

When and who started this mess about steroids?

With man's desire to excel in athletics by any means necessary and the sensationalism about some of the lengths athletes have gone to, sports fans the world over will now wonder whether athletes are or are not doing something extra, and maybe illegal, to succeed.

Everywhere you look or listen there is something in the press about a thing called steroids: a large group of fat soluble organic compounds such as sterols, bile acids and sex hormones, most of which have a physiological action. The biochemical action of steroids in a person's body has brought about much discussion in the medical field and in the sports world.

At first, in laboratories steroids were distilled from the testicles of bulls and were used to provide testosterone for men who could not produce enough in their bodies to carry out normal sexual activities. It was that simple, and doctors usually prescribed steroid treatment for men who requested the drug.

About 20 years later, a group of Russian weightlifters found that after taking a higher dose of steroids, not only did the sex life improve, but they were able to lift more weights and win more body building and weight contests. Also, Russian track stars, both women and men, began to run faster and win more events at international sports meets.

Athletes from the United States began to observe the Russians' rise in competitions and began to investigate the enhanced performance situation at events both here in the U.S. and internationally.

By the end of the 1960s, steroids had made their way into this country.

As more and more people were encouraged to do some-



SPORTS PACE

By Huel Washington

thing about their bodies by health experts (and some fanatics) and fitness icons, like 80-plus year-old Jack LaLanne and others on television, the public became regulars at the health food stores and nutrition centers. Many of these people buy nutritional supplements, for body building purposes that are not steroids but are precursors and chemically turn into steroids when ingested.

Some of these substances, like "andro" (androstenedione), which baseball player Mark McGuire admitted taking, have worked their way into college athletes' and high school students' bodies. After all, McGuire hit 65 and 70 homeruns in successive seasons, they think. McGuire stopped using the drug after being questioned about his use by a newspaper reporter.

The physical build of some athletes, like the National Football League's Terrell Owens of the Philadelphia Eagles, a very muscular sight, could also be the reason quite a few youngsters not only spend extra time in the weight room but another reason why steroids use is on the rise.

And the physical appearance of muscular star athletes, like McGuire, Jose Conseco, Jason Giambi and a few other track and football stars that are doing very well, has probably encouraged many users around the world to start or continue their use of steroids.

The desire to win is so enormous in the culture of the sports world that a great many athletes are willing to

take a pill now, win, and take the consequences later. The consequences and cost is high in terms of health.

One of the side effects of steroid use is kidney failure. Former NFL star Lyle Alzado used anabolic steroids during his career as a Denver

Bronco and an Oakland Raider. And even though Alzado's death was reportedly from a form of cancer, he maintained that his declining health was due to steroid abuse.

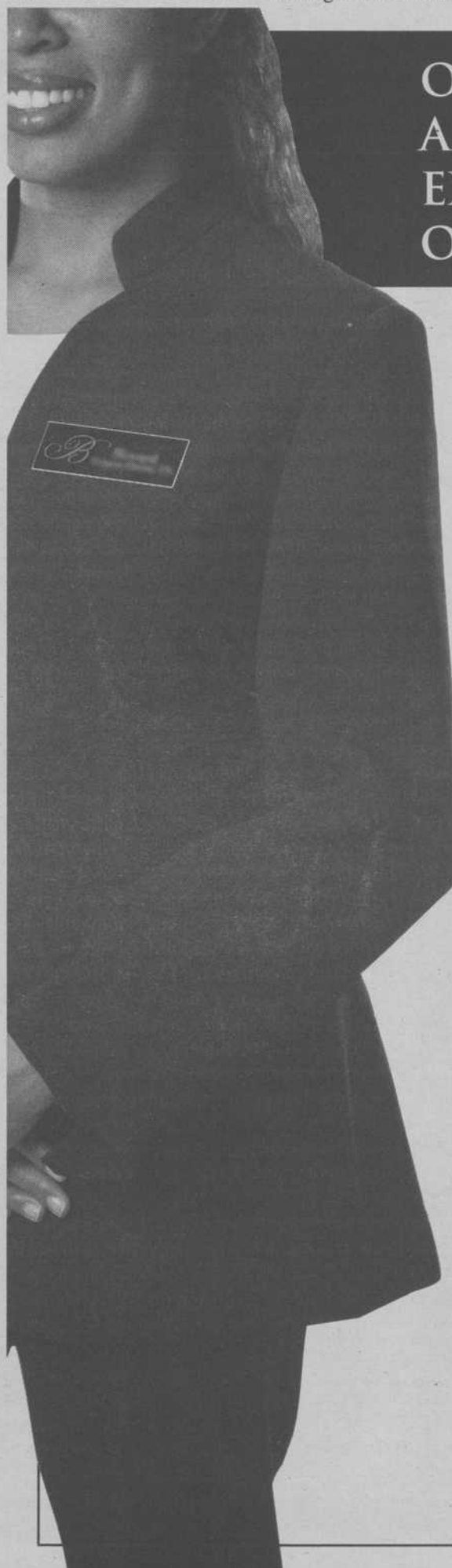
Steroids should be prescribed by a doctor and their use monitored closely, especially anabolic steroids which alter the user's metabolism. But who needs a prescription when they are available so easily. Generally speaking, if youngsters and adult users can't get steroid-like sub-

stances at the local health food stores or chain nutrition centers in the malls, there are contacts in the gym or on the streets to sell to them illegally.

Chemically, because steroids are an organic substance, and there are about 100 different kinds of steroids available, it is very frustrating for the federal government and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia: they are having a hard time keeping up with tracking and identi-

fying the different formulas. The detection process is challenging* for law and sports officials trying to regulate, control and ban steroids and prosecute sellers and users.

Are they bad for you? Some medical professionals say, yes. And what about the guys with low testosterone. Do they give up the chance to use steroids for medical reasons and suffer from erectile dysfunction? No. Steroids are here to stay in some manner. Will they stay illegal? No, sir, I don't think so.



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Apprentice

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a graffiti mural encouraging people to buy an expensive game." After committing to the assignment as project manager, however, Dowdell said her next goal was to ensure that the wall didn't negatively impact the neighborhood.

Since her appearance on "The Apprentice," Dowdell said she has received numerous lucrative offers, speaking opportunities, and encouraging feedback on her website www.taradowdell.net.

Still, she hopes African-Americans get in positions to contain pervasive negative representations on reality shows. "I wish that we as a community would really start to move from putting so much emphasis on being in front of the cameras to being in a position where we control the means of distribution," said Dowdell. "Until then, we will continue to be negatively portrayed in all media."

Clover Hope writes for the Amsterdam News