

STERIODS IN AMERICAN CULTURE

by Nick Holtzman, NSCA-CPT.

I am a big fan of documentary films, so the other day I rented one called "Bigger Stronger Faster". Basically the film is about the overabundance of steroid use in American (and worldwide) culture, from sports to movies, and its impact on the public. These days (as its been for as long as I can remember) the need to win at all costs and to get "bigger, faster, and stronger" by all means necessary is at an all time high, and it seems inevitable that performance enhancing drugs such as steroids will play a big role in this culture that has been created. I found "Bigger Faster Stronger" to be a very well made and thought provoking film; one that definitely will spark some conversation, especially in the health and fitness world.

I have always had mixed feelings on the whole steroids in sports and entertainment industry. This article is not to try to sway the reader to agree or disagree with any point of view, but rather for the reader to form an opinion for him/herself. The issue of steroids and sports & entertainment affects basically everyone in one way or another, not just fitness professionals as myself. It affects athletes, parents of athletes, and even the sports fan in general. And while it may cause some sports fans to be disgusted with sports overall, the unfortunate truth is that the issue will not go away anytime soon, and it is important that we become aware of it and form an opinion on the issue so that we can properly educate those around us that we influence, such as our kids and our clients.

By now we are all pretty aware of the gigantic number of scandals, accusations, and admittances of steroids/performance enhancing drugs by the MANY pro athletes and entertainment figures that dominate our culture. In fact, the issue was around since I was a young kid. I still remember seeing "Rocky IV" as a 7-year old kid and seeing Ivan Draggio, Rocky's opponent, get shot up with 'roids and knowing exactly what steroids were, so the issue has been around for an extremely long time now. I imagine that every 7 year old kid out there today who is a fan of Major League Baseball knows exactly what steroids are as well. Today we live in a society where information is a couple of clicks away, so all the research they need is right on the computer screen in front of them.

To me this issue is too large to be able to sum up in a short article. I am not and never have been a professional athlete, so I do not believe it is right for me to pass judgment on steroid use in athletes. It is a subject with far too many variables to list here. I am, however, two things: a professional fitness trainer and a parent. I believe that professional trainers MUST take responsibility for their actions, especially the trainers of big name athletes who have or currently use steroids/performance enhancing drugs. The media and the public have torn apart these athletes who have used or allegedly used these drugs, but very rarely do I see any blame put towards the trainers who these athletes trust who recommend and supply these drugs to these athletes. I understand that if you

train a professional athlete then you are the best of the best, and are paid top \$\$\$ to make these guys as strong, fast, and big as possible. I do believe, however, that the most basic level of ethics would prevent ANY trainer from going down the route of illegal drugs to enhance their athletes' performance.

As a parent of a child who will most likely grow up involved in sports, it is my responsibility to properly educate my child on the sports culture and the win-at-all-costs mentality that goes with it. With the internet and the various media outlets out there, the information and access to these drugs is there for everyone. It is my responsibility as a parent to instill an attitude of being the best you can be without this win-at-all costs mentality. How will I do this- I don't know yet, but I have a few years to still figure it out. Like I said, it is a complicated subject, and a tough world we live in, but it is a problem that has been around for a while. Some rise, some fall, but if you have an awareness of this frame of mind and the culture that we live in, maybe then you can rise above it and not get swept up in it, and that is why an open dialogue on the subject is so important.