

STEROIDS: WHAT REALLY HAPPENS - THE UNTOLD TRUTH

By Dr. Greg Shepard

This last summer I sat in on a round table discussion at the N.S.C.A. Convention on the topic of steroids. Mike Burgener who coaches at Rancho Buena Vista High School in California did a super job as chairman. It soon became obvious that everyone was there to gain knowledge and were searching for answers to help their athletes.

Harvey Newton past Olympic Lifting Coach from Colorado Springs made the following statement, "Recent studies indicate steroids help Olympic lifters by only 3 or 4 percent." A confused junior college football coach asked, "Is that all. Are you sure? It seems like it's a lot more than that." Coach Newton confirmed his analysis.

I wanted to clarify that statement but we ran out of time. I shall do so now and at the same time go into detail about what really happens and explain the untold truth.

What About Olympic Lifters?

There are three major differences between the Olympic Lifters identified by Coach Newton and the junior college football player. First, the Olympic lifters were highly ranked, Snatching around 300 pounds with Clean and Jerks of 400 pounds. Coach Newton, who is very much against steroids, was trying to explain that the risks of taking steroids certainly aren't worth the small gains. A 300 pound Snatch, for example, would only mean a 9 or 12 pound increase with steroids. Therefore, Coach Newton's position was why bother? Second, high caliber Olympic lifters normally are under the care of a medical doctor with only intermittent low dosages. If the lifter is lucky, this kind of system can prevent any volatile losses in strength when dosages are stopped prior to competitions. Third, Olympic lifters normally do not want any weight gains. They want to stay in the same weight class. The main objective is to change a percent or two of body fat into lean muscle mass thereby making themselves stronger at the same bodyweight.

What About College Athletes?

College athletes get their steroids primarily at muscle gyms and are influenced by bodybuilders. Dosages are usually much greater than dosages taken by Olympic Lifters. There are normally no medical doctors monitoring these dosages. The college athlete by comparison is a relatively inexperienced lifter who wants to gain weight. Therefore, it is not unusual to see a college age man go from 190 pounds of bodyweight to 230 pounds and to see his Bench go from 270 to 350 pounds. Part of the strength gain was from the increase in bodyweight and part due from the maturation process and technique. Some, of course, was due from

the steroids themselves.

Therefore, the junior college coach was correct in questioning Coach Newton. Going from 270 to 350 is not a 3% gain but almost a 30 percent gain! However, this college coach needs to know the whole story so he can more adequately counsel his athletes.

The Untold Truth

Stage One: Finding A Source

High School and college age people who go to muscle gyms can be exposed to steroids. At first, they observe injections and/or oral use of steroids. Then it's monkey see - monkey do time. Many are intrigued by the secretive nature of the whole process which leads to a real trap. Now, the new recruit must keep steroid use a secret. He must hide his pills, his vials and his needles from parents, coaches, teammates, and friends.

Comment: Upper Limit athletes don't sneak around.

Stage Two: An Amazing Rush

As the new steroid user begins his first dosage, rapid gains begin to take place. It is a real high. The user believes he will make gains and he usually eats more during his first cycle. The user will gain a lot of weight and strength during his first cycle. **Comment: Don't hold your breath.**

Stage Three: Oh, Oh.

After the first cycle, the first time user usually wants to stop. He hopes that he will be able to keep these new gains but alas he begins to drop rapidly. You see, the body manufactures its own testosterone (male hormone) and when steroids are put into the system this natural production ceases. Sometimes estrogen, the female hormone takes over and the breast area can swell, followed at times, with secretions of brownish liquid (the street term is called "Bitch Tit"). Finally, mental depression is likely because of the losses in strength. **Comment: The low after the high. Sound familiar? It's like any other drug.**

Stage Four: Not As Good This Time

The obvious solution is to begin another cycle. The problem is that the same dosage doesn't work as well as it did the first time because the body is building up a tolerance. **Comment: Watch Out!**

Stage Five: Give Me More

The user now consults with an experienced user or bodybuilder. A decision is made to increase dosages and to try different combinations. The body again goes through rapid growth in terms of bodyweight and strength. **Comment: Life is good again?**

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David Henson's Bench went from 370 in high school to 510 in college.

religion has always been with me. It's got me through a lot of things," concluded David thoughtfully.

We thank Coach Isom and UCA for helping us with this article. We especially thank David Henson for being an Upper Limit example to all.

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Stage Six: The Roller Coaster Is For Real

The cycle repeats itself over and over: Strong when on; weak when not. During the low periods, the user is usually totally consumed mentally with how much and what to take on the next cycle. He can't stand the reversal process.

Comment: The user is now hooked.

Stage Seven: The Side Effects Are For Real

Severe acne, facial blotchiness, increased pulse rate, increased blood pressure, increased aggressiveness, unusual mood swings, loss of hair and sexual problems are now common. **Comment: My heart aches.**

Stage Eight: The Net Gain

With all the ups and downs, the true net gain isn't that great. Usually with athletes a decrease in other important areas are seen. Since strength is so important, with users, especially Bench Press strength, other facets of conditioning are neglected such as flexibility, plyometrics and speed training. Technical sport skills are often not done. The user would rather spend an extra hour doing auxiliary exercises rather than playing a three on three game of basketball, or studying game films. **Comment: The athlete can turn into a bodybuilder or powerlifter.**

Stage Nine: The User Becomes A Loser

After two or three years of use, the athlete has become addicted and been through many ups and downs. He has

drawn away from teammates and coaches. He is into the muscle gym scene. There are periods of despondency and worry about long term side effects such as heart, kidney and liver damage. The user may even suffer from ligament and/or tendon weakness making him more susceptible to injury. The steroid use has not helped his flexibility, agility, technique, or athleticism. Many times the user, at this point, is less confident of his abilities in crucial situations. He worries about being caught if tested and during the low periods will make excuses for not being able to perform at his previous max level. **Comment: He is now the opposite of an Upper Limit athlete.**

Stage Ten: The Solution

Athletes should always train with the coaches and teammates at the school weight room if at all possible. When in doubt do the BFS System. Monstrous gains will be made by breaking a minimum of eight records per week. Work hard on all parts of the total program. Be a leader. Help your teammates. Create your own intensity. Eat nutritionally sound foods. Establish goals, write them down and look at them daily. **Comment: To call steroids performance enhancing is outrageous. It's like calling cigarettes health sticks. Steroids in the long run don't help; they hurt. It is a great myth that steroids give an athlete in a main stream sport a tremendous advantage. Upper Limit athletes are steroid free.**