I lied. I lied to you. I lied to my family. I lied to a lot of people for a lot of years when I said I didn't use steroids. I started taking anabolic steroids in 1969, and I never stopped. Not when I retired from the NFL in 1985. Not ever. I couldn't, and then I made things worse by using human growth hormone, too. I had my mind set, and I did what I wanted to do. So many people tried to talk me out of what I was doing, and I wouldn't listen. And now I'm sick. I've got cancer—a brain lymphoma—and I'm in the fight of my life.

Everyone knows me as a tough, tough guy. And I've never been afraid of anything. Not any human, not anything. Then I woke up in the hospital last March and they told me, "You have cancer." Cancer. I couldn't...
understand it. All I knew was that I was just so weak. I went through all those wars on the football field. I was so muscular. I was a giant. Now I'm sick. And I'm scared.

It wasn't worth it. Sure, I played 15 years as a defensive end with the Denver Broncos, Cleveland Browns and Los Angeles Raiders and twice made All-Pro. But look at me now. I wobble when I walk and sometimes have to hold on to somebody. You have to give me time to answer questions, because I have trouble remembering things. I'm down to 215 pounds, 60 pounds less than I weighed just a few months ago, and I've got to grow back into my pants, they're so baggy. I've been in chemotherapy at the UCLA Medical Center and have done pretty well. I haven't thrown up or anything yet, but I don't have any hair and I wear a scarf on my head. The other day my wife, Kathy, and I drove into a gas station, and a guy there started making fun of my scarf. My "hat," he called it. I wanted to beat him up, but Kathy reminded me I wasn't strong enough. She said I'd have to wait until I get better.

I'm 42 years old. I have a nine-year-old son, Justin, who lives with his mother, Cindy, in New York. Kathy, who's a fashion model, and I were married last March, and we live in West Los Angeles. I got sick and went into the hospital two days after the wedding. And it was a few days later I found out I had cancer.

I know there's no written, documented proof that steroids and human growth hormone caused this cancer. But it's one of the reasons you have to look at. You have to. And I think that there are a lot of athletes in danger. So many of them have taken this same human growth hormone, and so many of them are on steroids. Almost everyone I know. They are so intent on being successful that they're not concerned with anything else. No matter what an athlete tells you, I don't care who, don't believe them if they tell you these substances aren't widely used. Ninety percent of the athletes I know are on the stuff. We're not born to be 280 or 300 pounds or jump 30 feet. Some people are born that way, but not many, and there are some 1,400 guys in the NFL.

When I was playing high school football in Cedarhurst, N.Y., I hadn't heard about steroid use by anybody. It wasn't until I got to college when I realized that, even though I'd been high school All-America, that wasn't enough to make it as a football player. I didn't have the size. I had the speed but not the size. I went to Kilgore College, a J.C. in Texas, and my speed enhanced my progress, but my size didn't. Then I went to Yankton College in South Dakota, the only school that would accept me. I realized I wasn't even big enough for a small school like that, so I started taking steroids. I don't remember now where I got them or how I even heard about them, but I know I started on Dianabol, about 50 milligrams a day.

The Dianabol was very easy to get, even in those days. Most athletes go to a gym for their steroids, and I think that's what I did. I remember a couple of weeks later someone mentioned how my biceps seemed to look bigger. I was so proud. I was lifting weights so much that the results were pretty immediate and dramatic. I went from 190 pounds to 220 by eating a lot, and then I went up to about 300 pounds from the steroids. People say that steroids can make you mean and moody, and my mood swings were incredible. That's what made me a football player, my moods on the field.

As I progressed, I changed steroids whenever I felt my body building a tolerance to what I was taking. It's hard to remember all the names now. I studied them a little. And I mixed combinations like a chemist. You had to take them both orally and inject them, mostly into your butt so no one would see the marks. I always gave myself injections at home in my bedroom. I got pretty good at it. I kept the steroids in my dresser.

My first year with the Broncos was 1971. I was like a maniac. I outran, outhit, outanythinged everybody, and I made the team after Pete Duranko got hurt in a preseason game against the Chicago Bears. I took his place. All along I was taking steroids, and I saw that they made me play better and better. I kept on because I knew I had to keep getting more size. I became very violent on the field. Off it, too. I did things only crazy people do. Once in 1979 in Denver a guy side-swiped my car, and I chased him up and down hills through the neighborhoods. I did that a lot. I'd chase a guy, pull him out of his car, beat the hell out of him.

We had such a defense in Denver, especially that Super Bowl year, 1977. I can't say if anybody else on the Broncos was on the stuff, but because I was, I have to think some of the others were. But I wasn't liked on the team, so I really didn't know what was going on.

I was so wild about winning. It's all I cared about, winning, winning. All I thought about. I never talked about anything else. I spent three years with the Browns, 1979 through '81. I had brought the steroids with me to Cleveland from Los Angeles, where I spent the off-seasons. It's easier to get them in L.A. than anywhere else. Guys on the Browns came to me and asked about steroids, and I'd tell them who to call or I'd give them what I had. They'd take them in the privacy of their own homes, and it wasn't talked about much—not in the locker.
If you were in the gym, you might say something, but you had to be very quiet because there were detectives around. I wasn't a dealer, but if I was asked, I'd help other guys get steroids. Because they were doing for me what I wanted them to do, I hoped they would do the same for the other players.

When I went to the Raiders in 1982, I took more and more doses and different combinations. Orally and injecting. I felt I had to keep up. I didn't sleep much, maybe three or four hours a night. My system would run so fast. I was taking the whole spectrum now. I'd feel my body close up on one drug, and I'd switch to another until my body would open up to the first one again.

I'm convinced that my biggest mistake was never going off cycle. According to the guys around the gym, if you go on steroids for six to eight weeks, then you're supposed to stop for the same number of weeks. Me, I'd be on the stuff for 10 or 12 weeks, and then I'd go off for only two, maybe three weeks, and I'd feel that was enough. It was addicting, mentally addicting. I just didn't feel strong unless I was taking something.

A lot of the guys on the Raiders asked me about steroids, and I'd help them get what they needed. A lot had their own sources. But I was the guy to get them if they needed something. I kept progressing into stronger things, the last stuff I remember taking was something called Bolasterone and Quinolone—very dangerous. Steroids can raise your cholesterol level, and at one point late in my career my cholesterol was over 400. I was warned, but I wouldn't listen.

I had injected so much that a few years ago a plastic surgeon operated on my butt. I had these lumps under my skin from where the needles went in. He went in and removed one baseball-sized mass of tissue and then found a bigger one underneath.

I got moodier and moodier, too. I had a couple of divorces. I yelled all the time. Anytime I'd walk into a restaurant or a bar, I always felt like I had to check everything out to make sure no one was going to mess with me. I was so high-strung that I needed to play a game every day. That is what was so hard when I decided to retire. I'd had an Achilles injury, which I'm sure was a result of all the steroid use. I've heard that steroids can lead to weakened tendons. I tore my bicep clear in half, everything on the left side of my body tore, and I think it was because of the long usage of some of that stuff.

All along, even after I retired, I was getting stuff from a gentleman who works out of one of the L.A. gyms. He was making a ton of money. In fact, most of the dealers don't have to do any other work. I went up to northern California a couple of times and bought stuff from a guy in San Jose, Steve Coons. He sold me the Bolasterone. [Coons is in custody awaiting trial after being indicted in a drug-related conspiracy and mail fraud case in the U.S. district court in San Jose.]

As I said, I kept taking the stuff after retiring from the Raiders in 1985. I couldn't stand the thought of being weak. I tried to taper down. Mostly I was taking lower dosages of Anavar and Equipoise. I thought it was stuff that would help me. But I know now I should have gone off it. I stayed too big, too mean. And that's probably why the idea came into my head to try to make a comeback last year. Everyone kept asking me why the Raiders weren't tough anymore, and I just decided to prove to everyone that I could come back. But that's what got me into real trouble. That's when things got really crazy.

I decided to take human growth hormone. They used to get it from glands in cadavers, but they started making genetically engineered HGH in 1985. I was 41 last year, and I decided that in order for me to make that comeback, for my body to remain intact, I had to use the growth hormone. I started taking it in mid-June and used it right up until this March along with testosterone cypionate, an anabolic steroid.

The cypionate gives you the size. And the growth hormone, well, it gives you muscle mass. I'd take two vials—one a fluid and one a white substance—and mix them together, and I'd have growth hormone. Then I'd inject it. It cost me a lot of money, $4,000 for 16 weeks just for the growth hormone. At times in my career I probably spent $20,000 to $30,000 a year on different stuff. But the HGH was still a big added expense. I got it from the guy at the gym. It wasn't the stuff from cadavers; it was the other kind.

I was working out so hard. Every day, long hours, long days. I remember every workout. I was tested for drugs along with everyone else in camp. I lined up, signed up and took the test, with everyone from the Raiders watching. And I passed. My teammates all were saying, "How did you pass that test?" I had been told to stop the cypionate a month before the test, that this would be enough time for me to pass. And human growth hormone can't be detected by testing, so I kept taking that. I passed with flying colors.
Did the Raider coaches know I was taking stuff no matter what the test said? It was just like it was when I was playing with the Broncos and Browns. I think the coaches knew guys were built certain ways, and they knew those guys couldn't look the way they did without taking stuff. But the coaches just coached and looked the other way.

My comeback hit a snag when I injured my knee. I had arthroscopic surgery, which went well. A month later I played in an exhibition game against Chicago. I came off the ball so fast, so hard. Oh, god, it felt great. I was working so hard. They cut me anyway. I think the only reason they didn't keep me was because they figured I was too old. I could have made it. I know I could have.

So I was out of football again, this time for good. I kept taking human growth hormone, and I was still doing the steroids. One day last fall I was on Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles in a yogurt shop with Justin. I felt a big cough coming on so I went outside so I wouldn't spread any germs. I fainted. The next thing I knew I was getting up off the sidewalk with all this blood pouring from my face. I had fallen right on my face, on my nose. I broke the nose so bad they had to use plastic surgery to put it back together.

I stayed in the hospital four days while they fixed me up and ran a bunch of tests. They couldn't find anything. But I think that was the start. I think the tumors were beginning to fester in my head. In February I started to get a little dizzy. At first the doctor told me it was an inner ear infection and gave me some medication. For a while it helped.

Kathy was getting on me pretty good about the steroids I was taking, and I promised her I wouldn't take anything more after our wedding. I started tapering down even before the wedding. I think I was so excited about marrying Kathy that I didn't allow myself to notice that I was starting to get sicker. When I watch the video of the wedding, I see that, when I'm walking back down the aisle with her, I'm almost limping, listing to the right.

Two days later, in the apartment in Marina del Rey where we were living at the time, I started feeling dizzy. I couldn't talk. And I was seeing double. They put me in the hospital and took all kinds of tests and they told me I had some sort of virus. I went home and got worse and worse. I didn't eat for four days.

Finally, Kathy insisted to the doctors that I go back in, and they did a brain biopsy. I woke up the morning after, and they told me I had cancer. I couldn't believe it. I was just so weak. They started me on the radiation treatments, and I went home. Then I got an infection. But Kathy's dad was there. He saved my life. I wasn't breathing. I was purple. Kathy called 911, and her dad gave me CPR.

They took me to the hospital, and I kept having brain seizures every 20 minutes. It was so bad they put me in intensive care for two weeks, and I don't remember it at all. I keep trying, but I don't remember anything. They said I looked like I was just fading away.

On top of everything else, I'm told that my name has come up in various steroid cases. And, oh yes, my medical bills are enormous. But there are plans to have a benefit for me in the next few months.

This is the hardest thing I've ever done, to admit that I've done something wrong. If I had known that I would be this sick now, I would have tried to make it in football on my own—naturally. Whoever is doing this stuff, if you stay on it too long or maybe if you get on it at all, you're going to get something bad from it. I don't mean you'll definitely get brain cancer, but you'll get something. It is a wrong thing to do.

I'm sorry I lied. I'm sorry success meant so much to me. I just got married to a beautiful, beautiful woman. And I can't take her dancing. I can't take her to dinner. Justin understands that I'm very sick. I try to be real strong on the phone when I talk to him. I hope he'll read this article.

When I first got out of the hospital I felt inferior. Going from being built like I was to being built like this is very hard. But I don't feel inferior any longer. My strength isn't my strength anymore. My strength is my heart. If you're on steroids or human growth hormone, stop. I should have.

10 December 2010
A Doctor's Warning Ignored

Was Lyle Alzado's cancer caused by the performance-enhancing drugs he took—anabolic steroids and human growth hormone? Alzado thinks so, and Dr. Robert Huizenga, one of the physicians treating him, believes Alzado may be right. Huizenga, an internist practicing in Beverly Hills, was one of the Los Angeles Raiders' team doctors from 1983 until last fall. Sources close to the doctor say that Huizenga quit because the Raiders refused to tell a player that the player had a heart condition. Huizenga says that he resigned because of a "misunderstanding about the care the players were receiving." The Raiders deny the sources' claim and say they released Huizenga. With Alzado's permission, Huizenga discussed Alzado's case with SI's Shelley Smith.

SI: Did you know Lyle was taking steroids at the time he was playing for the Raiders?

R.H.: Yes. A difficult thing about medicine is what to do when somebody is doing things you might not agree with. Lyle and I battled since the early 1980s about his ingestion of certain things. I tried to be there and not be judgmental.

SI: What steroids did he take in those days?

R.H.: To my knowledge he took everything—injectable, oral, he cycled. When he played, we talked about it because his blood tests suggested he was taking massive amounts of steroids, but he never really discussed doses. He said in generalities what he was taking. Despite my admonitions that this was a major health risk, he kept doing it. He said it was a risk he wanted to take.

SI: When did you learn of his illness?

R.H.: He came to me at the end of February with symptoms of dizziness, loss of coordination of the right side of his body, double vision and slurred speech. Through a series of tests we were finally able to diagnose that he has a form of brain cancer that is very, very rare. He has T-cell lymphoma. That isn't to be confused with B-cell lymphoma, which is the lymphoma most commonly linked with AIDS.

SI: What kind of human growth hormone (HGH) was he taking?

R.H.: There are two types of human growth hormone. One is taken from cadaver pituitary glands and is homogenized and purified as much as possible. And then there is the genetically engineered hormone. He injected the genetically engineered hormone.

SI: We've had reports that Lyle may have taken cadaver-type human growth hormone before last year. Do you have any knowledge of this?

R.H.: Lyle told me he didn't take any HGH before his comeback attempt.

SI: Could Lyle's cancer have been caused by what he took?

R.H.: I think there's no question. We know anabolic steroids have cancer-forming ability. We know that growth hormones have cancer-growing ability.

SI: What other explanation could there be?

R.H.: Either bad luck or some kind of genetic quirk.

SI: Did Lyle undergo surgery after his illness was detected?
R.H.: He had a brain biopsy in early April and had some complications that required a second surgery to eradicate a brain abscess that had formed and become infected.

SI: And he's had chemotherapy?

R.H.: He's getting an unusual form of chemotherapy for lymphoma. It gives us a measure of hope, but you always have to be realistic.

SI: How does this chemotherapy work?

R.H.: The drug is called cisplatin. It gets a lot more of the cancer-fighting agent to the brain and less to the rest of the body.

SI: What is Lyle's prognosis?

R.H.: It's a tough, tough cancer. We have not had tremendous success with it. On the other hand, he's getting very good therapy, and he's responding well.

SI: Lyle says that he now wants to come out and help....

R.H.: That's the new Lyle.

SI: Is there really a new Lyle?

R.H.: Lyle is a great, great guy, but steroids can change a person. You can be talking to two different people.

SI: Are there other NFL players who could be at risk?

R.H.: A number of players on a number of teams who were heavy users in the past are at risk. We are very worried about those players.

SI: Why don't we know more about steroid usage by athletes and its effects?

R.H.: There are very few studies, and, frankly, the best group that could be studied and give useful information is NFL players. We—all the doctors of the clubs—agreed to back a study. We have not been embraced by the players' union or the league. Olympic athletes won't let us go back and study them because they're afraid they'll have their records taken away. We want to follow former players, and I believe we can get very honest answers from them because they have nothing to lose. From my contact, they're apprehensive about their past use, especially those who used heavy amounts.

SI: Does the steroid danger go beyond the NFL?

R.H.: Conservative estimates say a million people in the U.S. use anabolic steroids, not just for sports but for appearance. Most are young people. I think we have a real time bomb on our hands.

10 December 2010
East German athlete claims steroids made her a man

Tuesday, 30 December 1997

A former East German shot putter has claimed she had to undergo a sex-change operation as a result of steroids she took in the 1980s. Heidi Krüger, who won the gold medal in the shot put at the 1986 European championship in Stuttgart, now lives in Berlin as Andreas Krüger.

Der Spiegel magazine said the athlete had laid charges against Dr Hans Joachim Wendler, her physician, claiming he supervised her taking large doses of male hormones. Krüger said the process began in 1982, when she was 16. She claimed to have developed facial hair and an Adams apple and to have suffered psychological problems. Earlier this year she underwent two operations to become a man.

The secret of communist East Germany's sporting prowess is well known: the dope pushers have been filing into courtrooms for years. Yet the sports officials and doctors who pumped young athletes full of anabolic steroids always walk out as free men. They had "only been following orders".
The secret of communist East Germany's sporting prowess is well known: the dope pushers have been filing into courtrooms for years. Yet the sports officials and doctors who pumped young athletes full of anabolic steroids always walk out as free men. They had "only been following orders".

That may change now, for sitting in the dock yesterday at court number 38 in Berlin was no less a figure than Manfred Ewald, the communist functionary who headed East Germany's sporting establishment. And this time the victims, medal winners who lost their health in the Communists' quest for gold, will have their say.

The trial of 73-year-old Mr Ewald, the former head of the East German Olympic Committee, and of Manfred Höppner, the doctor who masterminded the doping regime, was to have lasted one day. That is what happened on previous occasions, with the judges dismissing the testimony of athletes as irrelevant. But it looks as though the script has been altered, in view of Mr Ewald's undeniable responsibility for what went on in East German sport. He had, after all, written an autobiography five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall with the title \textit{I Was Sport}.

Mr Ewald and the doctor are charged with 142 cases of grievous bodily harm. Mr Ewald has so far pleaded not guilty, and sat through the first day of proceedings looking sternly ahead, not uttering a word. Dr Höppner is pleading guilty in the hope of a light sentence.

More than 30 athletes are trying to have their say as joint plaintiffs. Eighteen of them were in court yesterday.

"You cannot just treat this case like shoplifting," said their lawyer, Michal Lehner, outraged by the court's plan to wrap up the proceedings in a day.

The presiding judge relented, and the swimmers, gymnasts and athletes will be able to tell their harrowing stories and confront their tormentors in court.

The shot-putter formerly known as Heidi Krieger has been waiting for this moment for years. She won the gold medal in the 1986 European championships in Stuttgart at the age of 21 and was crippled shortly afterwards by pain.

Ms Krieger had been training hard since the age of 13. When she was 16, she started receiving the little blue pills from her coach. These "vitamins", wrapped in silver paper, seemed to help her gain strength. As the weights she lifted daily increased, so did the size of the pills.

After her triumph in Stuttgart, Ms Krieger's body began to rebel. Her back ached continuously, her knee and hips required surgery. In 1987 she was taking five of the blue pills a day but only came fourth in the world championships.

By now she was aching all over. The muscles she had been so proud of no longer felt like her own. She seemed trapped in a body that was not hers: she abandoned women's clothes and started to feel embarrassed about going into the women's lavatory. She felt as if she was a man.

She only discovered why several years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. "Hormone Heidi" - as she had been known to her coaches - had been fed huge doses of testosterone: two and a half times the amount recommended in East German sports scientists' secret manuals.

At the end of her broken career, Ms Krieger was a man. Three years ago she completed the metamorphosis, in as much as that is biologically feasible. After another course of testosterone to complete the job, Heidi's breasts, womb and ovaries were removed, and the person emerging from the operating theatre took up the name of Andreas.

He is lucky to be reasonably healthy. Several former East German athletes have committed suicide and hundreds more are thought to be suffering drug-related ailments.

Catherine Menschner, a 33-year-old former swimmer, is not certain whether it was the drugs or the strenuous training that literally broke her back. Now she cannot lift her child.
An estimated 2,000 athletes were given performance-enhancing drugs in the Seventies and Eighties. A decade after the disappearance of East Germany, many medallists are maintaining silence over the medication they received but hundreds have co-operated with the Berlin prosecutors investigating doping practices. Their complaints are text-book cases of steroid abuse: liver and kidney damage, impotence, severe emotional problems.

Mr Ewald, who began his political career in the Nazi Party and switched to the Communists after the war, no longer boasts about his omnipotence. He is silent. He cannot very well say he was following orders. Everybody else followed his.

http://www.independent.co.uk/sport/general/hormone-heidi-confronts-east-german-ghosts-717391.html
10 December 2010

Thursday, 31 March 2005

Heidi Krieger: The price of victory

The East German shot-put champion Heidi Krieger was doped to win medals for the Communist cause. But the steroids she took changed her body forever. Now Andreas, following a sex change, he tells Tony Paterson why he's determined to find justice

Andreas Krieger was one of Communism's star athletes, but he is not proud of his achievements. He has turned his back on sport, and nowadays ekes out a living selling surplus US Army Ranger clothing from a shop in the run-down East German city of Magdeburg.

Krieger, a big, broad-shouldered man of 40 who sports a three-day beard, has more reason than most former track and field stars to want to forget a past that he will never really escape. A handful of black-and-white sporting photographs which date from the mid-1980s explain why. They show a muscle-bound, full-faced young woman in a tracksuit. Her features are uncannily similar to Krieger's own, but the hair is thicker and there is no three-day stubble.

"That was back in 1986 when I was Heidi Krieger, the East German woman who became European shot-put champion," Krieger says. Standing in front of the big Stars and Stripes flag that decorates his shop, he fights back tears as he adds: "The thing is, they killed Heidi."

Krieger's story is perhaps the most harrowing example of the effects of East Germany's state-sponsored practice of systematically doping young athletes to enable them to win medals for the Communist cause. Fed with injections and massive doses of anabolic-steroid pills from the age of 16, Heidi Krieger was, by the time of her 1986 European Championships win, a 15-stone Amazon with a deep voice and sprouting facial hair. She was by then already confused about her true sexual identity.

The effects of the systematic doping finally led her to undergo a sex-change operation in 1997. It was the moment when Heidi died and Andreas was born. "For me the tragedy is still that I had no choice in determining my sexual identity, the drugs decided my fate," he says.

Andreas Krieger is one of an estimated 10,000 East German athletes who have been more or less permanently damaged by the former Communist state's doping regime. Among them are champions such as Petra Schneider, the swimmer who defeated Britain's Sharron Davies in the 400 metres medley in the 1980 Olympics in Moscow, and Rica Reinisch, a world-record setter at the same event. Schneider has suffered serious heart and back problems since then. Reinisch suffers from recurring ovarian cysts and has endured numerous miscarriages. There are thousands more like them.
Although more than 300 former East German sporting officials have been convicted of doping offences since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, many of the affected athletes still feel cheated. Fifteen years after the collapse of Communism they are still waiting for justice.

In an attempt to finally settle the score, Krieger and 159 of his colleagues will next month file charges against the German pharmaceuticals giant Jenapharm, the company which produced the steroids on the orders of the East German government during the 1970s and 1980s.

The athletes are claiming damages of €10,000 each. They are hoping for an out-of-court settlement. However, if the case goes to trial, it could result in an embarrassing showdown for the German chemical industry and senior Communist-era management figures who have advanced their careers in the business since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Dr Michael Lehner, the lawyer representing the athletes, says that his clients are embittered by the fact that none of the former East German officials convicted of doping has spent a day in jail for their offences. "The athletes want to resolve this issue properly," he says. "Financial compensation would at least amount to an admission of guilt, but when somebody suffers from liver damage for the rest of his life, when a woman has disabled children or is always mistaken for a man, then no amount of compensation can compensate."

Andreas Krieger does not need to be reminded of this fact. Today, 24 years after his East German coach started handing him batches of blue pills wrapped in silver foil that were described as innocuous "vitamins", Krieger is still on a regime of medication. Massive doses of the male hormone testosterone are administered by injection from his doctor every three weeks.

"If I miss one of the shots I soon know about it," Krieger says. "My beard stops growing and my body starts going berserk. I am irritable, I cannot concentrate and I frequently burst into tears. It's my body saying it can't cope. I still need these injections to stay male."

But he also suffers from other permanent physical damage resulting from the rigorous training programme he was subjected to during his athletic career. The strenuous weight-lifting workouts Heidi Krieger was obliged to undertake as a budding shot-put champion ruined muscles and joints. These days Andreas can't lift weights because his vertebrae have been permanently deformed by his training. Even the most innocent of activities can cause crippling pain. "On Christmas Eve, I made the mistake of crawling under the Christmas tree to fix some of the lights. I ended up spending the whole of the holiday flat on my back in bed," he says.

The little blue pills that began his torment are an anabolic steroid called Oral-Turinabol. The drug was produced by Jenapharm, then a state-owned company, subservient to the wishes of the Communist regime during the 1970s and 1980s.

Its purpose was to enhance the sporting performance of athletes, and thereby the reputation of East Germany. An estimated two million of the tablets were administered to the country's athletes each year. And East Germany won 384 Olympic medals between 1972 and 1988.

Heidi Krieger was launched on an athletic career at 14 when she began attending a youth sport school in East Berlin. The institution was affiliated to the notorious Dynamo sports club which was sponsored by East Germany's Stasi secret police.

At 16, her trainer started giving her Oral-Turinabol. "I thought nothing about the pills, I was only 16. I was ambitious, and besides everyone else was taking them. Even my mother thought it was normal," says Krieger today.

But after six months, Heidi's clothes stopped fitting. By the time she was 18 she had developed a deep voice and had started to look increasingly masculine. She began to stay off the streets of East Berlin because passers-by called her "queer". The ultimate embarrassment happened one day when she was with her mother on a train. A male passenger told her that she looked like a drag queen. When Heidi got home, she took off her skirt. She never wore one again.

"I was totally confused. I didn't know whether I was a man or a woman," Krieger says. By 1991, Heidi's career was over. Her overtaxed body, damaged joints, tendons and vertebrae meant that she could no longer
compete. But just as alarming was Heidi's sexual confusion. "I was starting to have crushes on women, and I was beginning to feel a prisoner in my own body, but still I didn't know what to do."

It wasn't until the mid 1990s that Heidi sought medical advice. "The doctor asked me if I had ever been given steroids. I said I wasn't sure, but when I checked things out it emerged that I had been given masses of the stuff."

Heidi's records show that in 1986, the year in which she became European champion, she was given 2,590 milligrams of Oral-Turinabol by her coach. The dosage is roughly 1,000 milligrams more than the amount given to the Canadian athlete Ben Johnson, whose doping programme shocked the world when it was exposed in 1988.

The sex-change operation that Heidi finally underwent has only made life marginally better: "Things are better now than when I was Heidi, but of course it's impossible to escape what's happened to me physically. I can't go to the sauna. I dare not be caught naked in public. I even worry if I go to the beach."

Isabelle Roth, Jenapharm's chief executive since March last year, admits that she is "deeply moved" by the sufferings of the former East German athletes. However, she insists that her company was not the "driving force" behind the regime's doping programme. "As part of a group of pharmaceutical companies, Jenapharm was obliged to collaborate in the State Plan," she said in a recent interview. "Oral-Turinabol was a substance manufactured by Jenapharm. It was legally approved by the East German government and available on the market. The drug was misused by the sports physicians and trainers. Jenapharm cannot be held responsible."

Her version is bitterly contested by the affected athletes and their lawyers. "Jenapharm was part of the East German regime's system. The company not only produced the pills but they developed substances for the specific purpose of doping athletes," says Dr Lehner, the lawyer fighting their case. "Their representatives were at the meetings when the whole thing was planned."

Dr Lehner will rely on crucial evidence from two witnesses who were at the centre of the doping programme, to support the athletes' case. One is Dr Manfred Höppner, who was once head of an East German state committee supervising the project. Höppner was fined and received a one-year suspended sentence for his activities in 1998. During his trial he revealed that Jenapharm representatives were present when decisions on doping were made.

The other key evidence will be supplied by Dr Rainer Hartwich, the former director of clinical research at Jenapharm. He has since left the company. Dr Hartwich claims that the company did not plan to develop Oral-Turinabol as a medication for general use, but rather intended to keep it a secret.

He is quoted in Stasi files as remarking that the drug "will be of immense value to our sport". However, he later warned the Stasi that the regime's "illegal" use of steroids had reached alarming levels. Dr Hartwich now insists that Jenapharm "has a moral duty to support the doping victims."

The case also raises hitherto unanswered questions about the role played by Isabelle Roth's predecessor, Dr Dieter Taubert, Jenapharm's director during East Germany's Communist era. Dr Taubert was referred to by the codename "Alexander" in Stasi files of the period. He is now chief executive officer of the German chemicals giant Schering, which bought up Jenapharm in 2001.

Andreas Krieger says that even if Jenapharm admits responsibility, no amount of compensation will restore his health. However, his ordeal has at least brought one ray of light into his life. Three years ago he married, Ute Krause, 42, a fellow ex-athlete also damaged by steroids, cheated by coaches and abused by East Germany's Communist bureaucrats.

Like Krieger, Krause suffered for years from the effects of steroids. As a swimmer, she suffered from bulimia for 20 years while struggling to combat the weight she put on through taking drugs. She once tried to kill herself with sleeping pills and vodka. "Ute understands what I am going through better than anyone else," Krieger says.

Today, neither has much respect for sport. Krause keeps a framed certificate of her 1978 world swimming ranking stuck on a wall above the lavatory in their Magdeburg home.
Krieger has gone a step further. His gold medal from the 1986 European Championships now forms part of a trophy which is awarded annually to Germans involved in the fight against doping. The medal is encased in a plastic hexagon shaped in the form of the chemical molecule used to make Oral-Turinabol.

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East Germany's doping program casts long shadow over victims

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The sports doping program carried out by the former East Germany may be decades in the past, but many one-time athletes still carry the scars - physical and mental - from that time.

Berlin resident Birgit Boese can get to work and back home every day, but that's about all she can manage. The 48-year-old former athlete depends on crutches to get around, and she and her husband have to forego visits together to the theater, movies or local swimming pool.

"Because of the pain, we can't really take part in public life," she said.

Once groomed to compete in the shot put and compete against the world's top athletes, today she says she suffers from an irregular heartbeat, high-blood pressure, diabetes, nerve damage, kidney problems, and a list of other ailments that have made her all but an invalid.

She says she knows what is to blame for her poor health - little blue pills she was given by her coaches at a special sports school in the German Democratic Republic starting at age 11.

She was told they were vitamins; now she knows they were anabolic steroids, meant to increase her muscle mass, strengthen her endurance and put her on in the center of the winners' podium at the Olympics, gold around her neck.

She and 183 other former athletes who were victims of communist East Germany's notorious doping program, many of whom still suffer from the long-term effects of the drugs, were awarded compensation in 2006 from the German Olympic Sports Organization (DOSB) and the drug company Jenapharm.

Boese wants the government to make it easier for doping victims to get state aid.
Each received 9,250 euros ($12,200) from the pharmaceutical company in an out-of-court settlement and 170 of the plaintiffs were paid another 9,250 euros from the DOSB.

"It helped, sure," she said. "But for those with chronic illnesses and who have to pay out of pocket for medications, the money didn't go that far."

**Massive scale**

It is estimated that some 9,000 former athletes, perhaps more, were doped in a program that ran for decades up until 1989 with approval from the highest levels of the East German government.

Many, like Boese, were given the pills as minors. Estimates are that two million tablets of performance enhancing drugs, mostly anabolic steroids, were given out each year to athletes. Many later developed cancer, ovarian cysts, liver damage, heart disease, infertility and other ailments. Some had children with health problems, such as blindness or club feet.

"Certainly people were not aware of the long-term effects of the drug use and, in my opinion, dramatically underestimated them," Wilhelm Schäenzer, head of the Institute for Biochemistry at the German Sports University in Cologne, told Deutsche Welle.

What was not underestimated was the zeal in which the communist East German government pursued its goal of winning gold medals at the Olympics and other sporting events. It was seen as a way to show that its ideological system was superior, not only politically, but in the sporting arena as well.

"There was always a rationale behind the madness," Steven Ungerleider, a sports psychologist and author of a book on East Germany's doping program called "Faust's Gold," said.

Coaches, trainers and parents would watch as their young daughters suddenly exhibited unusual amounts of body hair, bulked up rapidly, and developed deep voices.

"There was a sick joke running around that when women Olympic swimmers would go into the changing room and see East German girls there, they'd say, 'oh my God, we must be in the men's locker room.'"

**Medal factory**

Despite the near cartoonish appearance of some of their athletes, the doping program delivered results. From 1972 to 1988, the country of 17 million won 384 Olympic medals, not including the 1984 Los Angeles Games, which they boycotted. They always placed well ahead of the much larger West Germany.

The human cost of those victories is still being felt today.

Probably the best-known case is that of Andreas Krieger, who competed as Heidi Krieger for East Germany and was European shot put champion in 1986. Krieger was systematically doped and her body underwent dramatic changes.

In 1997, Heidi underwent a sex change and now lives as a man. He is still struggling with the aftereffects - both physical and mental - of the doping, which was done without her knowledge.
Barbara Boese says over the years she has had contact with some 600 former athletes; she used to run a counseling drop-in center for them. For many of them, she says, their health has gotten worse over the years.

**Justice served?**

Manfred Hoeppner, the GDR's top sports doctor, and Manfred Ewald, a former East German sports minister, are considered the primary architects of the country's doping program. They were convicted in court on charges of being accessories to intentional bodily harm of athletes, including minors. Both received probation.

Also in 2000, Lothar Kipke, a former senior consultant to the East German swimming association, was fined several thousand euros and given a 15-month suspended jail sentence.

And last year, five former GDR coaches, all of whom currently coach Germany's top track-and-field stars, confessed to having participating in the doping program to enhance athletes' performances.

All members of the group, including long-jump coach Rainer Pottel, discus coach Gerhard Boettcher, javelin coach Maria Ritschel, shot-put coach Klaus Schneider and heptathlon coach Klaus Baarck, have been told they can keep their jobs.

"Some former athletes have come to peace with what happened," Boese said. "But when they see their former coaches at sporting events sitting there, then many of them become very bitter, even furious."

**Lesson learned?**

Doping is still a problem in many sports today, although observers say it is unlikely it is practiced on such a scale as in the former East Germany. Testing procedures have become much more rigorous over the past 20 years and sanctions for those caught cheating have become more severe.

"Today we know that the use of such substances by athletes or even recreational athletes has very serious consequences," said Schaenzer. "Even though, of course, abuse continues."

That is something that Birgit Boese has a hard time understanding, since she lives every day with the effects of doping. When she sees a news report about another athlete caught using performance-enhancing drugs, she usually just shakes her head.

"I think, the poor fool," she said. "Today athletes can decide to keep away from the drugs before they ruin their health. But maybe the lure of becoming rich and famous is so great that all reason just flies out the window."

http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,5968383,00.html
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