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MARIO STRONG'S



MUSCLE NEWS

An Interview with Anti-Steroid Campaigner... Steve Michalik



STEVE MICHALIK

By David Robson

Steroid use in bodybuilding has always been a contentious issue. Many feel steroids should be

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CELEBRATING THE NATURAL
MUSCLE BUILDING LIFESTYLE
SINCE 1976**

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outlawed for health and ethical reasons; while an equally large number believe their use is essential to success in bodybuilding.

Presently the steroid debate is raging as the IFBB (the world's largest professional bodybuilding federation) contemplate a complete ban on these substances. Many feel this would spell disaster for the bodybuilding industry, as all pro-bodybuilders are thought to be steroid users, supplement companies, bodybuilding publications, and pro shows rely on these athletes to generate revenue for their respective enterprises.

Others believe that bodybuilding simply would not be the same without the massive physiques that currently grace the stage. Without steroids, the attainment of these physiques would be impossible, and the paying public would have to settle for natural contests with their less massive contestants. Many would refuse to support bodybuilding if the "hardcore" element was removed.

Conversely, a growing number of people are supporting natural bodybuilding, and shunning steroids and their adverse effects. Steroid use has been shown to result in a number of health conditions including heart failure, cancer, kidney problems and psychotic behaviour.

Their use is also viewed as unethical in that they clearly give an unfair edge to those willing to sacrifice their health and risk breaking the law (steroid use for athletic purposes is illegal). Indeed, many are beginning to question the need to promote these clearly harmful substances through the current professional bodybuilding movement.

One outspoken anti-steroid campaigner is former Mr. America, and inventor of the Intensity or Insanity training system, Steve Michalik.

No stranger to steroid use/abuse, Steve, 57, has suffered greatly in his quest for physical supremacy. Steroids almost killed Steve, but he eventually broke free of their grasp and now lectures on their risks while promoting steroid-free bodybuilding at every opportunity.

An expert on steroid abuse and one who has been there, Steve talks about the dangers of performance enhancing drug use with a large degree of authority - he would love to see them banned from bodybuilding and truly believes an alternative will be found in the near future. I recently spoke to Steve on the subject of steroid use.

Hi Steve. Give the readers some background on your bodybuilding career. What are your current bodybuilding goals?

Steve Michalik: I started to be interested in bodybuilding when I was eight years old. After

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being abused by my parents, I was determined to be strong enough and develop the self-confidence to live a good life. My family doctor had some old bodybuilding magazines that he let me borrow. I realized that bodybuilding was something I could do by myself without my parent's permission and the outcome depended solely on me.

At sixteen, I entered my first contest. It was a novice competition and I won. After that I entered the Junior Mets and placed 2nd. The following year, I won the Open Mets and went on to win the NY State, East Coast, Apollo, Most Muscular Man in USA, Mr. USA, Mr. America, and the heavy division of the Mr. Universe.

At 57 I still train hard and love it. I am also an outspoken anti-steroids advocate and currently lecturing as well as doing TV and radio shows on the topic. I also promote natural bodybuilding contests and have my own Mr. America's bodybuilding team who compete all over the country. If anyone is interested, they can contact me at steve@mramericas.com.

[Q] What are some of the biggest changes you have noticed in bodybuilding since you last competed?

Steve Michalik: Bodybuilding had a greater following in my day, and much more exposure and acceptance with the general public. The physiques were all very unique back then and it made the contest very interesting. Now, everyone looks the same - big, bloated physiques with no form or symmetry. If you changed heads, you wouldn't know who was who.

[Q] You achieved great things in bodybuilding yet had to stop competing. Describe the circumstances surrounding your retirement from bodybuilding?

Steve Michalik: I was doing very well and felt if I had continued after the '72 America, I would have accomplished a lot more. Unfortunately, severe circumstances in my personal life sidetracked me. When I finally got back on track at the Mr. Universe contest, it had all come tumbling down after a severe car accident left me paralysed and basically ended my bodybuilding career.



It took me five years to recover and when I did, I was all those years behind everyone else. I basically had to start from scratch to rebuild my physique. One of the main problems I encountered was that I was no longer able to train heavy. My back, which was injured in the accident, could no longer support that kind of training. Also, I never fully recovered the feeling in my muscles. Nevertheless, I got back and competed in the IFBB for almost ten years, but never again came close to what I was. It was very frustrating. My love of the sport and the comradely of bodybuilding kept me going. Eventually, however, my system just broke down and I had to give it up or die.

[Q] What is your fondest bodybuilding recollection and what do you regret most?

Steve Michalik: My fondest recollection was coming back after my accident and posing in the Florida Grand Prix to the cheers of my fans; and also, meeting Larry Scott in person. He's just dynamic and legendary.

I do have two regrets:

The first, and by far the foremost, was the day I decided to take anabolic steroids. My second regret was not taking Joe Weider's invitation and moving out to LA.

[Q] You have been vocal on the issue of steroid use. What really qualifies you to talk so passionately on this subject?

Steve Michalik: I almost died from it. Then I met my present wife, and we wanted to have children, but my levels were so low that we had a very difficult time. Then there was the liver and artery disease, and the loss of my friend Lyle Alzado. I've certainly had some experience with the stuff and know what it really can do first hand.

[Q] You may have heard the IFBB had considered a complete ban on steroids. What is your view on this stance? Do you feel steroids have any place in bodybuilding?

Steve Michalik: Like everything in life, you must break it down to build it back up. Out of chaos

comes order. At first there would be confusion. Some will desperately complain while others will leave and try to find another venue to compete in.

Steroids are fake muscle and degrade bodybuilding. They are a lie. I know. I was part of it. Bodybuilding would eventually benefit and then grow into a more accepted sport. Now it's just a freak show with anyone outside of bodybuilders not caring. Nobody in the real world knows who is champ.

[Q] Many "hardcore" bodybuilding fans would still like to see steroids in bodybuilding as they actually enjoy the freakiness of the physiques created by them. Many feel the removal of steroids will harm the industry. What are your thoughts on this?

Steve Michalik: If you look carefully at who is responding to your question it is those few die hard bodybuilding fans that crave sensationalism and big is better (well yes sometimes but not always). People cannot own things they feel they can never have understand the reality of. In the early years of bodybuilding myself Zane, Coe, Dickerson, Viator, Tinerino, and all the other unique body shapes (and please forgive me for leaving out all the great physiques of that era) there was a special look to everyone, just like an automobile where there are many different styles to choose from. Humans want choice and today's physiques all look the same.

[Q] What are the biggest problems stemming from steroid use in your view?

Steve Michalik: Get this - steroids are harmful to the individual, to the family, and to society. They effect everyone's thinking process.

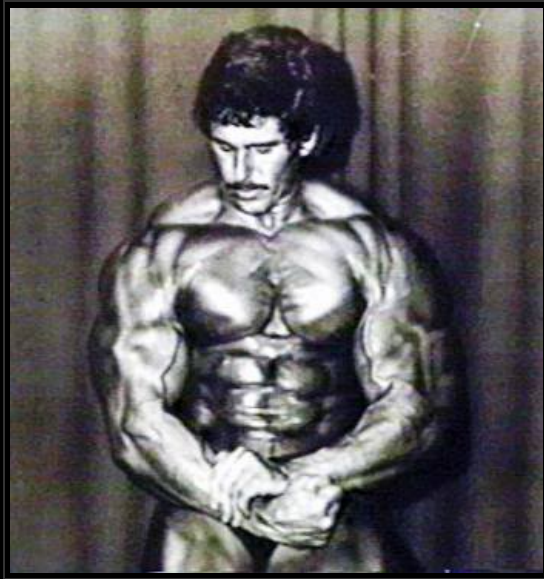
[Q] The psychological effects of steroid use have been debated for some time. Do you know of any research to support steroid induced psychosis or "roid rage". How common is this?

Steve Michalik: The negative psychological effects of steroids are not debatable - just live with one of these guys. But if you must have some semi-scientific proof, just look at menopausal woman. Or witness the changes in a woman's behaviour after childbirth or during that time of the month. It's all related to hormones and emotion. So do you think the male population would be immune to hormonal changes induced by steroids? I don't think so.

[Q] Why did you decide to use steroids? What were the biggest changes you observed in your physique after using them?

Steve Michalik: After I won the Mr. America - I went through some bad times. I didn't train and I was quite sick. I was asked to compete in the '75 Universe and had 6 months to train for it, so I decided I would give steroids a try. Once you take them, you're hooked. I didn't like what they did to my body. They bloated my mid-section, and I never quite got back in that incredible shape I had

in '72 - that 27" waist and 54" chest that was the cornerstone of my physique.



[Q] How long did it take you to come off steroids and what problems did you face doing this?
Steve Michalik: I couldn't come off steroids. Every time I would try, I'd feel like garbage. There's also a lot of pressure from promoters and fans to be big. I finally was forced to come off when my body shut down.

[Q] As steroid use has increased, have the physiques changed for the better in your opinion?
Steve Michalik: The physiques of today are big and ugly. They have no form, no symmetry. I don't care what anyone says, you can't compare the excellence of a Frank Zane to the freakish Ron Coleman. It's like buying a Ferrari and turning it into a Hummer.

[Q] You are a vocal anti-steroid campaigner but at one point you were prolific user of these drugs. Why did you stop using steroids and what message do you have for the countless young aspiring athletes who continue to use them?
Steve Michalik: When we used steroids in the seventies, no one knew about the side effects or any possible future problems. Doctors administered them to us and they worked. As you got bigger, your responsibility to self lessened. With this lessening of responsibility, came a cocky attitude about side effects and a dumb sense of immortality. When you finally come back to your senses, and become self again, you look back at what you did and what you became. After that, the only good thing to do is try to make up any damage you may have committed to yourself and others. My way of trying to undo my mistakes is to help others. This is planet Earth, a place full of deceit, lies, scams, and a whole bunch of frightened beings trying to survive. Cheating is rampant. Ethics and morals are but fleeting memories of a race that values the almighty dollar more than their very soul; where honour is replaced by winning at any price. I am always

pleased when I meet some young man or woman whose integrity is unshakable. Unfortunately, they are few and far between.

(Q) What do you suggest as an alternative to steroid use? Is there anything that comes close to replicating the effects of steroids?

Steve Michalik: There is definitely an alternative to steroids. The answers are in the science of the nature of muscle and the basic concepts of time, space, energy and matter. I have been working to perfect this science, and so far the "test studies" are remarkable. If one just looks at the work Darwin has done and his basic theories, you will find the answers - I have. I hope to publish these exciting answers and the solution to the problem of steroids once and for all.

[Q] Where do you see bodybuilding heading? Where would you like to see bodybuilding heading?

Steve Michalik: I see bodybuilding slowly fading into a cult status unless new, fresh ideas are pumped into its old heart.

[Q] What would you like to achieve on the anti-steroid front?

Steve Michalik: I would like to see others step up to the plate of life and take some responsibility and stop the lies to everyone about how they got so big. Certainly, it's not that ridiculous "one body part a day" routine, or some super shake. Its insulin loading, it's growth hormones, and it's biochemical manipulation of the hormones and cells.

I appreciate your time Steve. Do you have any final thoughts?

Steve Michalik: Anyone interested in contacting me for any reason, please feel free to do so at my website at <http://www.mramericas.com/>



Or you can e-mail me at steve@mramericas.com.

David Robson can be contacted at davidrobson19@hotmail.com

REFLECTIONS OF A NATURAL BODYBUILDER

The embodiment of personal responsibility, discipline, and commitment to a life built on the foundations of optimal wellbeing and impressive corporal aesthetics. Mario Strong's book tells the story of a mans life, his trials, disappointments and inspiring successes in the pursuit of becoming a champion in the field of bodybuilding, a sport that later had to have "Natural" preface the name to differentiate it from the drugs that came to soften its chiseled and Herculean image.

Reflections of a Natural Bodybuilder is a human-interest story about one man's insight into the world of bodybuilding. This compelling book explores how Staten Island bodybuilder Mario Strong implements his passion for natural bodybuilding to achieve his quest of health, strength, and longevity. However, his path towards accomplishing these goals is seen not without obstacles as he chronicles his unique history in a sport filled with nostalgia, hope, humor, ego, deceit, pharmaceuticals, pain, and death. Reflections of a Natural Bodybuilder also features tons of beneficial advice. From muscle-building workouts to fat-loss programs, you will find its in-depth natural bodybuilding guide not only informative, but also entertaining and inspirational as well. This fully illustrated book is a must read for the layman and athlete alike!

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