



# WRESTLING USA

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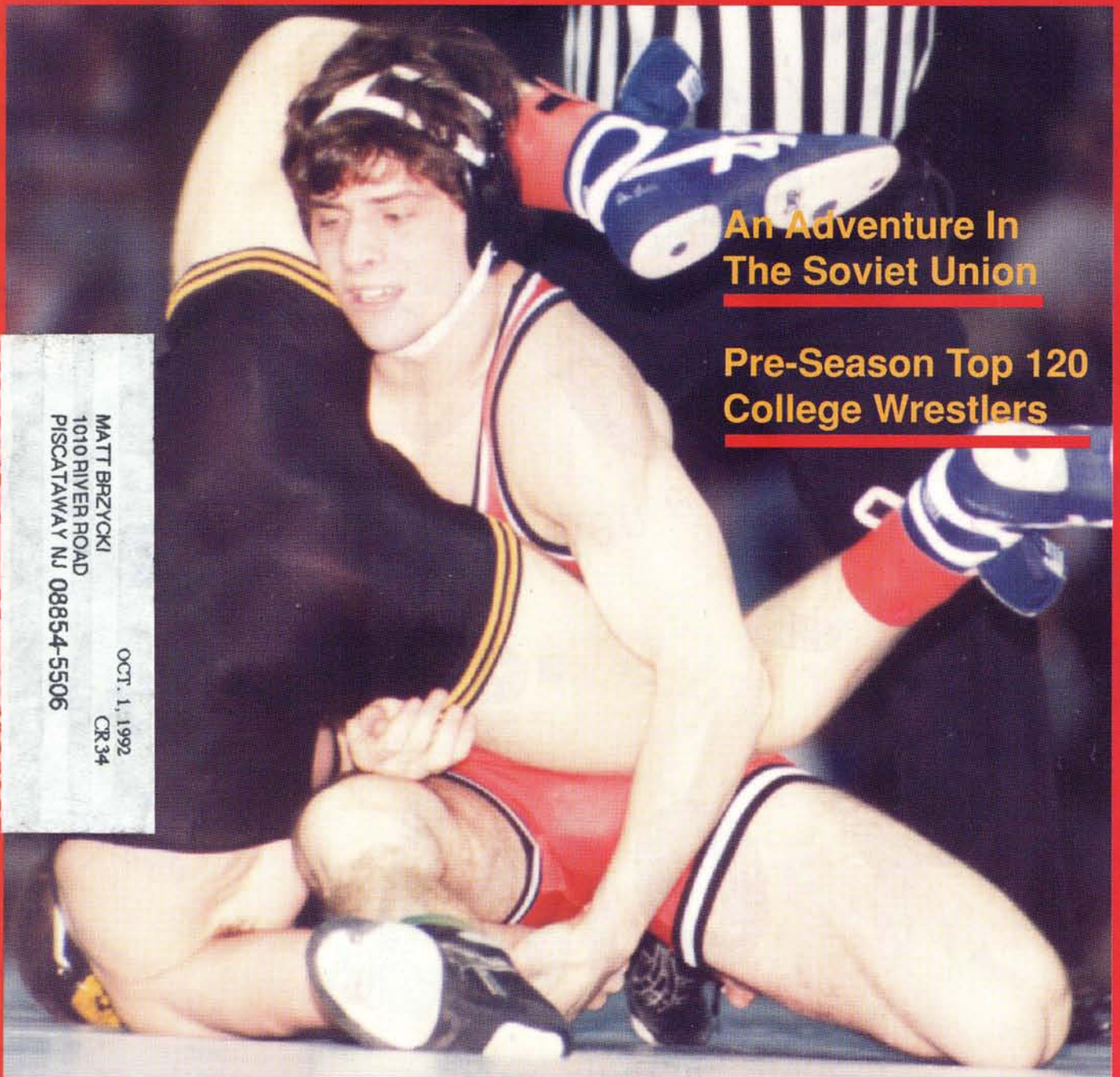
October 1, 1991

**An Adventure In  
The Soviet Union**

**Pre-Season Top 120  
College Wrestlers**

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OCT. 1, 1992  
CR 34



by Matt Brzycki  
Strength Coach  
Princeton University

# STEROID USE: RISKS AND ETHICS

*Second of a two-part series on steroid use*

**S**cientific research data appear to be inconclusive regarding the effects of large doses or the long-term administration of anabolic steroids on the health (or improved physical abilities) of athletes. Although the long-term effects are unclear, the use of anabolic steroids does pose serious threats to the skin, kidneys, liver, testes and accessory sex glands as well as the cardiovascular, immune, endocrine, reproductive and skeletal systems thereby presenting dangers to overall health and longevity. In fact, Ken Mannie (the Strength Coach at the University of Toledo) says, "The list of adverse effects [from steroid use] reads like a Stephen King horror story." An examination of the "horror story" in greater detail will show you that Coach Mannie isn't exaggerating. The following is a list of the dangerous side

effects that are well-documented in the medical literature:

## **Mental Side Effects**

These effects may include psychiatric disorders, severe depression, manic depression, paranoia, grandiose delusions, visual and auditory hallucinations, irritability, extreme mood swings that can be borderline psychotic and an abnormally high level of unpredictable hostility and aggression (called 'roid rage.)

## **Physical/Physiological Side Effects**

This may consist of hypertension (high blood pressure), cancerous tumors, cardiovascular dysfunction, kidney dysfunction, dermatologic syndromes (e.g. acne), insomnia, increased cholesterol levels, alopecia (loss of scalp hair), nosebleeds and a predisposition to tendon and ligament injuries. (Apparently, connective tissue does not

respond to steroids to the same degree that muscle tissue does. This creates a situation in which the connective tissue cannot keep up with the demands from using heavier weights. (Shaun Brown, the Strength Coach at Providence College, likens it to putting an engine from a Mack truck into a Volkswagen.)

There is also a possibility of various liver disorders such as peliosis hepatis (the pooling of blood in the liver), hepatoma (liver cancer) and jaundice. In addition, individuals also risk septic shock ("blood poisoning") and the spread of communicable diseases (including AIDS) from contaminated needles as well as neural dysfunction as a result of improperly placed needles. Premature fusing of the epiphyseal growth plates that results in stunted growth may occur in adolescents.



Photo - 118 lb NCAA Semi-Final. Jack Cuvo of E. Stroudsburg starts takedown attempt on Penn States Ken Chertow. Cuvo, the NCAA 118 lb. champ went on to score a 6-6; 2-1 O.T. win in this semi-final match and eventually won finals to gain his second NCAA title at 118.

Wait, there's more: When a man starts to introduce extra testosterone into his body, then his body will reduce its own production in order to maintain a stable internal environment. If too much "foreign" testosterone is added, the body will no longer produce its own supply and the result is a feminizing effect. This chemical balancing results in testicular atrophy (your "family jewels" shrink), gynecomastia (you get enlarged, female-like breasts) and a high-pitched voice. If this bit of hormonal irony isn't enough, males can also expect fluid retention, prostate enlargement, a decreased sperm count and functional impotency.

Oh yeah, one more thing: Deaths have been directly (and legally) attributed to steroid use.

Ken, you weren't kidding.

#### Spotting A Steroid User

It's often difficult to identify a steroid user. However, there are a few tell-tale signs. Because steroids can be taken orally in tablet/pill form or by direct injection into a muscle, users may have needles, syringes and pill bottles either hidden or in their possession. Users often have puncture or bruise marks on their upper thighs and buttocks from steroid injections. Due to fluid retention, steroid users often have a bloated, puffy look to their faces and skin. Another physical sign is that their eyes and skin have a somewhat yellowish tint. Several other physical indicators are unprovoked nosebleeds, gynecomastia and severe acne (especially on the back). Finally, look for sudden and significant increases in size, weight and strength.

In terms of psychological signs, violent and unpredictable rage is a noticeable side effect of steroid use. Other indications of steroid use can be severe depression and an increased or decreased libido.

Just because one of your wrestlers has one or two of the above symptoms doesn't necessarily mean that he is a steroid user. However, if more than a few signs are present, you can bet that he is ingesting more than Flintstone vitamins. Winning At All Costs Despite an incredible number of dangerous risks to overall health, evidence suggests that athletes will do anything . . . or take anything . . . to win. Personally, the desire to excel nearly drove me to use steroids. During my junior year at Penn State, I briefly considered using steroids because I needed

to increase my strength by about 10 percent in three months in order to qualify for the NCAA Powerlifting Championships. Though I chose to compete without any chemically-induced substances, the temptation was great.

On the other hand, many people elect to take the "artificial" route to success. Dr. Gabe Mirkin once polled more than 100 top runners with this question: "If I could

give you a pill that would make you an Olympic champion — and also kill you in a year — would you take it?" More than half of the athletes said that they would take the pill. Dr. Bob Goldman, a co-author of *Death in the Locker Room*, asked 198 elite athletes a similar question and again, more than half of those asked said, in effect, that they would give their lives to win. While some people's will to win can be applauded and admired, in

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this case it certainly contradicts the ideals of fair play of competition.

### A Matter Of Ethics

Anabolic steroids do have some legitimate medical applications, such as in treating malnutrition, skeletal disorders, soft tissue injuries, recovery from surgery, osteoporosis and various anemias. However, the use of anabolic steroids in an attempt to improve physical capacity or athletic performance is contrary to the ethical principles and regulations of competitions as established and set down by various athletic foundations and sports-governing bodies. These

organizations include the International Amateur Athletic Federation, the International Olympic Committee and the National Collegiate Athletic Association. Strong anti-steroid statements have also been issued by the American College of Sports Medicine and the National Strength and Conditioning Association.

### Steroids And The Law

The Anabolic Steroid Control Act of 1990 went into effect at the end of February 1991. Under this act, anabolic steroids become classified as Class III drugs, which makes their use restricted in the same manner as

barbiturates. The new law increases prison penalties, including a maximum \$1,000 fine and a maximum one year sentence for possession. It also gives federal drug enforcement officials the authority to regulate manufacturers, wholesalers, doctors and pharmacies, and allows for the seizure of assets and money earned through drug trafficking.

### A Solution?

It's the duty of coaches, physical educators and parents to educate youngsters about all drugs and their potentially dangerous side effects. They must let the young ones know that drugs aren't "the answer," whether it be for athletic performance or recreational use. Youngsters should be frequently reminded of the latest drug-related tragedies and that the use of controlled substances without a physician's approval is illegal. If young people are taking drugs illegally, it should be explained to them that the use of drugs as performance enhancers is unethical and immoral. Finally, the many long-term dangers associated with drug abuse should be emphasized.

Perhaps the most important (yet subtle) thing coaches, physical educators and parents can do for their youngsters is to be good role models. Athletes and children tend to copy certain characteristics, actions and even mannerisms of those whom they respect and admire. Therefore, it's imperative that those in authority talk, act and dress in a professional manner at all times in order to set as good an example as possible.

### The "Secret" To Success

I always smile whenever I read or hear about a secret training method, a miraculous fitness product or some other shortcut to success. Hey, there are no secret or mystical techniques for improving athletic ability — except maybe hard work and determination. If you give everything your best effort, things will work out for themselves. That doesn't only apply to the wrestling mat either — the same holds true for the classroom or anything you wish to be successful at.

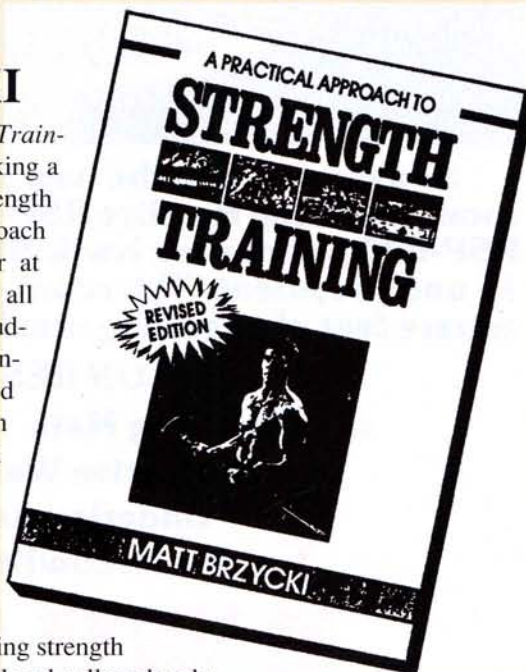
There aren't any shortcuts on the road to success. The secret to becoming a better wrestler doesn't lie in a bottle, a pill or a syringe; success is measured by dedication, desire and effort. Remember, users are losers — you don't need drugs to be a winner! ●

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