became involved in steroids culminating in a bittersweet ending three years later. Every Coach and athlete should read Eric's story. My comments on the side of Eric's story reflect the BFS position relating to our published article on the "Great Steroid Myth".

"I got too competitive," began Eric just after it happened. "When I went to Spring football at the University of Idaho during my Senior year of high school, I was in awe. I saw how big those guys were. I was only 6-3 1/2 and weighed 220 pounds. My forty was 5.0 and I only Bench 300 pounds. I didn't do Power Cleans. Everyone expected me to get better and better. I just got caught up into the competitiveness of the whole situation. The pressure to be #1 got too great. Everyone's expectations were far greater than mine."

Eric confessed that he was impatient. He saw the record board in the University of Idaho Weight room. The top bench was 500 pounds. Eric saw many guys on the team weigh between 250 and 270 pounds. He started talking about steroids with another kid that he'd met on his recruiting trip. When he came back home to his home town of Snohomish, Washington, Eric began lifting with renewed enthusiasm at the high school and finished out his senior year. "I wasn't increasing that much," explained Eric. "I did not want to get fat. If I was going to get bigger, it had to be muscle."

Halfway through the summer, Eric started talking to people, especially older body builders. Then, he went looking for them. Eric went to Seattle which was only about 30 miles from Snohomish. "I didn't want anyone to know," Eric confided.

At a Seattle gym, Eric bought his first steroids from a stranger who was a friend of a friend of a friend. Eric read an article that was against steroids but he learned from it what to take and how much to take. Eric began an 8-week cycle of steroid injectables and pills. (Eric's beginning dosages were 15-30 milligrams per day plus the injectable testosterone) That stranger gave Eric his first shot. Eric remembered, "I was scared and shaking but from then on I shot myself."

Eric never shared a needle but Eric revealed that getting his hypodermic needles were worse than getting the steroids themselves. He went to pharmacies three towns away. "I didn't want to answer any questions or be recognized."

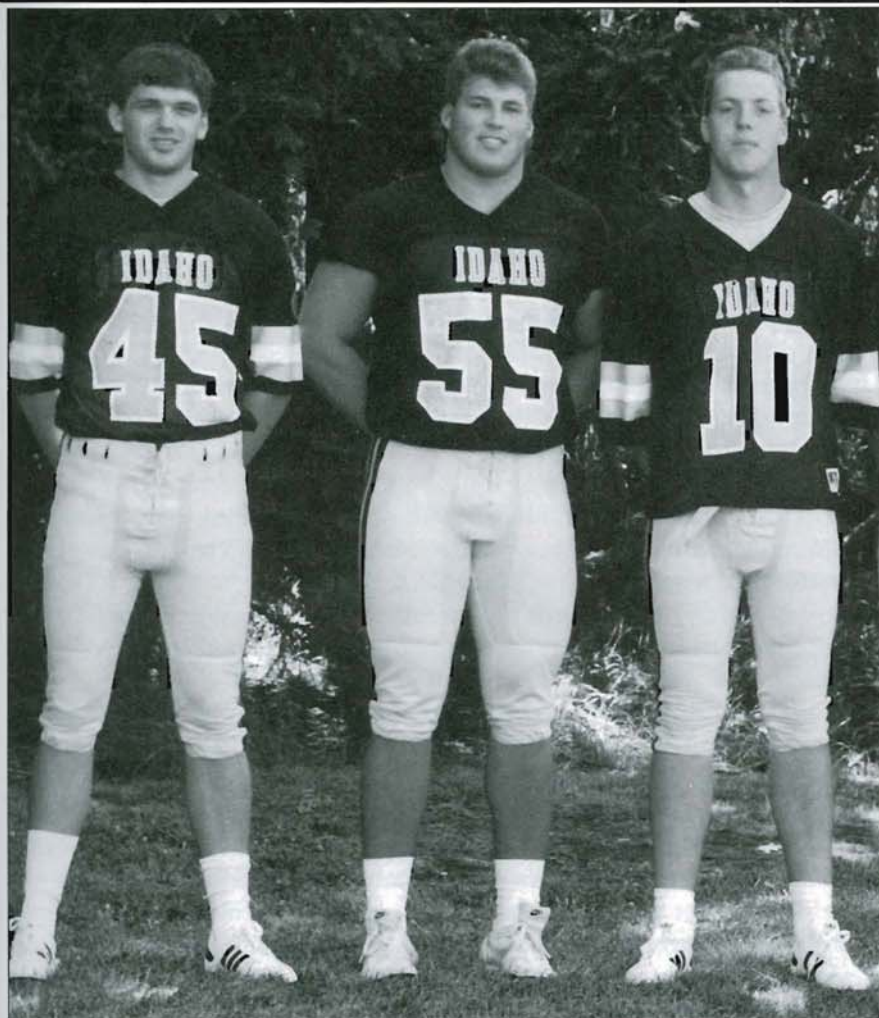
During this time, Eric worked on flexibility, sprinting, plyometrics and had intense weight training sessions. Eric stated "I found I could stay in the weight room longer. My coaches didn't say much because they didn't really see me but my friends started talking and asking questions."

Eric's mother and father didn't know anything about the steroids or even suspect. "My dad was counting calories, fixing protein shakes and giving me amino acids," disclosed Eric somewhat embarrassed. "He pushed me to eat more but I wanted to stay lean."

Eric's bench jumped up to 355 and he added 30 pounds of bodyweight. He now weighed 250 pounds as a freshman. Eric was red-shirted that first year but he was elevated to the second team. "All of a sudden I'm not a scout team player anymore."



# THE GREAT STEROID MYTH



*Eric Dickey #55 Flanked by Two Idaho Teammates*

After Christmas, Eric got quite a bit of publicity, but his weight dropped down to 235 pounds and he wasn't lifting that much. Eric started worrying about his bench. Eric was embarrassed because his capacity was down.

It was inevitable. Eric began another steroid cycle and his bench soared to 375 pounds. "I thought the bench press was the most important lift. It's what everyone talked about," explained Eric.

"I dug a hole and I wasn't sure how to get out," said Eric in an alarmed tone. "They expected me to improve even more. It became an addiction. I became real paranoid. What would happen if I wasn't on the juice. I didn't have enough confidence in my ability."

"I knew three positions during Spring ball my next year. I figured that if anyone of those three guys gets hurt, I'm a starter. Now I'm really into getting bigger. My steroids are getting more sophisticated. I was a bouncer for a while even though I was underage. I liked this job. I was aggressive and became kind of mean."

"I had to answer a lot of questions at pharmacies. I got a lecture one time at a pharmacy and got mad. I lost control. At that point, I knew I was in trouble. I'm basically a very gentle person. However, my workouts became even more intense."

*continued on next page*

## EDITOR'S COMMENTS

### II. Steroids = Roller Coaster Ride:

Eric was very typical. He had a great high and a great rush of quick strength, because of the increased testosterone intake. However, it sends a message to the brain which tells the body to stop producing its own testosterone. Therefore, when Eric stopped taking his steroids, he crashed down hard. It's not unlike other kinds of drugs. So Eric was way up on his bench one day and way down the next. When he was down on strength, Eric became depressed. This is right out of the textbook.

### III. Steroids Build up Tolerances - 20 milligrams Can Escalate to 500 milligrams:

Towards the end, Eric by his own admission was getting crazy and escalating his dosage. Again, this is not unlike addictions of other kinds.

### IV. Super Great Gains Can Be Made With Intelligence, Intensity and Persistence:

When Eric was on the juice, he was intense but when he was off steroids, he didn't train. He was depressed and embarrassed because his bench press was down. One season he even used steroids instead of training to keep his strength up. Eric was neither intelligent or persistent and his intensity was sporadic. Eric knows this now and he hopes you don't make the same mistake.

### V. Uncontrolled Aggressiveness is BAD!

Eric is basically a gentle person but he became a bouncer and enjoyed the physical confrontations associated with this line of work. But you say, isn't that good for football? Well, yes, but up to a point. You must have a controlled psych. When you're out of control, you make mistakes or you can get thrown out of the game. This obviously contributes to losing, not winning. Hey, if I've spent hundreds of hours training with great natural intensity and then someone tries to take my position from me or to take my win from me, you're going to be in for one heck of a fight. I don't need steroids for aggressiveness. I paid my dues.



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### VI. Intensity Can Be Made Awesome By Teammates and Coaches.

### VII. Fast Workout Recovery Can Be Made by Intelligent Variation and Selection of Exercises:

Eric unfortunately did not have a Strength Coach and he probably got a lot of misinformation.

### VIII. The Stress of Getting Caught:

Eric had to sneak and hide his steroid abuse. He would go miles away from his home to get his steroids and needles. He certainly didn't want his parents to know. At the time of our interview, Eric still had not talked to his high school football coach. The stress was heavy enough to cause an ulcer.

Upper Limit athletes don't sneak and hide. Sneaking around is just a bad precedent to set for yourself.

### IX. Steroids Don't help Agility, Flexibility or Technique, etc:

Training to reach your potential as an athlete is very complex. It involves many different areas. Steroid users many times place too much importance on size and strength and forget about many other areas that are necessary in winning.

### X. Steroids are a Crutch Theory:

If an athlete looks to steroids to help him get through a crucial situation, he becomes a loser. If it's 4th and one and he doesn't look inside for something extra but has the feeling of where's my pill then obviously the user becomes a loser.

### XI. Strength and the Diminishing Return Theory:

The stronger an athlete becomes, the less important extra strength becomes. However, when Eric got to 415 pounds on his bench, he became "obsessed" and "it became what he lived for." Once an athlete gets to 415 pounds on the bench, he has arrived in the strength category. It is ridiculous to assume that a lineman who benches 450 is superior to a lineman who only benches 415 pounds. What Eric should have done is analyze his weaknesses. Eric never did improve on his speed, which remained at 5.0 on the forty. In BFS terms, that is relatively slow. Eric

## ERIC DICKEY: TRAGIC/HAPPY

"I tried the same steroid dosage but my gains weren't the same. My solution was to take greater dosages. I went to stacking three different kinds. It's scary to think of what I did. At this time my bodyweight was at an all time high of 260 and I was benching 415 pounds. I could have played without the juice but the bench test put pressure on me. I lost control of myself mentally. The lifting became more important than football. I became obsessed by beating everyone. It became what I lived for."

Eric's grades were fine. He was a National Scholar Athlete with an accumulative 2.8 grade average. "But, I lost sight of my education and career. I was risking my life!" lamented Eric.

Eric started the first game of his sophomore year as he beat out the starting center. However, there was some controversy. As a result, the coaches decided to give Eric a shot at defensive tackle. He gained that aggressive defensive mentality and even started several games. The University of Idaho Vandals made it to the Division I-AA Semi-finals. In that game, Eric played more than half the game. During this season, Eric couldn't lift so he took big dosages of steroids (up to 100 milligrams per day).

"After that season, I'm thinking pro-career," recounted Eric. "However, two of my teammates got caught for steroids at random testing during our playoffs. I got scared because I thought they'd test me at spring football. I got off steroids but also got depressed. I got weaker and smaller but nonetheless I had a good Spring football season. I started thinking for the first time, "is it worth it?"

Eric could only bench 365 pounds at this time and was depressed. His bench was down 50 pounds. He didn't want to Squat or Clean because he knew they were down even more. "I was hurt a little so I used that as an excuse not to get tested for maxes on my lifts," Eric disclosed.

After Spring ball, Eric put in his orders for steroids. "We were going to open the 1989 season with Washington State and I'm thinking that I've got to be ready. I got my steroids at school. Heavy doses! I'm thinking two cycles! I'm getting crazy! I started taking them! Then it happened. Blood began appearing in my urine. Pain came to my kidney and chest area. It clicked. What I had heard about medical problems associated with steroids was happening. God, it was happening to me. I went to my family doctor. My parents knew nothing about it."

"Then it came out," blurted Eric, who was confused and scared. "I confessed to my doctor about being on steroids. My kidney was swollen and I had an ulcer. I weighed only 240 pounds!!"

Then it was silent. Eric paused and drew in a big breath. He sighed, "It was the middle of May. I'm really down. What was I going to do. I asked myself "Why am I playing football? I couldn't answer."

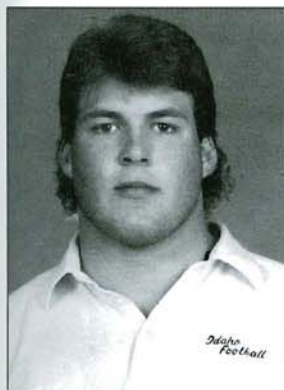
"My coaches asked me if I could play without steroids but I lost it. I mean, I lost the desire to play."

This interview took place two months later and Eric's weight had dropped to 208 pounds. He was running and trying to get healthy. Eric's resting pulse rate had been in the high 80's and now it was 59. His blood pressure was also dropping from a systolic high of 149. Eric had told doctors at football physicals that he had a family history of high blood pressure so they wouldn't question it. "People are treating me well", said Eric. "I was really worried about that. My teammates and coaches have really supported me."

"Mentally now, I feel good. I'm going to major in physical therapy. Everyone's been saying that they're proud of me. I'm kind of afraid to talk to my high school coach Dick Armstrong but maybe I will in the next



# STEROID MYTH ANALYSIS



Eric Dickey Before  
The Decision.

couple of weeks."

"I made my decision at the end of May but my dad got kind of mad when I said that I didn't want to play. My mom didn't understand either. I told my mom first about my steroid abuse problem but my dad had gone to everyone of my little league games. I couldn't tell him so my mom kind of hinted.

"Then Kieth Gilbertson who was my head coach at Idaho my first two years called. I told him the whole story in front of my dad. I assured Coach Gilbertson that he hadn't put any pressure on me and since we didn't really have a strength coach that it was all my own doing. My parents are now both very supportive."

Eric was asked if he had any advice to give aspiring athletes. He responded by saying, "Don't rush things. you'll get your turn. I knew that most people don't get to start in college until their junior year but I couldn't wait. At first, I just wanted to be noticed. I used steroids as a crutch. They gave me a false confidence."

Finally I asked Eric where he'd be now if he hadn't taken them. It was a tough, tough question. I could tell he didn't want to answer it but then he whispered, "I'd still be playing football. I'd be in the weight room. I'd be looking forward to getting good playing time as a sophomore. I'd probably weigh 245-250 pounds and be benching 360 plus."

We applaud Eric Dickey. We are thankful his health is returning and that his life is going forward with a proper perspective. It took a lot of courage to tell us his story and to answer all those tough questions in a forthright manner. Eric hopes his story will help younger athletes understand more fully the extreme consequences of steroids. He would like to prevent any and all of the serious effects of steroids. If it helps just one athlete, Eric will be happy. Eric Dickey is an Upper Limit Person. We wish him well.

## EDITOR'S COMMENTS

should have decreased his time in the weight room and increased his time on plyometrics, flexibility and speed techniques.

### XII. The Best Don't Do It!

The vast majority of athletes are not on steroids. It is a myth that an athlete has to take steroids to compete.

### XIII. Tendon and Ligament Injuries:

There are studies which indicate that steroid users suffer from a greater incidence of tendon and ligament injuries than do non-steroid athletes.

Eric Dickey went through a nightmare and when the dust had settled after three years, he was a mess. Eric had an ulcer, swollen kidney, abnormally high pulse rate and blood pressure with unnatural aggressiveness and bouts of paranoia.

Eric's speed did not improve and he had wild fluctuations in weight and strength. Tragically, the truth of the matter is that Eric went through all that risk with no payoff. He could have made more progress in the long run without steroids. Happily, Eric saved himself from a desperate situation. He is now going about the business of having a happy, successful, rewarding and healthy life. Thank God for that.

## RATE YOUR SCHOOL

### EXTREME STEROID RISK

- I. Big City High School
- II. Muscle-Gym Nearby
- III. Adverse Powerlifting and /or Body Building Influence
- IV. No Weight Training Facilities
- V. No Class Time Allotted For Weight Training
- VI. Weight Room Run By Non-Coaches

### VIRTUALLY NO RISK

- I. Smaller Town High School
- II. No Muscle-Gym In Vicinity
- III. No Adverse Powerlifting and /or Body Building Influence
- IV. Have a Great Weight Room
- V. Weight Training - Body Building Part of Curriculum
- VI. Weight Room Supervised By School Coaches

Rating System Developed from BFS Survey on next page