

Understanding Anabolic Steroids and Their Role Inside of Today's Gym Culture

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Abstract

I have created this technical background report on behalf of Rocktown Fitness's Board of Investees, as they contracted me to provide them with a concise and detailed report regarding anabolic steroids and their role in today's gym culture. In order to accomplish the aforementioned task, this technical background report begins by featuring sections highlighting what exactly anabolic steroids are, why some lifters in today's gym culture opt to utilize these substances, and a brief history of how steroids burst their way onto the athletic scene. Following the theme, the report features sections detailing the positives and negatives of using these substances, with an additional section listing some of the most commonly used steroids and their application inside modern gyms. Finally, in the conclusion of this report, I left a few of my personal recommendations and suggestions towards the original questions the Board of Investees proposed.

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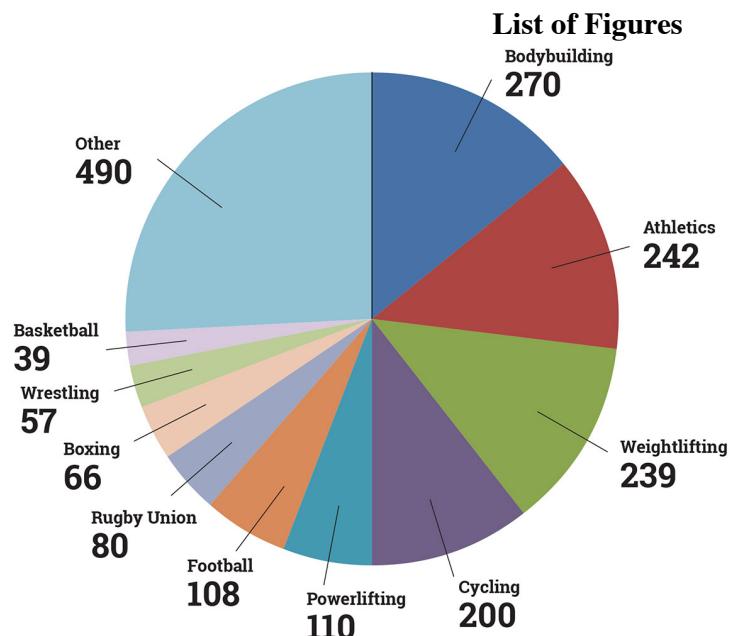
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Introduction:

In a society in which each person must get up every day and provide for themselves, competition is simply seen as a built-in part of human existence. Come on, think about it, even as a youth, you were likely banding together with fellow classmates attempting to sink that game-winning foul shot your team needed to win what felt like the NBA Finals, even though it was just gym class. Or maybe you even looked over and saw your friend getting a higher score on a test than you, so you made it your absolute mission to obtain a perfect score next time in hopes of besting your unaware “opponent”. Wherever life has taken you, you’ve likely experienced some form of competition or competitiveness, and today’s gyms are no different.

If you were to ask a majority of people who lift daily the reason why they’ve remained consistent and dedicated to the craft, they’d likely tell you that they are chasing their “desired physique” or accomplishing their “personal fitness goals”. Every day they step foot in the gym, they engage in a competition with themselves, pushing themselves to the brink each workout in hopes of achieving their ideal body image. Out of this love of natural competition with oneself and the innate desire to achieve a prime version of one’s physique, steroids were born. Just like that one friend who always scribbled all his notes on his hand prior to taking that dreaded Spanish exam, humans are always looking to cut corners and speed up the process; it’s just a natural reaction to something that takes a long time, which is exactly how most steroids are viewed in today’s society. Across the vast abyss that is social media, you’d be hard-pressed to find a gym influencer who’s currently popular and not utilizing certain unnatural steroids and supplements. Additionally, take a trip to your favorite local lifting spot in 2024 and you’ll see some gym participants who’ve experienced explosive muscle growth and strength while taking steroids. Unfortunately, with such a variety of social media content, there’s bound to be tons of incorrect and misleading information regarding steroids and their role inside of today’s gym culture. In this technical background report, I hope to clear up some of these misconceptions and present facts.

Understanding the Technical Definition of Anabolic Steroids:

According to DEA.gov, anabolic steroids are “synthetically produced variants of the naturally occurring male hormone testosterone that are abused in an attempt to promote muscle growth, enhance athletic or other physical performance, and improve physical appearance.”

A Brief History of Anabolic Steroids:

According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the first legitimate reporting of the use of anabolic steroids came in the 1930s, with the practice becoming widespread in bodybuilding and other areas of sport beginning around the 1950s. With the popularity of steroids reaching a boiling point around this time, organizations scrambled to deal with the subsequent issues surrounding the substances. In 1975, the International Olympic Committee announced they were banning the use of anabolic steroids, making them the first in a long line of leagues and professional sports organizations that swiftly followed suit. In 1990, the United States federal government announced, in an attempt to gain control over the rampant use of steroids, that they would begin to classify the substances as a “Schedule III controlled substance”, much like Ketamine and Benzedriamine.

Effects of the Use of Anabolic Steroids on the Human Body:

Positive Outlook:

According to the New York State Department of Health, anabolic steroids do come with their advantages to the user. For one, when used in high doses, users are able to promote muscle growth at an exponentially higher rate than they would be able to otherwise, helping them to gain a more cut, defined physique quicker and with much more ease. Additionally, users of anabolic steroids also will likely have an increased amount of testosterone in their bloodstream, prompting their muscles to go through the process of repairing themselves much quicker and with greater efficiency. Overall, users of this category of substances will likely see a much more cut, defined physique and muscle growth far sooner than those who choose to go the natural way, helping those looking to achieve their fitness goals in a shorter time frame.

Negative Outlook:

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Negative Outlook:

Taking anabolic steroids can be quite dangerous and offers its own dark web of potential negative side effects. Per the Mayo Clinic, men who partake in the use of anabolic steroids may experience gynecomastia, a condition where males develop excessive growth on their chests, making them have the appearance of having “breasts”. Additionally, one of the most common negative side effects of taking steroids young men experience is with the shrinking of their testicles. On the flip side, young women may develop a deeper voice, grow more body hair than before, and even stop getting periods or have them occur on an irregular basis.

On a more general note, one of the most talked about signs one of your buddies is on the “juice” is the sudden onset of severe acne, mainly occurring on the user’s back and chest area. Along with the severe acne, many young users of anabolic steroids often report issues with their liver and high blood pressure. Apart from physical ailments, users of anabolic steroids can also experience intense psychological episodes, as the body attempts to intake the increased levels of chemicals within the body. Some lifters report even developing extreme depression after using steroids for a long period of time, with the community as a whole silently acknowledging that continued use of these substances can mess with people’s heads for the rest of their lives. These, and many more, are just a few of the reasons many professional sports leagues and organizations have continuously championed not using these performance-enhancing drugs, as they have so many potential drawbacks involved with them.

Examples of Some of the Most Common Anabolic Steroids and Legally-Purchasable Supplements

As we spoke about before, most anabolic steroids are, as defined by the DEA, synthetically produced examples of the male hormone testosterone, a naturally occurring element inside one’s body. Oftentimes, to take the desired amount, the user will ingest the steroid orally, inject it directly into the muscle via a needle, or even use different skin applications to ingest the product. One of the most popular options members of the fitness community may indulge in is known as “Trenbolone” or “Tren” for short. When it first entered the market, “Tren” was aimed primarily towards livestock farming, as the labs attempted to convince farm owners dosages of the drug would promote increased muscle growth and appetite in their cows. In modern times, humans have been modifying the substances to use on themselves, in hopes of obtaining the same benefits through their own injections. Another favorite anabolic steroid in the bodybuilding community is known as “Boldenone”. “Boldenone”, also known as “Boldenone Undecylenate”, originally entered the marketplace as a steroid that worked to promote muscle growth in animals, primarily seeing most of its action in the veterinary field. Like its close neighbor “Tren”, “Boldenone” has also been utilized by the fitness community in modern times, with bodybuilders opting to inject the drug directly into the muscle for the best results. When needles are involved, especially with substances such as these, which are illegal to possess within the United States, it’s easy to see why so many professional sporting leagues and organizations would advocate against and ban the use of such substances within their competitions. As you can see in *figure 1* however, of this group of steroid users surveyed, a good majority of them still operate in competitive spaces, so it does make one wonder.

On the flip side of the spectrum, while most steroids are illegal to possess, there are a number of new, recently developed steroids that are marketed and sold by smaller chain stores and wholesaler websites. These steroids are considered legal and available to lifters of all ages as long as they have a connection to the internet. Even reputable brands, such as BodyBuilding.com, have moved towards carrying these types of products. One of these products that has gained quite a reputation over the years is Dianabol or “D-Bal”. Touted by *MuscleandFitness.com* as “the best legal steroid available right now”, Dianabol has been making massive waves in the fitness community, being highly valued for its ability to promote insane muscle growth while having a very limited number of side effects compared to previous steroids. In addition to “D-Bal”, many bodybuilders who choose to partake in these legal steroids are utilizing another substance known as “SARMS”. “SARMS”, or “Selective Androgen Receptor Modulators” as it’s known in the medical community, is a steroid that aims to increase muscle mass as well as burn body fat. Both of these steroids, in addition to being available to virtually anyone who has a connection to the internet, are also becoming more popular in recent times due to the fact that the average person can now afford these alternatives, whereas previously “doping” was seen as an incredibly expensive method of gaining a physique.

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Final Recommendations for the Board of Investees

Concerning the Proposed Bodybuilder Competition’s Rules and Regulations:

Across the world of bodybuilding and even in many of the sport’s most respected institution’s core values, the use of steroids to gain an “edge” or “advantage” over the remaining field of competitors is overwhelmingly seen as unfair. In fact, as much as the media or your friends might tell you, many of the largest and most prestigious bodybuilding competitions and circuits require their contestants to administer a urine sample prior to being admitted entry. With this precedent set in stone within the fitness community, I would make the following suggestion to the board of investees: If you do plan to move forward with hosting the competition, express to potential competitors that there will be two categories: “natural” and “unnatural”. To decide who falls into each, the gym can either work on an honesty policy or allow participants to submit urine samples, whatever they may choose. By doing this, the gym is still able to give credit to those who earned their physique naturally, but also not turn away potential customers in the opposite direction.

Concerning the Use of Steroids Within the Facility and the Potential Addition of a Chain/”Pop-up” Store

While steroids can be a huge positive for those looking to quickly achieve their fitness goals or dream physique, it’s well documented that they also carry a ton of potential negative effects and drawbacks with them. With that being said, I will leave the following suggestions to the board of investees regarding the aforementioned topics: Understanding how dangerous many of these anabolic steroids are to both administer and cycle in the body, not to mention the fact that most of them are illegal to possess anyways, leads me to suggest that the facility draw a hard line on not allowing the use of steroids on the premises. Additionally, while there are some questionable products and steroids available on the open market legally, the addition of a large-scale health chain, such as a “GNC”, could be one way to merge the profits of the two businesses while also ensuring the facility’s participants steer clear from certain sketchy substances.

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