

## STEROIDS

Athletics has changed over the last fifty years. The games, equipment, and rules have become far more sophisticated. Training techniques have also become more sophisticated. Unfortunately, this sophistication has led some athletes to the use of anabolic steroids in an attempt to gain the "competitive edge". Even more unfortunate is the fact that some of these athletes are still in high school and junior high. Two recent surveys indicate that approximately seven percent of high school senior boys across the country have used or are using steroids. That translates into more than 250,000 high school athletes across the country! Over one-fourth of those high school seniors indicated that their use started while they were in junior high school! The results of an Iowa High School Athletic Association survey conducted in 1990 show that four percent of high school male athletes in Iowa indicated they had used steroids within the past year. In Iowa, that translates into approximately 3,000 male high school athletes!

Steroids (anabolic-androgenic steroids) are a synthetic version of the male hormone testosterone. Steroids, in one form or another, have been in existence for over fifty years. It has been within the last fifteen to twenty years that their use has become more widespread than just among elite athletes. Anabolic steroids do promote tissue growth by creating protein and other body substances. This tissue growth can lead to strength and size increases and does cause people who train intensely to become bigger, stronger, and faster. Therefore, many athletes believe steroids will make them a winner. **They could NOT be more wrong!** Steroids do not make someone a winner; the athlete makes him or herself a winner! The athlete is the one with the dedication, desire, and commitment to do what it takes - within the rules - to become a winner. An athlete may win a competition or two through the use of steroids, but they are not only cheating others, they are cheating themselves as well! They are cheating themselves out of the knowledge that they could have played within the rules and been the very best they could be.

Along with cheating themselves and others, an athlete using steroids must be willing to accept some of the terrible side effects that can accompany the use of the drug. A few of which are shrinkage of the testicles, stunted growth, development of breast tissue, liver dysfunction, and extremely high blood pressure.

Athletes tend to think of themselves as invincible. Given enough time they learn that they are not. The physical and mental conditioning an athlete goes through to be competitive is destroyed through the use of steroids. Let's look at a few facts about steroids and the development of strength, size/weight, and speed.

First, anabolic steroids have few legitimate medical uses. They are used for the treatment of impotence in males, asthma, anemia, severe burns, some bone diseases, breast cancer, and a few other rare diseases. After some types of surgery, steroids are used to promote healing and increase the appetite. There is no good evidence that steroids will help a person recover from an injury, as some athletes and doctors have claimed. Steroids can, in fact, increase one's chance of injury. The growth and strength of bones, ligaments, and tendons do not keep up as muscles get bigger and stronger. Therefore, the risk of tendon, bone, and ligament injury is greater.

Second, steroids do nothing in terms of "building muscle" unless their use is combined with several other proven training principles. A person seeking increased size and strength through the use of steroids must have been involved in an intensive strength training program prior to steroid use and must continue to keep up this intensive training regiment throughout use. Proper diet and adequate rest also need to be included. Steroid use does nothing to improve the cardiovascular fitness level of a person. Steroids, by themselves, will not improve a persons endurance!

Third, **anabolic steroid use is illegal!** For the first time in history, possession of even a small amount of steroids without a valid physician's prescription is a federal crime. The maximum penalty for possession is one year in prison and a minimum \$1,000 fine. The maximum federal penalty for trafficking and illegal dispensing of anabolic steroids is five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Under current Iowa law the penalty for unlawful distribution of steroids is a maximum of ten years in prison and a \$50,000 fine! The message that law enforcement people are sending is, "Anabolic steroids are a drug and we will penalize illegal use and distribution of drugs."

Fourth, you don't need anabolic steroids to become bigger, stronger, and faster. You can become bigger, stronger, and faster by, first of all, having the proper genetic make up. By adding to that proper diet, proper strength training technique, adequate amounts of sleep, and **LOTS** of hard work increases in size and strength and improvements in speed will occur. People like Edwin Moses, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Howie Long, Evelyn Ashford, and Carl Lewis are the best in their sports, and they accomplished it without the use of steroids. Another example is Todd Collins. He has bench-pressed 360 pounds, parallel-squatted 575 pounds, power-cleaned 300 pounds, run a 4.57 forty-yard dash, and had a vertical jump of 40 inches. Todd did all this as a senior at Jefferson County High School in Georgia! Don't tell him it's not possible to be bigger, stronger, and faster without the use of steroids!

Lastly, let's talk about sportsmanship and citizenship. Athletics is supposed to instill the values of good sportsmanship and citizenship in the competitors and fans alike - values like dedication, desire, sacrifice, discipline, integrity, respect, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and leadership. Steroids do not fit into the sportsmanship/citizenship theme. The use of steroids is cheating, pure and simple. As Ben Johnson and many other athletes have discovered, society is becoming unwilling to accept poor sportsmanship. Athletes who use steroids are finding that their ill-gotten "achievements" are often not worth the price they have to pay.

Many years ago a coach presented his philosophy called "total effort". Simply put it means you give the game everything you've got - within the rules! If you do this you are a true winner. In athletics we learn about the real game, and the game, you see, is the game of life. And whether you finish first or last, if you give a "total effort" you will be the best that you can be. This truly makes you a winner.

SIGNS OF STEROID USE

"Puffy", swollen look to the face  
Acne; especially on shoulders, back, or chest  
Excessive time spent working out  
Frequent nosebleeds  
Frequent muscle cramps  
Increased aggression and violence  
Increased irritability  
Periods of depression  
Quick strength and weight gains  
Wide mood swings

People with these signs and symptoms may not be using steroids, nor may someone using steroids have all of these signs and symptoms. These ARE things to be watching for however.

#### POSSIBLE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF STEROID USE IN FEMALES

Deepening of the voice  
Growth of permanent facial and chest hair  
Loss of hair and partial baldness  
Menstrual irregularities  
Oily skin  
Reduction of breast size

#### POSSIBLE ADVERSE EFFECTS IN MALES

Breast enlargement and pain  
Deformed sperm/possible birth defects  
Lowered sperm count/temporary sterility  
Pain when urinating  
Permanent premature hair loss  
Shrinking of the testicles

#### POSSIBLE ADVERSE EFFECTS IN BOTH MALES AND FEMALES

Acne; especially on chest, shoulders, and back  
Addiction  
Blood clots

Chills  
Diarrhea  
Dizziness  
Fever  
Frequent nosebleeds  
Hardening of the arteries  
Headaches  
Higher cholesterol levels  
Increased risk of heart attack  
Increased blood pressure  
Increased violence and aggression/"roid rages"  
Increased risk of injury and slower healing time  
Insomnia and restlessness  
Joint pain and stiffness  
Liver damage; including cancer  
Muscle tendon damage  
Muscle cramps  
Nausea and vomiting  
Periods of depression  
Sterility  
Stunted growth  
Suicidal thoughts  
Swelling of feet and lower legs  
Unpleasant breath odor

A person with some of these adverse effects may not be using steroids, nor may someone using steroids have all of these adverse effects. These ARE possible adverse effects.

Sources: American School and University, "Steroids are Big Trouble", by Erik Meintz, October, 1988; "Anabolic Steroids: Losing at Winning", Department of Health and Human Services, 1988; Anabolic Steroids: The Steroid Heart... A Ticking Time Bomb, by Forest Tenant, M.D., 1989; Anabolic-Androgenic Steroids: A Synthesis of Existing Data and Recommendations For Future Research, by Charles E. Yesalis, et. al. On Target, "Nutrition, Training Beats Steroids", by Brenda Barris and Ann Bradford, December, 1988; National Coach, "The New Drug Crisis", by Ken Mannie, Spring, 1989; Scholastic Coach, "The Great Steroid Myth", by Dr. Greg Shepard, March, 1989.

For further information on steroids or any other area pertaining to athlete's wellness please contact Alan Beste, Wellness Coordinator at the Iowa High School Athletic Association. (515)432-2011