

Preface -

In 1986 I was a JV soccer coach for the local high school. One day after practice one of my players asked if he could speak to me in private. Once alone, this 4'5" 105 pounder asked me if I knew of anything he could take to help him grow a moustache. A moustache?, I said "Yeah, you see," he explained "all my friends are getting taller and their voices are changing and stuff. I just wanted something to make me look older." My first instinct was to laugh - it *was* funny. My little player continued, "I heard there was a hormone booster or something you could take - I sure would like to speed things up!" After a thoughtful pause, I assured him that in no time he would be experiencing growth spurts and hairy lips, and that there was no way to speed up nature. He didn't seem happy with my answer - he was *so* sure there was something out there.

When I had time to reflect on what he had said, the gravity of the situation hit me hard. Somehow, somewhere this little athlete had heard about some product that seemed to promise exactly what he desired, and of all the people in his universe that he could ask, he had chosen me - his coach. This single encounter started for me a journey that has lasted to this day. At the time of this encounter I was also a Physical and Health Education major in college, and I began to research the area of dietary supplements. Although the names of the products have changed over the years, from Chromium Picolinate, to Hot Stuff, to HMB, to Creatine, to Andro, the promise of physical and sports enhancement has remained the same. Here are just a few of the things I have learned along the way:

- In the last decade, the dietary supplement industry has grown 300%, and it's not going away anytime soon,
- Young athletes are a primary target market by companies that hope these youngsters become lifetime users,
- No government agency tests these products before they hit the stores, not the Food and Drug Administration, nor anybody else,
- Each year, young athletes are rushed to the hospital with adverse reactions to these products,
- Influences on use include coaches, parents, and athletic trainers,
- Our educational efforts in this area have been focused on the wrong thing,
- I am confident that one day we will have a safe dietary supplement, but that day has not yet arrived and will not arrive until more stringent measures are in place to assure athletes, parents, and coaches that what they put in their bodies is 100% safe and side-effect free.

Until that day comes, this book was written to assist health and sport professionals to be ready to adequately and properly assist the young athlete who asks to speak to you about these products, and to educate parents, teachers, athletes, and anybody else concerned as they try to separate fact from fiction when it comes to these products.