

In sport known for steroids bodybuilder goes another way

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No other sport is like this one, and almost anyone who competes in it will tell you so.

Bodybuilding - the art of getting ripped, leaning out, posing down and showing the body's muscle definition - is likely based more on measurables than any other sport out there. It should be no surprise that bodybuilding has been rife with steroid use in the past.

But, at least for one person - David Sanders of Orangeburg - steroids and bodybuilding don't mix.

I've never really been tempted, he said. I have heard a lot about them, what they can do, but no, I've never really been tempted. Basically, I'm totally against it. It might work for some people who do use it, but I really don't much care for them.

At 22, Sanders, a student at South Carolina State University, has worked his way into a muscle-bound specimen with the hopes of becoming a professional bodybuilder. He has already been in one competition -- finishing fourth in the National Physique Committee's State Championships this year - and has another coming up Aug. 25 in Charleston.

Right now, I'm just starting to diet (for the Aug. 25 show), he said. I'm cutting back and just eating my protein, my steak, fish and chicken breast. I'm doing a little more cardio now, and cutting down the carbs.

For Sanders, bodybuilding is about hard work, which keeps him in Nautilus Health and Fitness with his trainers Greg Price and James Sanders. If someone is bigger than him, he said, it's not a temptation to try steroids, it's motivation to work harder.

It doesn't bother me at all, he said. I'm just a rookie in the game, and that's something that has never even come across to me. But you do hear everything about the whole steroid rage with the Benoit case and everything.

All you have to do to get big is put in the hard work, he said. And eat your vegetables, carbs and protein.

But because Sanders doesn't choose to go the steroid route doesn't mean it may not be an issue in the sport. Several popular bodybuilding sites have message board threads - loaded with thousand of posts - identifying steroids and giving directions on how to use them. They operate as informational road maps, many claiming providing the information is better than leaving uninformed people to delve into steroid use.

Still, Sanders' trainer - Greg Price - said he believes steroid use is not that big an issue in the sport.

I think the only issue is the government making it bigger than what it should be, he said. (Steroids) have been around since World War II. Everybody has their own opinion, but the media tends to make sensationalizing stories out of it. A lot of people come to me wanting to know if I am on them, but they don't have the will or the drive to work out. I get accused, but I will pee in a cup any time.

Price said he is often asked if he is a wrestler or if he lifts weights.

That's a stupid question, he said. You don't walk around looking like I do if you don't lift weights. I get accused because people are not informed. I don't have a big huge belly, and people around here are too lazy to work out. They don't see any results in four visits and that is it. It's easier to stuff your face with pasta, lasagna and doughnuts.

My dad is a doctor, he said. All of his patients have health problems because they are overweight. I mean 75 percent of the kids in this town are overweight. It's just people's perceptions of how you should be.

How does he feel about the current climate as it pertains to steroids?

I think the government should stay the hell out of bodybuilding, he said. If the government jumped into the stuff it was supposed to - instead of sports

- there wouldn't be any starving children in the world.

It's just sensationalizing it, he said. I tell people this all the time, 'There are 10 million athletes in the world. And 7 million of them have used some type of steroid, but they haven't killed their wife and children.'

So, is Sanders bothered by the idea that a perhaps misinformed public may view him as a steroid user - simply because of his size - even though he is not?

That doesn't bother me at all, he said with a laugh. If you know me, then you know that I am not on that stuff.

For me, it's not about steroids, he said. For me, it's more mental than anything. If you feel like, going into a competition, that you see somebody bigger than you, then you have probably lost. You shouldn't be defeated mentally after putting in all that hard work. I feel proud of being able to enter a competition.

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