

# SAFE YOU CASE STUDIES



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## The Competitiveness: Christos' story (Cyprus)

Christos is a 22 year old bodybuilder. He started playing football when he was 12 years old. In order to meet the demands of the training, he also started working out in a fitness gym. He realised he was not an exceptional football player; in fact, he enjoyed his gym sessions more. He stopped playing football and started to devote himself to fitness and bodybuilding. The last four years, he trained in a bodybuilding style and became a competitive bodybuilder.

He does not use gym instructors; rather, he prefers to coach himself. He designs his training programs by getting information from the Internet or books. He also discusses and exchanges training tips and programs with other people on the field such as experienced athletes, coaches and doctors, whom he fully trusts. His goal is to have a stronger and more muscular body, as well as to stay at a competitive level.

Christos believes that gym goers' diets should consist mainly of protein and carbohydrates through meals and nutritional supplements. Taking vitamins and minerals are not necessary as they come from the meals themselves. In order to increase muscular strength, gym goers need to take nutritional supplements such as protein, carbohydrates, glutamine and casein - in addition to consuming meals rich in protein such as beef, chicken and rice. However, he also believes that for a competitive bodybuilder it is necessary to use substances with performance enhancing effects - including both nutritional supplements and doping - in order to be successful. He says: *"Training and nutrition alone are not sufficient to take you to the highest level of competition."*

Christos thinks that the most important substances for exercisers are testosterone and growth hormone. He has tried testosterone, growth hormone, Deca, Primobolan and other substances. He is doing six-month training cycles with three months substance cycles. During the preparation period, he spends three months using steroids and three months off steroids. At the same time, he uses other performance enhancing and nutritional supplements. This is because each anabolic steroid has a different effect - depending on the training period, he selects the substances depending on his particular goals for that time period. He explains: *"For example, I take the growth hormone before falling asleep during the period of muscle strength training but I take it in the morning and in the afternoon when I stop muscle strength training."*

Christos has experienced several negative side effects from using doping substances such as palpitations, headaches, swelling, weakness, aggression and even fluctuations in sexual desire. Once, he overdosed with an anabolic steroid and he had a stroke. Despite these side effects, he believes that these substances have many benefits such as increased muscular strength and endurance development and he intends to continue using them - with harm-reduction measures in place. *"During the competition period, I may take up to 100 pills every day but I regularly have blood tests, usually a month after the end of a cycle, to check my health."* - he says. Depending on these test results, Christos may take additional substances, such as hepatoprotectives or blood pressure medications, that help his body to recover. *"These protective substances depend on the doping substances I am using. For example, if I use Aromasin during the cycle, then I will take Prolomet and Proviron during the recovery"*

*period.*" The types of substances, the dosages and the use patterns are determined by Christos himself, based on his experiences, and the consultation with a doctor.

Christos thinks that accessing and purchasing doping substances is easy. Gym goers can purchase these substances from the Internet and food stores; or through athletes and fitness instructors. He never faced difficulties in finding the substance he was looking for. The Internet is an important source of these substances and there is always a network of people that can provide access to these substances quickly.

## The Influence: Yannis' story (Cyprus)

Yannis is 21 years old and likes spending time in fitness gyms. He believes that doping substances are used by gym goers to increase their strength. He also claims that there are normative reasons which explain exercisers' use of these substances: other exercisers do it, so it is acceptable and using these substances helps keeping up with exercising.

According to Yannis, doping use is now very common in gyms, as exercisers simply desire to look better as soon as possible. Doping substances are used in cycles with some intervals. Yannis thinks there are certain periods when use is increased, especially in the summer. Also, he believes that some gym goers use these substances, while others abuse them.

Yannis himself uses nutritional supplements throughout the year. Depending on the time of the year, he will do cycles of different nutritional supplements. He mostly uses supplements to increase muscle mass and aid recovery from training. This year for the very first time he was introduced to steroids by his personal trainer. Reflecting on this experience, Yannis says: *"I did a cycle with Winstrol but I am still unsure whether the substances have helped me or not."*

From his experience, Yannis thinks that not many gym goers buy doping substances through the Internet because they worry that the substances might be impure. Yannis thinks that gym goers ask fitness instructors for information about doping use. Gym goers trust their instructors. They are influenced and inspired when they look at instructors' strong and muscular bodies. In addition, Yannis thinks that gym goers purchase these substances from nutritional supplement stores recommended by their fitness instructors. Yannis argues that it is risky because *"nowadays, many people call themselves personal trainers with minimal qualifications and they are the persons who promote doping use."* He is also aware of advertisements where popular athletes, personal trainers or coaches promote the use of performance enhancement nutritional supplements. This in turn develops a mentality of supplement use as necessary to increase performance beyond regular training.

## The Acceleration: Kostas' story (Cyprus)

Kostas is 22 years old and is a recreational athlete. Kostas has been training in gyms and fitness centres for several years and occasionally practices martial arts in his free time. Kostas believes that gym goers use doping substances to optimize their performance when training alone is not sufficient to reach their goals. Kostas also claims stereotypes about attractiveness, social norms and overall moral climate that prevail nowadays increase doping use among exercisers. He says: "*Exercisers are heavily influenced by social media and the image stereotypes they promote, and they reach for substances when they struggle to achieve the 'ideal body' quickly*".

Kostas has used nutritional supplements systematically the past three years. He started using protein supplements and amino acids, then he soon moved to Tribulus and ZMA. Currently, he is using combinations of nutritional supplements depending on the time of the year.

Kostas thinks that gym goers use nutritional supplements daily, whereas doping substances are used in cycles of six months. Performance enhancing substance use (including both nutritional supplements and doping) depends on gym goers' goals. For instance, steroids are used during winter and spring to bulk up, whereas the use of fat burners is increased in summer time. The dosages depend on the weight of each gym goer.

For information on performance enhancement substances, gym goers consult friends and fellow athletes, or ask for information at nutritional supplement stores. Kostas says that gym goers purchase these doping substances through the Internet. He also claims that these substances are promoted heavily by gyms.

## The Norm: Jermaine's story (Germany)

Jermaine is 18 years old and he is finishing high school. He started to play soccer at club level when he was 10 years old. While growing up, his peers in the soccer club became more muscular and physically stronger whereas his body appeared to be underdeveloped. To improve his physical appearance, Jermaine decided to join a gym.

At the beginning, he went to the gym sporadically but soon he started to enjoy the motivating atmosphere. His parents bought him a permanent membership as a present for his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. Because they thought nutritional supplements are an integral part of the typical training routine in gyms, they also gave him a package of protein.

Jermaine started to go to the gym twice a week and soon he noticed positive results. He improved his gym performance and his body became more muscular. Supplementing with protein became part of his training. When he was 17 years old, one of his friends in the gym convinced him to give up soccer and invited him to join an American Football team. Since then, he works out in the gym three times a week and practices American Football with his new teammates twice a week.

Since the day Jermaine received the first protein package from his parents, he consistently consumes nutritional supplements. He includes an appropriate amount of protein in his gym routine after every workout. Recently, Jermaine started to use pre-workout supplements which he consumes before the workout to be alert and focused for the upcoming session.

During the American Football season, Jermaine uses painkillers, especially when he feels pain in his shoulder and other body parts; or when he has a headache after a game. During the games, the coaches usually provide beverages containing magnesium and calcium which all team members, including Jermaine, consume regularly. So far, Jermaine has never used any other performance enhancing substances.

After Jermaine received protein from his parents, he subsequently ordered protein from the Internet. He educates himself about the substances that he wants to use. "*I tested different kinds of proteins before I decided to stay with the products I currently use.*" - he says. In fact, he tried several brands until he found his preferred mixture and flavor.

The 'home pharmacy' of his parents provides him with painkillers. His parents know that Jermaine takes these substances. He hopes that he will be able to order the pre-workout supplements from the Internet soon. Currently, this product is not available in Germany. He received it from a friend at the gym who had been to the US and bought an XXL-package for him.

Almost all his American Football team members go the gym regularly and take all sorts of supplements. Most of them use protein and creatine. "*To them, taking supplements is just as normal as consuming painkillers. Nobody questions this procedure or talks about it.*", Jermaine says. Mostly he is not influenced by the supplement manufacturers' commercials or promotions; but now and then he picks up some supplements that are promoted by players

from the U.S. American Football League (NFL). Jermaine knows what he wants when he orders protein from the Internet; or when he asks a friend to buy him supplements in the US. The distributors on the Internet often include special offers or discounts, but Jermaine is not interested in these deals. He just orders the products he knows and wants.

## The Look: Rico's story (Germany)

Rico is 23 years old and works as a qualified bank employee. He started an apprenticeship right after he finished high school and now works at the bank full time as a member of staff.

Rico was not interested in sports, but he was a big movie fan. He was inspired by the aesthetic bodies of his favorite actors and wanted to emulate their bodies. Rico was always impressed by the actors who had more defined biceps and muscles than him. He became a member of a gym and started to work out three times a week regularly. Over time, he changed his routine and now he works out almost every day. He is proud of his well-toned body and tries to maintain his diet to remain slim.

Rico started to go to the gym when he was 15 years old. He recognized the first positive results immediately and subsequently increased his workout sessions both in terms of time and intensity. After the first one and a half years of training, his body performance did not increase as fast as he wished. *"I felt that I must gain more muscles to become even more impressive and with that, it appeared to me that I needed to change something."*, he says.

Rico asked other members from the gym he befriended and the most frequent answer was to use nutritional supplements. Rico decided to buy his first protein supplements at the gym. He quickly became interested in supplements and willingly tested any product that was offered to him. At first, he bought the over-the-counter supplements in his gym, then he became regular customer of a specialized shop right next to his apartment. A further one and a half years passed before the pattern of stagnant performance repeated itself. Once again, Rico found himself too thin and not muscular enough. He observed what the other frequent gym users looked like. Most of them had a physique like the actors in Rico's favorite movies.

*"I started asking for more information about how the others gym users got their bodies in shape. I also asked the store owner of the shop where I regularly bought my supplements. They basically told me that I would not make it to where I wanted to be just by normal workouts and normal supplements. In particular, a guy I did not know all that well told me what kind of substances I needed for real muscle growth. He even offered to buy the proper medication for me."*, Rico remembers. This was the first time Rico took anabolic steroids. He was 18 years old.

In the following weeks, Rico felt great. He was happy because he could see instant improvements. He went to his friend's shop and shared his experience - which opened a door for him to a whole new world. He was offered to purchase everything he needed to set up a 'course treatment'. Rico was introduced to a group of other users. Among other things, he was advised to use testosterone on top of steroids. Rico had no doubts. His muscle growth and performance exploded.

However, after a short period, the first side effects - acne on his back and first signs of gastric problems - appeared. He increased his dosage until two abscesses formed on his back. He suffered pain, went to the doctor and was finally sent to a hospital for an operation. *"The*



*operation was a wake-up-call, but despite the negative experiences I continued using anabolic steroids. Not as extensive as before but I still want to keep my body in the shape."*, he reasons.

Rico never used the Internet for buying substances or even as a source of information. The gym offered basic supplements to Rico, which he tried excessively. Later in the shop he was offered a discount rate for his nutritional supplements (e.g., protein, creatine) if he agreed to try new supplements from time to time. He was drawn to appealing brands (e.g., "Body Lab") and product packaging. Rico did not ask for information about the products, as long as they served as a means to improve his athletic performance and shaped his body as he wished.

Although he did not know the gym user who sold him his first steroids, he trusted him. "*The impressive body was good enough reference*" for Rico. At that point, Rico worked out regularly and was well known in the gym. Later the shop was his main source of substances (anabolic treatments and testosterone). He never questioned the origin or production of the illegal supplements. Rico basically bought the products and did not care about information concerning the substances nor about the price. When purchasing nutritional supplements, his decision was not influenced by special offers and discounts, but more so by the pure size of the package instead of the reduced price. When Rico obtained the steroids, he bought a whole cycle along with substances for post cycle therapy.

## The Mindfulness: Tim' story (Germany)

Tim is 24 years old. He started with Jiu-Jitsu at a competitive level at the age of seven. During his life, he has actively pursued several martial arts. He even competed at an international level but never reached a point where he could earn a living from sport. As he lost his passion for martial arts, Tim decided to study sport science and has turned to CrossFit - which was an emerging new sport four years ago. Currently, Tim exercises three to four times a week and is thinking about entering some regional CrossFit competitions.

Because of his sports, Tim has always been in a very good physical shape and he has always had a positive body image. Since he started CrossFit, he gained even more muscle and his body fat percentage decreased significantly. Now, he is very satisfied with his appearance although he thinks he could lose some muscle mass. Throughout his sporting career, Tim learned that athletic performance is highly dependent on exercising and willpower.

During his former martial arts competitions, Tim consumed energy drinks. He reasons: *"Because of the energy drinks, I could maintain my focus on the next competition and felt better prepared for the next opponent"*. He also tried creatine once during his martial arts training, but he did not notice any performance changes. Tim thinks that *"martial arts in general offer a mindful approach to body and soul and should not be supported by any additional substances"*.

In contrast to that statement but necessary to support his own extensive CrossFit training, Tim uses protein shakes. His training partners at the studio also regularly use boosters during their training sessions, but he has never considered it owing to the potential side effects. Because he is close to the studio's owner, he has insight in the promotional activities of several nutritional supplement companies. Due to the ample free samples the studios are provided with, Tim is very suspicious about the promises these products boldly make. His protein supplement is produced by a company which is located close to the CrossFit studio. He says that they personally guarantee the quality and purity of the supplements and he trusts them. Because of his studies, he knows how the body works and would not use any substances without consulting experts he trusts. *"The other products I regularly see do not provide any particular background of specialized expertise."*, he says.

Although Tim has heard stories of athletes using illegal products in martial arts and in CrossFit, even at a recreational level, he has never had personal contact with such substances. On one hand, Tim thinks illegal products might be effective; but on the other hand, he is concerned for the associated health hazards and the ethical implications. *"If I took those substances, I would contradict the spirit of martial arts; and then I would lose the respect of my friends and family."*, he says.

Tim readily supports any campaign that promotes clean sport. In his opinion fitness studios should be specifically targeted. *"Every athlete, no matter what level he or she is at, should be aware of the problems related to consuming illegal substances"*, he says and continues: *"I would also impose penalties to dissuade the distribution of such products."*

## The Shortcut: Dimitrios' story (Greece)

Dimitrios is 24 years old and he is an amateur bodybuilder. He believes that gym goers use doping substances to get faster results and to look better compared to other gym goers who might be in better shape, indicating a normative element in doping substance use. Being more sexually attractive is another reason for using doping substances to improve physical appearance.

Dimitrios also believes that it is easier and better to consume nutritional supplements, such as protein shakes, rather than trying to get the same nutrients from regular food. Performance enhancement substance use varies with respect to dosages and type of substance used. Some substances are used daily but their dosage may increase occasionally. Dimitrios says: "*There is seasonality in performance enhancement substance use, with some doping substances used for 'bulking up' and increasing muscle size in winter time, and other uses for fat burning around summer time*". He believes that excess use is an issue and "*exercisers may use doping and nutritional supplements at doses well beyond the recommended ones*".

Dimitrios has used nutritional supplements regularly for the past five years and has been experimenting with steroids for the last two years. He is doing short cycles of steroids to increase his muscle mass when he feels that his physique is not improving as expected and needs something more to boost his training.

According to Dimitrios, information about nutritional supplements is widely available. Gym goers may seek such information from personal trainers or from other fellow gym members. "*Doping substances are promoted by elite bodybuilders*" - he says - "*whereas nutritional supplements are also promoted by athletic champions through advertisements or by coaches who advise exercisers to take supplements to do better*". Accessing and purchasing doping nutritional supplements can be easily done on the Internet.

## The Awareness: George's story (Greece)

George is 21 years old. He likes to do sports, especially CrossFit. He has been using steroids systematically in the past two years. He started using nutritional supplements but was soon introduced to steroids. He is using 10-day cycles during the winter period. He also uses several nutritional supplements such as protein supplements, amino acids and Tribulus.

He believes that gym goers use doping substances to obtain a strong and muscular body in a shorter period of time. *"We use supplements because they help us to be satisfied with how our body looks. We need these substances as part of our 'sporting mindset'.*

According to George, athletes take doping substances in cyclic intervals, which always depend on the substance. *"For example, some drugs should be taken before training. On the other hand, in fitness sports, exercisers usually take nutritional supplements all year in cyclic intervals lasting one month but they take doping substances for about eight to nine months. The most sensitive period to take doping substances is in the summer."*

George is convinced that people are heavily influenced by models with extremely toned bodies they see on television; consequently, gym goers try to obtain such bodies by using performance enhancing substances. Regarding how gym goers get the doping substances, George knows that most companies have websites and thus gym goers can buy drugs on the Internet. He points out that drug companies only present the positive effects of the performance enhancing substances to boost sales but negative side effects are not mentioned. These doping substances are promoted through videos on YouTube which are launched by popular athletes, through social media or through events which are sponsored by drug companies. George also thinks that 'word-of-mouth' is a powerful marketing tool and gym goers are informed about doping substances by other athletes rather than by their coaches.

Concluding, George underlines that if someone wants to purchase doping substances it is easy to do so. He believes that illegal substances produce results more rapidly while the use of legal supplements require a greater effort to 'build' a strong body, thus the decision to use doping substances depends on the individual's personality.

## The Understanding: Giovanni's story (Italy)

Giovanni is 23 years old. He started to play rugby when he was 12 years old. When Giovanni was 17, he had the opportunity to enter in the selection process for a national Italian youth rugby team. During that time, he suffered serious injury to his knee. To be able to play on Sunday, he took a mix of strong painkillers such as Buscopan and Voltaren. Giovanni knows that *"in rugby, the use of medications and medical practices is very common from 14 years of age, specifically when this sport generally becomes more aggressive and hard"*. In the sports club where Giovanni was playing the doctor advised him to take medications or treatments. For example, when his teammate had the same knee injury, the doctor aspirated fluid from his knee. Another teammate was forced to take human growth hormone (GH) by the club. However, ultimately Giovanni had to have an operation to fix his knee and his dream to become a professional athlete was finished.

Obviously, Giovanni took the performance-enhancing substances without his parents' knowledge because he knows that they would absolutely disagree with this choice. Thinking back, Giovanni acknowledges: *"At that time I was not aware of the possible consequences of taking that substance. My only goal was sports performance and the ability to play every Sunday. Nothing else mattered."*

Giovanni knows about supplements because in rugby they are widely used, and he knows that many of his teammates and friends use them regularly. In fact, they always have those fancy colored boxes which attract Giovanni a lot. In high level rugby, many players are sponsors of these substances, and there are many stands filled with these colorful boxes during the sport events. It is no wonder that Giovanni has become interested in knowing more about supplements. He never underestimated the possible negative effects of excessive use. Giovanni believes that these supplements can be useful. *"For example in rugby, the physical contacts during the match generate physical problems after the game. So it is very important gain muscles in order to counteract or reduce these negative effects."*, he explains. *"Controlled consumption of supplements, in conjunction to physical activity in the weight room, could give an advantage because they help to build a strong muscular structure more suited for the strong impacts of the match."*

Giovanni thinks that today the 16 and 17 year olds who play rugby are more in touch with legal substances, such as dietary supplements, even if in some cases they are in contact also with illegal PAES. In his opinion, there is more misinformation about legal PAES than about illegal PAES, since the latter are often the focus of anti-doping campaigns. However, in gyms, where there are no controls, there is the increased use of both controlled and uncontrolled PAES.

Giovanni thinks that in fitness, the PAES market does not need any advertising. Usually there are gym instructors or other gym goers who are motivated to sell some substances. He tells about *"a company which exploits this and distributes its products through these agents"*. Unfortunately, the system allows everybody to become a seller of legal PAES. These representatives, people without any competence, frequently recommend substituting a meal with a shaker of supplements. Generally, the instructor is the key figure that firstly advises

you to use these substances, since he often benefits financially if he sells substances. The gym instructors sometimes also give recommendations about the use modalities and the substances' dosage without any specific clinical knowledge or analysis. Giovanni speaks about sport events *"where you can find a lot of publicity about PAES, especially through stands, flyers, and free samples of substances. For example, there was a beach-rugby tournament in which the sponsors gave a goody bag filled with a lot of different substance samples to the finalists. How is that for promotion?"*

Giovanni knows that his body is his responsibility and that he needs to know how to protect it. In the sports club where Giovanni plays rugby now there is no nutritionist, only a physician who deals mainly with injuries. However, Giovanni contacted a nutritionist who advises him which substances to take, and how to take them. The nutritionist has chosen a specific plan of substances to use only after specific clinical analysis that he repeats frequently. Giovanni only buys the substances from licensed pharmacies.

## The Overload: Luigi's story (Italy)

Luigi is 25 years old. He is currently a university student studying sport science. He always loved sports. When Luigi was 15 years old, he developed a passion for martial arts, so he decided to practice karate as his main sport, aiming to reach a competitive level. When Luigi was 16 years old, he began to drift away from karate and started to play American football, which was an uncommon sport in Italy at that time. Today, Luigi plays American football for his hometown team, in the top division of the Italian championship.

In his sporting career, Luigi - directly and indirectly - encountered different types of PAES. His first experience with PAES was only a few months after he started playing American football. This sport is very hard and implies much physical contact. Luigi was thin in his adolescent years, not fully developed physically. Some coaches in his team advised him to work on his physique, joining the work in weight room and using of protein supplements (i.e. protein and amino acids).

Luigi remembers: *"At the beginning, I did not accept advice easily from my coaches. I came from a different sport background, karate, which mainly focuses on the improvement of mental and coordination skills rather than muscular ones. I was also worried that increasing my muscle mass significantly would result in losing the speed and coordination that I had developed with karate"*. After speaking with his teammates Luigi realised that all of them used protein supplements. Consequently, Luigi also began to consume protein and amino acids under the guidance of his teammates regarding dosages and consumption methods. In conjunction with his work-out regime, Luigi effectively increased his muscle mass in a short period of time. These first positive results motivated Luigi to work hard on his body to improve both his performance and physical appearance.

During that time, Luigi began seeking more information about supplementation, and contacted a specialist. Unfortunately, the nutritionist did not know anything about Luigi's sport or about the specific metabolic needs of an athlete practicing that sport. Luigi remembers: *"In that period, I consumed a very large amount of supplements which led to metabolic overload"*.

When Luigi turned 19 and his body had developed naturally, he decided to reduce the amount of supplements. Currently, Luigi is not a professional athlete. He mainly uses creatine before matches, and vitamins in conjunction with a balanced diet suggested by a nutritionist.

Luigi thinks that people have always used substances to improve their performance; and thus, taking legal substances in a planned and medically assisted manner is a socially accepted practice. He also feels very comfortable with protein supplements because they are dissolved in water or milk, replace a meal and can be easily taken at any time.

However, Luigi thinks that having different laws regulating PAES use across countries is not right. *"For example, there are substances that are illegal in Italy but are legal in other countries, such as Australia and South Africa"* - he comments. He wonders how it is possible

that the university courses highlight and teach the possible negative effects related to the use of some substances that are legally sold in some countries.



## The Environment: Emanuele's story (Italy)

Emanuele is 22 years old. At the moment, he is studying sport science at university. He has practiced weightlifting at an amateur level for two years without any competitive purpose. Emanuele realized that all the people who practiced weightlifting took some sort of protein supplements. Conversations between gym patrons and the instructors often revolve around what substances they may take and what substances are the best. *"More than once, I have seen some guys give themselves injections of GH and/or testosterone in the dressing room."* - Emanuele adds - *"I wondered why they did this. I knew for sure that nobody in the gym participated in competitions."*

With this experience, Emanuele now understands that the sole purpose for substance use is the improvement of physical appearance. Unfortunately, this is not accompanied with correct information and/or following the advice of a professional. Emanuele explains: *"As gym users ask around for information, they believe everyone, especially guys with impressive looking bodies which inspire trust. They must know what they are doing because they've obtained the desired outcomes. In general, there is a complete lack of correct information about the substances used and their effects, as well as the correct way to use them. It's what we call 'bro-science'.... which could be accurate and good but equally, it could be very much misinformed. You have to be careful."*

After a few months, Emanuele decided to start taking protein supplements in an attempt to improve his physical appearance in an easier way. Later on, he looked on the Internet and found out that a box of protein supplements costs 40 Euros, and decided to buy it. He started taking protein every day and the box lasted for a month. He decided to continue buying more boxes in the following weeks and months.

Emanuele looked for more information online and found a special offer of a free branded T-shirt with the purchase of three boxes. Emanuele, however, decided to buy only one box, and proceed step by step. Emanuele tells of a moment when he realised something peculiar in the gym: *"After a few days, I noticed a guy in the gym wearing the promotional T-shirt that I had seen on the Internet. Many people approached him to ask information about the brand sponsored on his T-shirt."* Intrigued by this situation, he started to observe that in the weight room there was an open market of substances, mainly promoted and coordinated by the instructors.

At the moment, Emanuele is in employment and thus has disposable income. He is aware that his financial situation encourages him to buy larger amounts and different types of substances, as well as to buy substances of better quality than he couldn't afford in the past. Emanuele reflects that *"having money is a great temptation to increase my substance use; so is feeling stuck"*. Because Emanuele feels frustrated by the lack of progress despite the workout regime and supplementation, he is thinking about switching to other substances, such as those the others were taking in the dressing room when he was just a novice.

## The Presence: Jeremy's story (UK)

Jeremy is 35 years old now but his experience with PAES goes way back into his young adult life. He started weight training when he was 14 years old. His motivation was all about getting *“as big as possible”*. He had a great appetite for sport particularly amateur ‘fighting’ - boxing, but also martial arts - and was also a useful sprinter.

Clearly as his teenage years developed he trained hard with weights, but also began to seek out and find out about *“stuff that would help him get bigger”*. First stop was his local body building supplement shop where by befriending the staff he began to learn about and use proteins and also creatine. He was gaining weight and lifting bigger weights but also working to keep a balance so he could still sprint. Clearly Jeremy was very committed to getting bigger and better and contemplating the pros and cons of supplements of various kinds.

Jeremy talks too of the time he took Tribulus, how it made him feel *“more manly”* and interestingly how he felt it gave him *“presence”*. Clearly this young man’s use of PAES was beginning to be about appearance and self-image as much as they were about any perceived sporting advantage.

Maybe as a result of this boost, he became night club door staff, joining that group of over-coated muscle men manning the velvet rope. Suddenly the dark world of PAES opened up. Well paid, late nights and with everything to gain from a dominant physical stature and quick reflexes Jeremy moved on. He was given pills by his peers in the nightclub business and became increasingly aware of his colleagues’ widespread use of injected steroids - often doing so on work shifts, but he was wholly resistant to injecting and remains so.

*“I was less than impressed with the tablet form steroid I was given. With no real result to show I did not persevere but I kept on with Clen and Efergen - mostly as weight control.”* - Jeremy says. He pressed on with an increasing commitment to his weight lifting. Experimenting with Novatest which dramatically increased his aggression, gradually becoming more disillusioned as he realised how prevalent the steroid use was in his weight lifting competitions he used Clenbuterol, bought through a friend, and can easily get growth hormone from his old doormen crowd.

Generally speaking, he is happy to buy substances through second parties but he is worried by the possible side effects of steroids that he has read about, notably heart attack and stroke. He is pretty clear that all sorts of controlled substances are freely available through gyms and remains open minded, suggesting that in any sport where there is power, there will be steroids.

## The Machine: Harry's story (UK)

Harry is 25 years old. He spent his sporting time actively pursuing rowing and a range of organised team sports; his focus was on the gym, with weights and circuits as a central part of his training.

Harry confesses that he *“never considered using doping as he was constantly going into tested competitions”* - which seems to be a constant pattern with many athletes whose focus is organised team sports. However as soon as his team sports backed down and he began to focus on individual weightlifting and more loner physical training he became keen to up his personal competitive edge.

Harry started taking anabolic steroids a year ago and has been observing a calculated and rational regime of dosage and frequency which he relates in a very ‘matter of fact’ way, this is not a careless individual, a vain uncontrolled spirit, an unscrupulous amoral operator, but an athlete at ease with himself in respect of a world where *“everyone’s doing it”*.

Harry’s motivation began with *“curiosity”* and now *“I just want to see how far I can go”*. He tells of moments in the gym *“when they know you’re using steroids and everyone crowds round, you know that suddenly everyone is –everyone wants to know”* and of course the gym networks offer every opportunity for regular supply: *“If it’s one of those dungeon gyms it’ll be the owner or his brother that’s supplying, if it’s a commercial gym, it’ll be a pusher-local supplier, in and out”*, Harry goes on *“and anyhow ,there’s internet supply and it’s not that much hidden and even user reviews of outlets and suppliers.. So it’s really not hard to get.”*

Harry is aware of all the negative side effects and speaks at length about how *“it’s important to know about coming off steroids properly”*. Clearly he sees it all as quite a normal part of his current regime, quite a part of his make-up, his sporting life.

When challenged on the moral aspects he equivocates: *“We all know that teams at professional level and top amateurs in these sports are on it, so why not, often the coaches take the flak, or manage athletes cycles so they can proceed undetected.”*

Harry has no time for the uncontrolled substances, protests that those marketing proteins and diet supplements are *“peddling a lies”*, using the biggest body builders in their promotions that are probably on steroids anyway.

## The Respect: Rita's story (UK)

Rita is 28 years old. She has grown up with two brothers who were really keen on bodybuilding. Rita reflects that in the beginning, when she was 20-21 years old, all she wanted was to have a "beach body". She followed her brothers, joined the gym and started to work out - sometimes with friends, colleagues or just on her own. It was not until she joined a more "hard-core" gym with female bodybuilders that she got more serious about her workout.

Rita came in contact with bodybuilding drugs in the gym. She made friends fast and when they saw that Rita was serious about her workout regime, they had no problem freely talking about the drugs they took to enhance the effect of their training. Rita saw nothing wrong with these substances. She explains: *"I was seeing the results of the other people that were on the 'juice', or the 'hot sauce' as we call it. After seeing that so many people were using and nothing was really wrong with them. This was how I started."* She adds: *"I've taken quite a bit of stuff, you know, like test-e-cycle, D-bol, winstrol and stuff like that, although I'm not on a cycle at the moment..."*.

Rita also wanted to lose some fat and asked about specific substances that might help with it. Someone at the gym recommended DNP. At first, Rita was skeptical about it. She turned to the Internet to get more information. When she recalls what she was thinking she asks: *"Who wouldn't be skeptical? DNP was described like a serious drug that kills you instantly.. but after seeing the guy during and after cycle still alive and fine; and then seeing other bodybuilders taking it and not only do fine but getting good results. I wanted the fat loss quickly. If you ask anyone who trains, I think they would do it as well."*

At the end, Rita decided to take DNP and T3. She got them from the Internet but she admits that she had no idea if the pills she got were the real thing. Reflecting on her experiences, Rita says that, at first, taking DNP was not very dramatic and she felt that it did not do much at all; but the second week was very hard. She asked one of her brothers to stay with her for the second week. Rita admits that *"first he told me off for taking that stuff... but he was sort of curious too and he helped."* Recalling her experiences, Rita continues: *"I was sweating so much, and then I was getting cramp in my muscles, insomnia at night, lethargy during the day. That was the worst thing during work out. If I drank water, I got that horrible bloated feeling."*

Also, Rita understands that no drugs do magic. *"You have to control your lifestyle and you have to understand what those substances do to you"* - she says, then adds - *"You should only take DNP if you are serious about your workout regime. There is no point in taking it and going through all that hassle and lose the fat to just gain it back because your diet is poor.... Your knowledge about general health has to be there. It would be much easier doing a liposuction if you don't actually want to work for your goal. "*

Rita also talks at length about the importance of a supportive broader environment. Other gym users and the person who sold the DNP to her explained all the side effects and helped her to use it safely. She says that it was *"actually really nice of them to be honest as really they didn't have to, they could have just sold it to me and that's it."*

Rita argues that the problem is not with the drugs per se, but the users. In her opinion, it is really important to be prudent and respect the drug. She believes that there is a need for reliable advice and guidance to help those who want to use substances and she feels lucky that her environment provided guidance for her journey.

## The Balance: Jena's story (UK)

Jena is 24 years old. She is a committed athlete and regular gym goer. She enjoys weight training and circuits and has recently begun to enter into competitive weightlifting *“in a small way”* - she says. It's not clear how far she intends to go with this, or indeed whether she wishes for the *“competitive thing to take over from the recreational thing”*. It's all a matter of finding *“the right balance”* she says.

She is proud to have developed an athletic physique, personal strength and argues that her regime has given her purpose and increased her self-esteem but that she doesn't want to go all out like other women she has seen, *“sure those super heavy weight lifting women are impressive but they're like objects”* - she says - *“and when you hear their voices crack ...nah I don't want that for me”*.

Clearly Jena wants to manage her sport and her physical appearance but keep on the right side of the feminine spectrum. She is relatively small too, short and powerful.

So like many young women Jena's first experience was with Efergen, and her motive was the 'oh-so-common' desire to lose weight- bought on the internet at a time when her image in the mirror was not how she wanted it to be, she recounts its horrendous effect on her, *“my heartbeat was racing, I had the jitters, it was mad”* however, she goes on to say *“it was terrible when I wasn't training, but great when I was”* the combination of the substance and physical exercise producing an experience that was dangerously good.

Jena also experimented with fat-burners and knew about appetite suppressors but she was not saying much about those. Her only comment was to say that they were all freely and readily available in the gym circuit and amongst her gym going female peers.

When the conversation turned to steroids, she admits that yes she had been tempted, been offered it regularly and yes she had seen a documentary and thought *“why not”*, but had been put off by tales of the side effects and observing others. *“I think it's all much more risky for women”* - she says – *“yes there's that same threat of heart attack and stroke from prolonged use, but I just don't like that horrendous bloating effect, hairy back, spots and all that, but face it, sadly, you're not going to do too well in competitive weights if you look too angelic”*. Again, Jena is considering the issues around balancing her appearance and her sporting performance. She concludes *“The only way for me achieve lean body mass is to keep training.”* You have to know your body to decide what is best for you.

## The Purity: Annie's story (UK)

Annie is a 20 year old aerialist, studying for a degree in circus arts. She specializes in floor work and work high off the ground, like aerial silks and trapeze.

Growing up, she was always interested in trying different sports. She is a competent swimmer (although she does not like swimming) and she also tried horse-riding, skiing, parkour and many other sports. She did gymnastics and dance, in a sort of recreational way, once a week for a decade before she discovered circus.

*"My passion for circus sparked by a recreational off-school club sort of thing" - she said - "then I started getting really into it. Soon I was doing 12 hours training a week – circus skills, but concentrating more and more on my aerialist performance, and now I am in the degree programme so it's like classes having from 9.00 to 5.00 with an hour for lunch and dance and movement classes. Often we stick around to do long after hours work on our skills."*

Annie acknowledges that it is competitive to get circus jobs, but in training for circus performance *"you're really just competing with yourself, pushing at it all the time, for yourself, proving what you can do. And if you get as good as you think you can be at one thing, you can always work on something else."* - she says.

Her dream is to get into one of the big companies, and then maybe start one of her own. In Annie's world, both strength and flexibility is critically important. Because she does a lot of aerial work, specifically silks and trapeze, her shoulders have developed a lot different from an acrobat. She needs strength in her shoulders, but she also needs flexibility to bend and twist. In order to be strong yet flexible, Annie takes food supplements. She is a vegetarian and she does not like the vegetarian food that are rich in protein such as beans, peas and nuts that much so she supplements her diet with whey protein powder.

Annie does not think that drugs like steroids are really necessary for what she is doing. As she explains: *"We're not really competing and we so much need flexibility which that stuff doesn't help, bodybuilders and free runners maybe, that's all 'show-offy' stuff, but it's not for aerialists like me"*. Annie thinks that performance enhancers are not really common or even talked about within circus. *"You don't get it at all"* - she says - *"we just train really hard till we get the tricks"*. Even then, at the end of the day, being technically brilliant is still not enough. As Annie concludes: *"You can be super strong and do the tricks, but if you don't have the performance side, people won't remember what you did"*. Drugs do not replace talent.