

## SPORTS

# Steroids: more problems than they're worth

By Polly Rix

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Hans and Franz, the weight lifting characters Dana Carvey and Kevin Nealon played on "Saturday Night Live," were known for wanting to (clap) "Pump ... you up!"

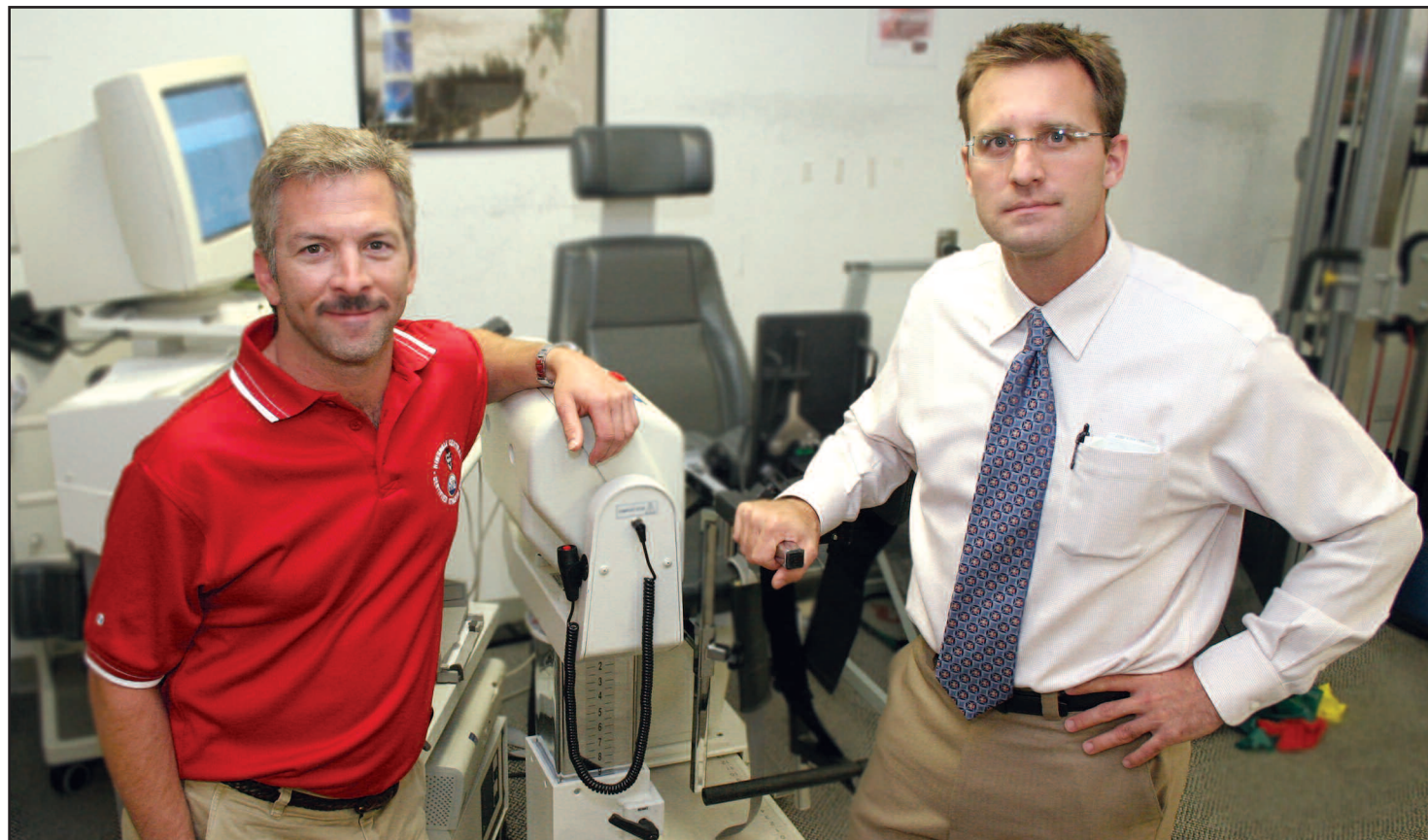
Serious about developing their muscles, neither Hans nor Franz could be accused of being a "girly-man."

But in the real world the barrel-chested duo might have been charged with anabolic steroid use. And using steroids is no joking matter.

Although professional athletes come to mind when steroids are mentioned, studies show six in every 100 Illinois high school athletes use synthetically produced hormones to bulk up.

"The incident of high school students using steroids is about 6 percent. More than 50 percent of teens are drinking alcohol. Clearly the greater problem is use of alcohol," said Central athletic director Paul Moretta, who attended an Oct. 19 seminar on the topic.

In some Illinois communities, the numbers of teens buying and ingesting steroids is on the rise — enough that the Illinois High School Association stepped in a couple of years ago. Illinois School Code now requires schools to educate athletes about steroids and ways they can



**Hinsdale Central** athletic trainer Ted Hirschfeld (left) and Dr. Steven Chudik of Hinsdale Orthopedic Associates led a presentation Oct. 24 at the high school, teaching student

athletes about dangers of steroids and healthy ways to bulk up. (Jim Slonoff photo)

build healthy, muscular bodies with a good diet and exercise.

Education is the best deterrent to steroid use among teen athletes, said Central athletic trainer Ted Hirschfeld. Trainers, coaches and the medical community know more about steroids than they did five years ago, he added.

"This is my sixth year at Central and I don't believe it's an issue, although I am not in the weight room every day," Hirschfeld said.

"It's not a huge thing. It's more educating the kids.

"They want instant bulk. A guy who is 6 feet and 200 pounds wants to be that 6-foot, 250-pound athlete. They think 'I want to get some juice.' They think 'I'm going to get my college scholarship,'" he added.

Hirschfeld wants teen athletes to understand they are compromising their bodies if they use steroids, commonly called Arnolds, gym candy, juice, pumpers, stackers and weight train-

ers.

"They look at it from the short term. You have to look at what steroids do from the long term to the kidneys and other organs," he said.

Anabolic steroid use has been linked to liver cancer, heart attacks, elevated cholesterol levels and stunted growth among adolescents.

An Oct. 24 steroid presentation at Central gave students the information they need to make good choices.

"The best choice is a healthy diet and a constant

weight training program," he said. "From December until June, that's football off-season, they're weight training. They're on a strength and conditioning program," Hirschfeld said.

What are red flags that an athlete might be taking steroids?

Building muscle that's abnormally large and perfectly shaped, severe acne breakouts on the back, aggressive behavior, mood swings and a temper are all signs, Hirschfeld said.

### A historical look

Anabolic steroids were developed in the late 1930s primarily to treat hypogonadism, a condition in which the body produces an insufficient amount of testosterone.

The primary medical uses of steroids are to treat delayed puberty, some types of impotence and wasting of the body caused by HIV infection or other diseases.

During the 1930s, scientists discovered that anabolic steroids could increase the growth of skeletal muscle in laboratory animals. This led to abuse of these compounds by bodybuilders and weightlifters and then by athletes in other sports.

Anabolic steroids can be taken orally, injected or rubbed on the skin.

These drugs are often used in patterns called cycling, which involves taking multiple doses of steroids over a specific period of time, stopping for a period and then starting again.

Users also frequently combine several different types of steroids in a process known as stacking.

By doing this, users believe that the different steroids will interact to produce an effect on muscle size that is greater than the effects of using each drug individually.

Another mode of steroid use is pyramiding. This is a process in

which users slowly escalate steroid use (increasing the number of drugs used at one time and/or the dose and frequency of one or more steroids) reaching a peak amount at mid-cycle and gradually tapering the dose toward the end of the cycle.

Source: [www.whitehousedrug-policy.com](http://www.whitehousedrug-policy.com)

### Learn more

Two programs for high school athletes provide healthy alternatives to steroids, sports supplements, alcohol and other drugs.

A.T.L.A.S., or Adolescents Training and Learning to Avoid Steroids, and its female counter-

part, A.T.H.E.N.A., or Athletes Targeting Healthy Exercise and Nutrition Alternatives, are taught by coaches and student leaders who use peer and team influences to promote nutrition and exercise. Oregon Health and Science University School of Medicine developed the programs, which were so effective that a national model was designed.

Both A.T.L.A.S. and A.T.H.E.N.A. were funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse of the National Institutes of Health.

For more information about A.T.L.A.S. and A.T.H.E.N.A. visit [www.ohsu.edu/hpsm](http://www.ohsu.edu/hpsm).