Steroid tragedy

Side effects harmful to man and beast

As a collegiate gymnast more than 20 years ago, specializing in the high bar and still rings, I was in rigorous physical conditioning program that included weight training. I vividly remember walking into our campus weight room one day, after a six-week injury-related layoff, and hardly recognizing a track athlete with whom I had previously worked out. Flou, what's happened to you?" I asked. Live, which shappened to you?" I asked. Although the proportions per proportions to the proportion of the proposed of the proposed proposed to the proposed prop

Crease my strength," he whispered.

LOU CAUTIOUSLY opened his gym bag for me, as if he were biding gold nuggets or diamonds inside. I noted a small bottle of pills with no label. "Where did you get these super pills"! asked.

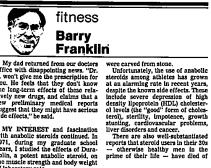
"From a friend," he said.

"Can I have or buy some?" I asked.

"Nope, gymnasts don't need the strength and bulk that we shot-putters do," he replied. "Besides, I need every pill that I can get."

I subsequently learned that Lou had been taking these pills like candy, with no regard for the appropriate or safe dosage.

The following weekend I went home to visit my parents. I asked my father to approach our family physician for a supply of these "wonder pills" for me.



My dad returned from our doctors office with disappointing news. "Dr. S. won't give me the prescription S. won't give me the prescription you. He feels that they don't know the long-term effects of these relatively new drugs, and claims that a few preliminary medical reports suggest that they might have serious side effects," he said.

MY INTEREST and fascination with anabolic steroids continued. In 1971, during my graduate school years, I studied the effects of Durabolin, a potent anabolic steroid, on the muscle strength and body weight of laboratory rais.

Although many of my steroid-infected rats became larger and stored rats became so mean the steroid of the stored state of the state

control.

It was then that I first realized the potential hazards of anabolic steroids.

THE REVELATION that Ben Johnson, Canada's Olympic gold medal winner, had used anabolic steroids was not really surprising to me. I had never seen a sprinter with such tremendous upper body development. His torso looked as if it

TWO YEARS ago, I attended an

strokes.
TWO YEARS ago, I attended an undergraduate fraternity reunion. I asked an old friend and former track athlete if he knew whatever happened to Big Lou.
"Lou died last year from a strange blood disorder. They thought it was a form of cancer," he repilled.
"Ironic, hast it," he went on. "Lou was one of the strongest and healthiest athletes that ever graduated from this university. He was only 37 years old when he died. Hard to believe, isn't it?."
"Not really," I thought.
Barry A. Franklin is director of cardiac rehabilitation and exercise laboratories, William Beaumont, 'Hospital, Royal Oak, and associate professor of physiology, Wame State University, School of Medicine.

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