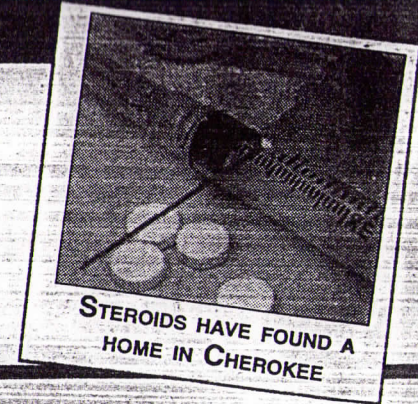


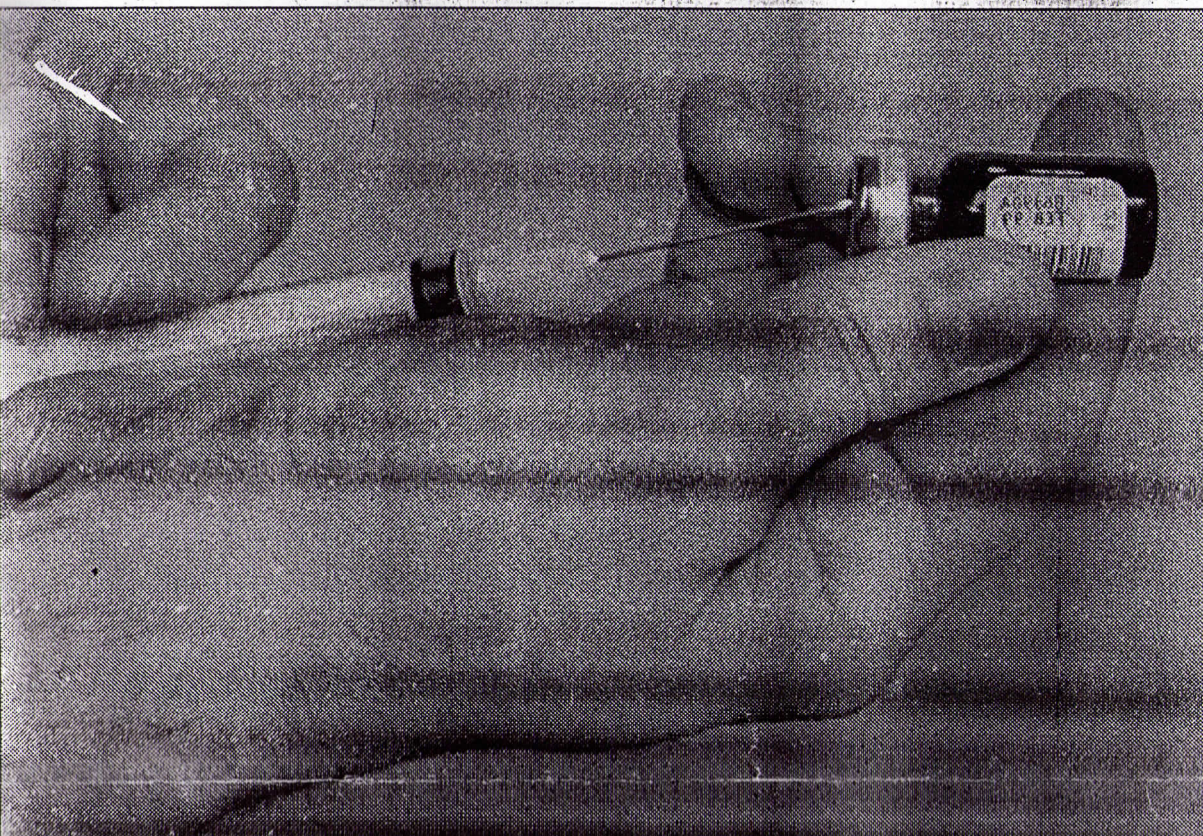
# CHEROKEE COUNTY'S DAILY TIMES



SERVING AURELIA, CHEROKEE, CLEGHORN, LARRABEE, MARCUS, MERIDEN, QUIMBY AND WASHTA, IOWA

## 'Rhoid Rage

### A drug once reserved for athletic outlaws, anabolic steroids are becoming more popular in Cherokee County



“I don’t think we’re different from any other community. I think we’d be putting our head in the sand if I said that we didn’t [have students using steroids].”

**Paul Fuhrman**

*Washington High School Principal*

by **Charlie Litton**  
Daily Times

Something is rotten with area athletics. Unfortunately, underneath the sweet smells of victory, spirit, and fair competition is a foul stench wisping a palpable bouquet of malodorous reek. Everyone knows it’s there, but no one dares to speak of it.

Whether we like it or not, the issue of area athletes using anabolic steroids can no longer be swept under the carpet as a nonrecurring anomaly. A dangerous trend is beginning to take root like a thorned weed.

A trend serious enough that Paul Fuhrman, principal of Washington High School in Cherokee, felt it incumbent to seek assistance in the matter. He turned to the Iowa High School Athletic Association (IHSAA), the governing body over boys athletics in the state.



"Paul Fuhrman contacted me, and said this was something that would be good for the student body," IHSAA Wellness Coordinator Alan Beste said of his talks with students and parents of Cherokee the first week in December.

According to Beste, a 1993 survey found that seven percent of all Iowa athletes have used or are using steroids. Beste also said that statistic should apply to nearly all Iowa high schools.

"I don't think we're different from any other community," Fuhrman explained. "I think we'd be putting our head in the sand if I said that we didn't [have students using steroids]."

"I'll guarantee you there is someone here (WHS) using steroids or that has used steroids," Beste said to a group of concerned parents and faculty members on December 5.

Betting on just one Cherokee or area athlete using steroids would be a safe one. "I know about ten kids or so that use, or at least have," says an area athlete who wishes to remain anonymous.

Ten may seem like a high number, but when the athlete's pull to steroids is taken into account, it is relatively small. Athletes want to get bigger, stronger, and faster in less time. They're fighting for that scholarship, the starting job, or just trying to gain that competitive edge. Hard work and dedication are not enough; not effective enough, not fast enough.

The pull becomes stronger when the dangerous side effects are hiding behind the deceiving shell of a newly found physique. "It's hard not to [use steroids]," said an area athlete. "When you see the effects; when you see you're staying the same and your lifting partner is getting better."

Therein lies the major problem concerning adolescents using steroids. While it is true that steroids do work, the damage they do internally are permanent and are often invisible until sometime down the

road. Problems with the liver, kidneys, the connective tissues within the joints, closed growth plates, and high blood pressure are among the major negative side effects.

"The whole steroid issue really, really irritates me," Cherokee Braves football coach Bill Messerole said. "It's like drugs and alcohol. They don't realize the long term effects." He later added, "Kids get the wrong idea. They think it'll make them a superstar."

There comes a point in many athletes' high school careers when they weigh the pros and cons of anabolic steroids. Most decide against using, but it may be for the wrong reasons. For some, a fear of needles may be the deciding vote. "I've seen them; I've seen people do them, but I've never done them," said one area athlete. "I seriously thought about it. I didn't because I didn't want to get caught."

The inability to locate steroids is almost never the reason. Neither is the price of black market steroids. "Money's not the problem. I got money, and my parents don't really pay attention to how much I spend. But, yeah, I could have them by the end of the day," said an area athlete. When asked if he decided on using if and when he went to college, where he would get steroids, the response was: "Oh, I'd just come back here to get them."

Ralph Kroger, owner of the Victory Gym, has seen his share of steroid use in his long career as a professional body builder, and knows the warning signs. "It wasn't too long ago, in the summer months, there were kids that I knew were using. . . They were actually going to Mexico to get them," Kroger said.

The IHSAA has a strict policy concerning steroid use. Violators are banned from all activities for one calendar year. Washington High School also employs the same policy.

But since the mandate's implementation in 1991, the IHSAA has only enforced

it once. Last year when two football players from Little Rock were caught using steroids obtained from a veterinarian. The athletes told the veterinarian they needed steroids for a horse.

A lack of enforcement does not indicate a lack of abuse. It simply demonstrates the difficulties involved in detecting and prosecuting steroid users. Among the difficulties is the IHSAA can not levy punishment unless they have an admission of guilt or a conviction in a court of law. Testing is almost useless due the exorbitant cost, and the fact that it has to be random. "You just can't pick a suspect," Beste said.

Random testing also includes female athletes, and activities often not associated with steroid abuse, such as tennis, golf, and basketball.

"If we only work with the kids that get caught, we'd be working with a small group," Beste said. "We want to be proactive. It's better to educate the kids about the negative effects before they start using, than it is to say don't do it or we'll catch you."

It is for that reason that testing is not the weapon of choice in battling steroid abuse. "Education is the best possible approach available to us. Testing has too many variables involved. I'm not even considering the expense. . . I don't see that as a viable alternative," Fuhrman said.

"I think it's education because the side effects are life threatening and the kids need to understand that," Messerole said.

Taking the proactive stance is the popular route. It seems the only answer to a scary question, but difficulties arise in that as well. In educating adolescents, a risk is taken in almost encouraging use. Nowhere is human stubbornness more prevalent than it is among the unwilling student. Couple that with youth's delusion of invulnerability, education can be tough. Take, for example the results of a survey in which high school

athletes were posed this question: "Would you take steroids if you were guaranteed to win a gold medal at the Olympics, but would die in ten years? Ninety-two percent said that they would."

"I think if you got a widely educated program on steroids, most would walk out wondering where to get them," Kroger said. "It's got to come from within. With these kids today, I think that the more you harp on them not to do something the more they want to do it."

Kroger's word may seem incredible, but they appear to be frighteningly close to the truth. "Education sure won't work," says a Washington High School student. "When that guy came (Alan Beste)- he told us he wouldn't lie to us- he said, 'they work.' After that everyone wanted them."

According to Beste that is why it is equally important, if not more, so to not only educate athletes, but also the non-athletes, parents, teachers, and coaches. So that they know the warnings signs. So they help in the preventative process. ". . . what to look for, what are the things that lead to use," Beste said.

"If parents suspect it, they need to know where to go. . . I hate to say the coaches. I hate to say the school, but I think that's it," Messerole said.

Fuhrman concurs with Messerole but added, "Depending on the relationship, sit down and work with the child; that would be the best approach. . ."

To think that Cherokee and surrounding communities are immune to such goings-on simply because of the small town atmosphere could be a large mistake. "It's not just a metropolitan problem," Beste said.

"Any school district in the U.S. that said they didn't have a problem; they'd be kidding themselves," Fuhrman said.

Despite the growing concern, use is only increasing with no end in sight. "They've been around, and they're there. I don't think you're ever going to stop them," Kroger said.