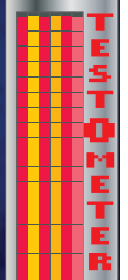
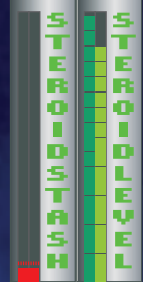
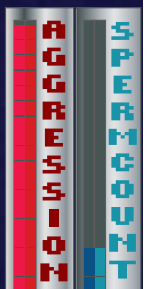


FUEL INJECTED

With professional sport being ravaged by steroid controversy, what of the average guy? He's alive and well and shooting up in the privacy of his home

BY PAUL McNALLY



NAME:
BUTCH

AGE:
28

JOB:
CARPENTER

60cm

1.8m

100kg

DIET:

FRIENDS:

12:04

HIS PORTLY, MIDDLE-AGED MAN ASKS:

“six-pack?” I spin around to face him.

I’ve been caught standing in the change room, with my shirt off, I suppose glancing at myself. It’s just the two of us. I tell him no, that beer doesn’t let me get a six-pack. “I’ve got some steroids for mine,” he says, grabbing a giant wobbling handful of his own stomach. He’s sitting on the bench prodding his fat. I question him, as calmly as I can, where he got these ‘roids. “I can’t really say,” he says casually, “but it’s going to trim me up. Help me with my confidence during presentations. I’m in marketing, you see.” And I do see.

You wouldn’t be holding this magazine if you didn’t at least sympathise with a man’s need to look good. But would you be willing to risk shrinking your balls? And is that even true? Would you shoot up testosterone? Risk bitch tits? A lot of South African men are saying yes. And the revelation is that most don’t even believe it’s such a big deal.

In the US, according to a recent survey, 78 percent of steroid users are non-competitive bodybuilders and non-athletes (with an average age of 25). Marketers by day, juicers by night. Heart attack by 40. But your coffin will be huge. I had no idea – until recently I just assumed that these guys, with the 50cm biceps, were eating big bags of protein powder. It turns out, while the steroid debate rages on the sports field, average guys are quietly shooting up at home while watching the match on the television. Even teenagers of 16, according to a recent study, are turning to steroids to emulate their sporting heroes. Dangerous drugs, with incredible strength. These are normal men doing normal jobs, men who will do, and believe, anything to be the best.

THE POWER OF GREYSKULL

Meeting Tyrone makes me want to take steroids. He’s 24, gained 15kg of pure muscle in the past year, is a personal trainer, biokineticist and his enthusiasm for these illegal, hormone tampering drugs is infectious.

“You go into a club and feel like you can take on anyone, not that I would – it’s not in my nature. But if anything did happen while I was injecting I’d be able to fight him, and his friend and his wife. You know?” No, I don’t know. I’ve been in therapy for a year trying to get this confident. “You feel invincible. For 12 weeks a year I can gym twice a day and not get sick. I’m never sore. It’s an amazing feeling. Strength, yes. Confidence, yes,” Tyrone says in a zealous fever. “Some chicks like it. Some hate it, but I love making other men feel intimidated.”

Tyrone isn’t grotesque. To be honest I’m a little disappointed. Under his fleece he’s big, but not a monster. He might be popping a few of the same pills that Schwarzenegger did in his heyday, but he’s not in that league. He works in a gym and has the fit, friendly approach you’d expect.

“While I’m young I want to see what my body can do,” he says. Here’s what he’s finding: he went from squatting 140kg to 220kg and felt less pain. “Weight doesn’t seem

THE COCKTAIL

What the average newbie injects, swallows and absorbs

- **Sustanon A** A combination of four different testosterone. Two of them fast-acting, two slow-acting.
- **Deca Durabolin** A firm favourite for size and strength.
- **Anabol** Tablets that help with the build-up of protein.
- **Tamoxifen** An anti-oestrogen supplement. Too much testosterone causes your oestrogen levels to elevate. So to avoid bitch-tits and water retention you need to reverse that.
- **Horny goat weed** To counteract the dip in libido when you stop using.

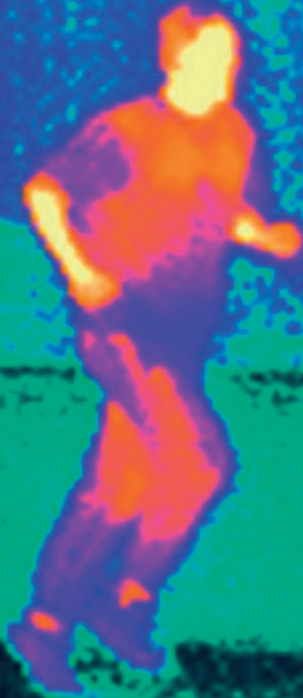
heavy. I have to stop myself. I can’t explain. If I pick up a weight when I’m ‘clean’ then I might wonder about it. But when I’m shooting I jump 10 kilos and if I go up 20 I have to stop myself because I might tear something.” He can take off his shirt at any point and show a six-pack, he’s addicted to the fact that he stands out.

“Our ideas around what is acceptable and what’s not – just like our idea of what is and isn’t possible – largely stem from our particular life experiences and the impressions they make,” says Clinton Gahwiler, head of psychology at the Sports Science Institute. “This includes things people have said to us, things we have witnessed and cultural factors,” he adds. For Tyrone, a gym partner he respected introduced steroids to him, he needed to start injecting to keep up. “One of the problems now is that we don’t weigh up the short-versus long-term consequences consciously enough. We rather avoid doing so – which is of course as much a choice with its own particular consequences,” says Gahwiler.

Tyrone is known in his community as the guy with “lekker arms”. The rub is he has more clients in his gym than any other trainer and he reckons it’s because of his body. “I don’t need business cards. *Look* at me.”

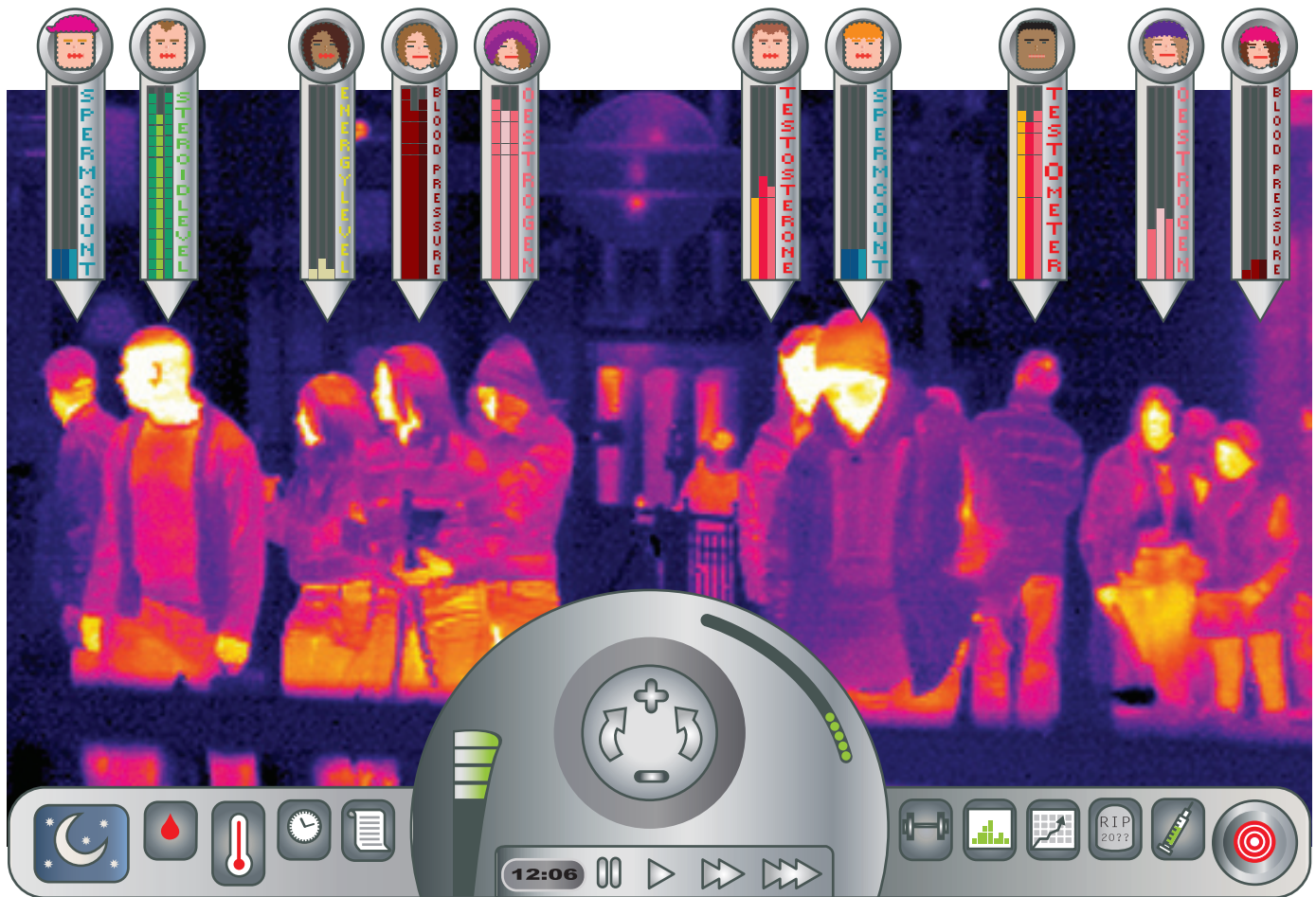


WHILE THE STEROID DEBATE RAGES ON THE SPORTS FIELD, AVERAGE GUYS ARE QUIETLY SHOOTING UP AT HOME WHILE WATCHING THE MATCH ON TV



50cm
1.72m
85kg

BLOOD PRESSURE
PERFORMANCE
TESTOSTERONE
STEROID LEVEL
THROMBOSIS



On closer inspection, Tyrone is huge, but he's covering. "A lot of people come to me and ask: what's the deal? What do you need? What do you recommend. I just say I'm natural, I'm natural, natural," he says, his palms held up. He hasn't told his friends, certainly not his clients. "I don't think anybody knows," Tyrone admits. "Not even my brother." They reckon he got where he is with hard work and protein shakes.

SUPPLEMENT ON DEMAND

Tyrone's deception makes sense. Most people don't know what it takes to get huge and supplements are on a sliding scale. Probably starting with the innocent creatine. This powder makes more energy available to your muscles so you can work them harder for longer, causing more microscopic damage (which is what you are trying to do in the gym) and so more growth. Creatine has no reported damage or side effects if taken in normal dosages. Tyrone, however, is injecting anabolic steroids (and has been for two years). They are testosterone-based and change the hormonal balance of your body to make your muscles grow more.

"Your body releases cortisol and that's a huge obstacle in muscle growth," says

TESTOSTERONE SMOOTHIES

What you need to eat to promote your favourite hormone

There's no such thing as a testosterone sandwich on rye. It's not found in the food we eat. However, "What we eat can assist testosterone production and better blood circulation," says *Men's Health* nutrition editor Megan Pentz-Kluys. Here's your shopping list.

▶ EAT PLENTY OF HEALTHY CARBS

Low GI breads, fruit and seed loaf, multigrain breads, rye breads, high-fibre cereals, oats, oat bran, mealies, pumpkin, butternut, durum pasta

▶ EAT MORE VEGGIES

Especially the dark green, orange or yellow variety. Green, leafy vegetables such as broccoli, brussel sprouts and cabbage

▶ PICK A FRUIT

Especially apples, blueberries, pineapple

▶ EAT HEALTHY FATS

Avocado, peanuts, raw nuts, olives, canola oil, olive oil

▶ AVOID LIKE A CASTRATION

Fried foods, sugar, caffeine and alcohol

Michael Lambert, associate professor for the Exercise Research Unit at the Sports Science Institute. Testosterone helps break the cortisol down. Tyrone injects for six weeks in spring and six weeks in autumn. Here's the amazing part: he gets the steroids on prescription from his doctor.

Tyrone met his doctor at a product launch and the older man told him that if he followed him he'd have absolutely no problems, just muscle gain. I've got to admit, I'd rather take a doctor's prescription over a dodgy Internet site, which was where I thought everyone was scoring.

I trailed the hellish steroid websites for days. There were pictures of well-built guys, the product you apparently needed and a space for your credit card number. "The black market stuff isn't made under lab conditions. You could end up injecting cooking oil," says Dr Ryan Kola, sports medicine practitioner. While surfing the sites I almost bought R900 worth of testosterone, just to see if it would arrive – from Germany, where steroids are legal. In South Africa, without a doctor's prescription, steroids are illegal. In theory you face a R40 000 fine for possession, but no one has ever been prosecuted. Perhaps I'd try out the testosterone, just to see what it did.

STEROIDS

I resisted, mainly because I thought the South African postal service is too dodgy.

Tyrone attributes this whimsical experimentation and gym talk – guys copying other blokes at the gym – as the major danger of men taking steroids. He says you need to research, you can't pick 'n mix with your credit card. But Lambert points out that even a "dodgy doctor" who's prescribing for you doesn't match the kind of supervision a professional sportsman gets. You need coaching for when the muscles deflate and the depression sets in (along with other side effects). Like growing boobs...

THE DEADLY SINS

Tyrone was actually quick to tell me about his gynaecomastia (commonly referred to as bitch-tits or male breasts). And then to tell me that his doctor immediately gave him another pill to sort it out. He started forming

your scrotum, but they tend to restore when you stop taking). All true, usually.

"Nothing was happening, but I was getting stronger and stronger," says Tyrone, who initially got no negative symptoms. He admits that if his back had broken out in pussy spots he probably would have stopped right away. "Men are initially governed by side effects. It all comes back to cosmetics," says Kola. If there are no side effects at the start they keep going.

One problem that Tyrone did experience was aggression. "I'm generally a good oke. But when I'm on that stuff I'm slightly short-tempered. I'm argumentative." He broke up with his last girlfriend because she thought if he went on steroids then he'd beat her up. "If violence is in your nature, then you will get into it. Intensify it," he says. He's had a few heated arguments with his folks and new girlfriend, but no fists.

"IN SOME MEN, THEIR PERSONALITIES CHANGE, AND IT'S PERMANENT"

a hard lump in his left pec. His concerns on infertility, however, he leaves until later. He wants a family and steroids tend to attack the sperm. Not your penis, but the actual balls.

"Because steroids mimic testosterone, it becomes about balancing the anabolic (muscle) effects with the androgenic (sexual) effects," says Lambert. You want to minimise the sexual effects as much as possible, for most guys it's like vengeful puberty. Breasts. Acne. Shrinking balls (often so noticeable you can actually measure the size difference in

"What we've learnt," says Lambert, "is that men have very varied physiological and psychological changes. In some men their personality completely changes and it's permanent."

The most important side effect, though, is death. Steroid-related fatalities occur as a result of suicide, liver disease, heart attacks and cancer. "Something that is overlooked is a swelling prostate," says Kola. The testosterone is attracted to it and can turn it cancerous. "Wrestlers in America are clearly not checked for steroids and they have a huge

THE SIDE EFFECTS

They are plentiful and horrific IN THE SHORT TERM

- Ball shrinkage – your penis will be fine, but your spuds will shrink.
- Reduced sperm count.
- Baldness.
- Development of breasts – known as gynaecomastia. If this goes untreated the fat will need cutting out.
- Back acne.

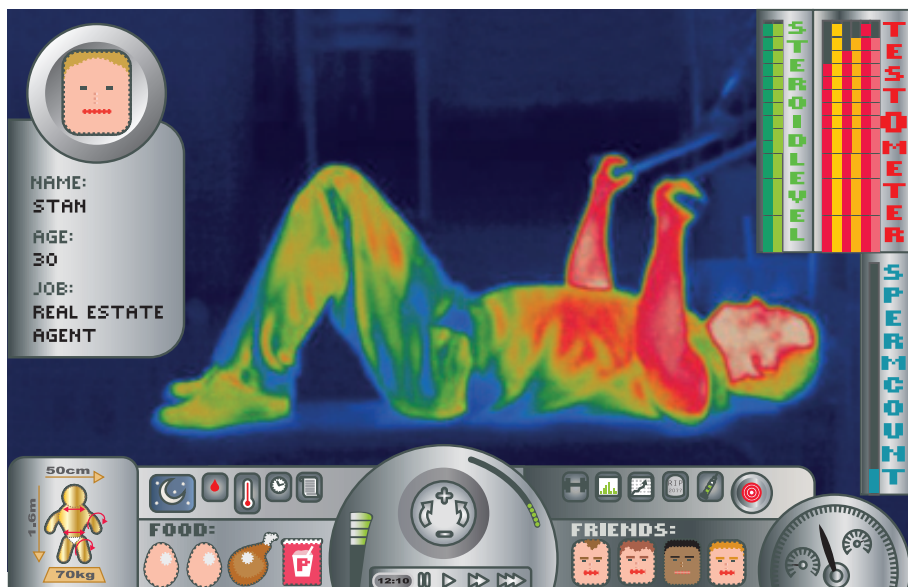
IN THE LONG TERM

- Heart attacks – over time your heart's left ventricle swells and thickens. Making it hard for the heart to relax.
- Hypertension.
- High cholesterol and high blood pressure.
- Liver cancer – processing of the steroids knocks your liver.
- Infertility.

fatality rate," says Lambert. WWE has seen at least 38 professional wrestlers dying at age 40 or younger since 1985. This includes Chris Benoit, who killed his seven-year-old son, his wife and himself. Whether the deaths are directly steroid related or not is debatable, but there's little doubt that they were using.

Tyrone knows all this. He even jokes how it'll get him one day, but he doesn't really believe it'll get that serious. It reminds me of when I had drug education at school and they told me that if I puffed on a joint I'd become a full-blown alcoholic and possibly a male prostitute. It didn't stop me smoking joints, it just eroded any kind of respect for my high-school's guidance department. Steroids follow the same rule as all drugs, I think. That magic word: moderation.

Then Tyrone proves that moderation isn't possible in this steroid game. He says it with his usual huge smile: "What I've found is I've had to increase the dosage." He's adding extra drugs each time and upping the ones he's using. "This year I'm chowing a tablet as well," he says. At his peak he takes five a day. If Tyrone had stuck with his original conservative plan he'd probably be fine. But people always up the dosage. Just like cocaine and Tik, no matter how careful you are, even if a doctor prescribes "good stuff" there is no "use" of steroids, only "abuse". You'll have to inject more and more to get the same affect and Tyrone admits it. Reluctantly. "It is abuse. Your body doesn't need it." But when your goal is "self-improvement", and you're trying just so damn hard, it's easy to forget the drug stigma. He even indulges in an argument that because



STEROIDS

steroids are used on Aids patients (for muscle atrophy), they must be good. "I wouldn't inject anything that was bad for me, it has advantages, doctors use it," he says. But just because it helps Aids patients doesn't mean it's good for everyone.

"No one from the medical profession is ever going to say that steroids are good for you," says Kola. Not professionally, but they might if they think they'll make some cash. The mark-ups are huge. Even Tyrone's moderate cycle of six weeks costs R2 000 and guys can go into costs of three times that. But when all your self-esteem is invested in your body, the cash seems to be worth it. The trouble is, if users are injecting for increased self-esteem, they can hit a snag with the general public. Not everyone is as encouraging as guys in the gym: the man on the street still sees it as cheating.

CHEATERS WIN IN SECRET

If a man has taken steroids, most people want to know about it. "Men want to look as good as the guys they see in the media, but they don't have the time to spend six hours a day in the gym," says specialist *Men's Health* psychology editor Rafiq Lockhat.

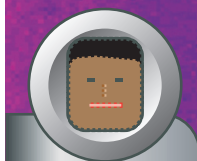
But Tyrone would argue that injecting is the complete opposite of cheating. "I'm not doing anything different. I don't see it as cheating. Please, that makes me angry. Don't ever look at it like that. I'm doing more than

MANAGE YOUR PROTEIN

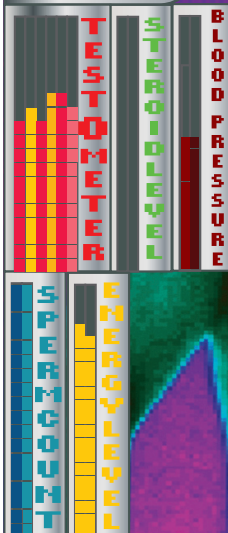
Protein can be abused. "The maximum amount of protein you should be taking in is 2.2g for every kilo of body fat," says *Men's Health* nutrition editor Megan Pentz-Kluyts. "If you're not lifting heavy weights in the gym that should be half a gram less." A decent steak can give you 30g of protein without blinking, so watch out – this "muscle builder" can become your worst enemy. A gram of protein can be turned into 17kJ if your body has no need for it. Overindulge and your body takes the excess and turns it into fat and sugar.

THE LIFE OF A PIECE OF STEAK

- The protein in your steak is broken down into building blocks known as peptides.
- These peptides are then broken down further into amino acids.
- The amino acids are absorbed through the small intestine's lining, enter the blood stream and are carried to the liver.
- From here, some of the amino acids are used to build the body's protein stores.
- What's not used is stored as fat (although to be fair some may be broken down, converted to glucose and burnt for energy).



NAME:
JOSHUA
AGE:
24
JOB:
IT DEVELOPER



someone who's just taking supplements. I'm taking full advantage of the fact that I'm on steroids. Because I want more growth while I'm committed. I want everything to be perfect – especially my nutrition," he says. He reckons he's more focused while injecting. He only drinks water. He also eats well, mainly because steroids escalate your cholesterol; before you've eaten anything you've already poured tons of fat into your blood stream. He has to balance his body out. It's a lot of effort and takes plenty of focus but despite it all, even when you're huge you can't please everyone.

"When I go out, I have to cover up. I like to show off. But now I cover up because people look and they say: steroids!" he says.

We want men to be huge, but only if they get there on the genetics their parents gave them. It's weird. Ironically (and tragically), Tyrone is all about other people. What the other bodybuilders are doing. What strangers are saying. The man who cares what others think is engaged in a drug-fueled activity that gets him ostracised. But to him the social cons outweigh the bad. When he does get a good comment it fuels him for the rest of the day. It sends him back into the gym and makes him want to pump iron harder. So if social ridicule won't stop him what will? At the moment it looks like nothing. He's got doctors prescribing the best, his father's interest, his mother's denial, a booming business and none of the disgusting side effects. But is there going to be a point when

THE BEAUTY OF THE BEAST

Get huge like Tendai "Beast" Mtawarira (Sharks rugby player) without drugs or an injection – just food. Lots of it

This 21-year-old Zimbabwean weighs 111kg. He has never used steroids and never will. He eats five eggs, soya milk, a side of bacon and brown bread for breakfast. He eats steak three times a week and two protein shakes every day. "I eat double, maybe triple the amount of the average guy," says Mtawarira. But he burns it off by working out almost four hours a day. "I concentrate on a different muscle group each day," says Mtawarira. That's an hour and a half in the gym and the rest on the field. "Most important is to be consistent," he says. If you've got a physical goal you need to live it 24/7 – that's how you make it happen.

this doctor is going to say stop? A doctor who has sold his soul to a supplement company? I suddenly get a feeling that Tyrone is being led into a realm that won't let him out.

Here's why: the way this man describes steroids makes me want that feeling of power. I always have. And if someone gave it to me for two years (as Tyrone has had so far) I don't know if I could stop. "At the start I wanted to get to 80kg," says Tyrone. "And then 85. Now I'm at 90. I want to get to 100, then I'll be happy. But to be honest – when I look in the mirror I still see the scrawny 65kg guy." Then he says, dropping his guard even more: "It's hard to say I'm going to stop one day. It's like reverse anorexia. I'm never going to feel hard enough. I'm never really happy with it. When I'm not injecting I go back to normal... and I never want to go back."

MH