



I don't like to commit myself about heaven and hell — you see, I have friends in both places.

## STEROIDS:

# PUSHING

# our children too far

The extreme expectations placed on school-level sports are driving the use of performance-enhancing drugs

### THE NARC REPORT

with Jarrod Cronje



**F**ATHER'S Day has come and gone. I reflect back on my dad with fond memories. He was an extremely charismatic, loving father who always had our interests at heart.

He died in 2006. I remember the weeks around his death as if it were yesterday, which is strange because everything else during that time was pretty fuzzy. I was deep in addiction in those years, using a lot of cocaine. I used cocaine the day he died, the few days leading up to his funeral and on the day itself.

Not many people know this and it may come as a shock to a few reading this who know me, but my coping mechanism to any adverse situation was to phone my dealer, Robertson. I called him Herbs and Spices. I recall picking up a few grams with blood-shot eyes from crying all morning. He even asked me if I was alright, as if he actually cared. I admit to feeling a little sick as I write this now because it's triggering the shame I carried around for years afterwards. How could I disrespect my dad this way? How could I do this with all the family around? How could I stand up in front of dozens of guests in church, laced with narcotics?

Such is the nature of addiction that even the death of a loved one cannot motivate positive change in oneself. Addiction is born in shame, and so as the guilt developed and as the shame grew, I used more and more. I have dealt with that since.

I think one of the greatest memories I have of Dad, and there are many, was his complete dedication and show of support to us children. None more so than his support of our sports games. I don't recall him missing a single rugby match. He had a booming voice from the sideline. He was very vocal but never undermined or shouted at us. He only encouraged and lauded us with "Great tackle, Ja" or "Well-done my boy".

He despised it when other fathers ran children down and I even remember him getting into an argument with a particular father who had nothing good to say to his son, or the rest of the team for that matter. I was really proud of him for standing up for us that day.

He never expected us to be the strongest, fastest or smartest children in school. He expected only the best out of us. Everybody has different talents and gifts. When children are pushed too far outside of their talent and capacity, they become over-stressed. Society's expectations, or should I say perceptions of success, are all mixed up. I have spoken a little of this before and don't need to elaborate today, but felt I needed to discuss one of the resulting behavioural manifestations that is rife in our schools at the moment — steroids.

I matriculated in 1993. If our rugby team had to match up against a team of today, I think we'd get a hiding second to none! I'm not talking about the skill level. I'm talking about the sheer power, speed and aggression. The school teams are way more professional now. I saw a school rugby team the other day flashing the Puma brand on their kit. We were sponsored by KFC! Our man of the match would get a bucket of chicken to share among his mates. One piece each, *nogal*. The stakes and expectations are higher now. As we push our children to be stronger, better and faster, we are actually promoting and enabling a host of behaviours such as the use of performance-enhancing drugs.

Have we forgotten what's important? One percent of school children will become professionally paid sportsmen and women. A hundred percent of school children need sound academics and a purpose in life. I'm not for a second saying that sport is bad, on the contrary, I believe it is vital for childhood development. It's the extreme expectations placed on school-level sports these days that I have concerns about. Some children are not sporty but would thrive in alternate, outdoor activities like camping, hiking, birding and scouts. We marginalise these activities and praise the glamour sports too much. One of the results is an increase in the use of performance-enhancing drugs.

Another major contributor to this is the era of the celebrity culture, which blatantly promotes materialism, status and entitlement. Narcissists are raised, not born. These superficial expectations are developing narcissistic traits in our youth and as technology via social media expands, so does narcissism flourish. Social media says "instant gratification", "follow me", "broadcast yourself" or "be my friend".

I could go on forever about this but space and time restrict me. What I would like to add is something very real. I interviewed an inpatient here at Harmony who I know was involved with steroid use and dealing at his high school just a couple of years back. I asked him to write a short synopsis about steroids and his involvement. He scribbled this down in no time flat, without referring to any notes. I'm not changing anything, this is verbatim from him so don't scrutinise the grammar or the scientific spelling and names of the steroids mentioned, for that is not the point. The point is this: steroid use



'Most students are using androgenic anabolic steroids to fit in and keep up with the athletic performance of others and for the appearance of being bulky and strong.'

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

at schools in our back yard is real.

"Steroid use in schools  
I can only speak for what I've seen and experienced myself in my home town (Richards Bay) and in Durban too. The majority of steroids abused by school children are taken orally, which is in my opinion, worse than injecting the solution. Injections by-pass the liver and kidneys, where orally induced steroids have most of their negative impact. Not to mention the other easily dismissed side effects such as severe acne, violent mood swings, gyno-related side effects leading to impotency, cists (especially behind the nipples), lactating and even baldness. The most popular steroids I sold were, Dianabol (blue hearts, pink cubed-shaped or capsules), Anapolan, which also comes in various forms

and Stanazol (or Winstol). Prices range from as low as R120 for 50 Dianabol or R800 for 50 napps. Common injectable steroids are Sustanon, Deca, Trenbolone and various testosterone such as Testaplex, Testoviron, Test-enthatate, Test-propionate and Test-acetate. Prices for injectable steroids range from R35 per 1 ml of "Sus" and R250 — R1 000 per 10 ml of

Trenbolone Acetate. Most students are using androgenic anabolic steroids to fit in and keep up with the athletic performance of others and for the appearance of being bulky and strong. All this is done not considering their future health or lack thereof due to the negative side effects of steroids."

Need I say more? There are not many things

that surprise me these days but what did surprise me was the dexterity and ease with which this youngster expressed himself on the subject. He sounds like a seasoned steroid dealer having been in the business for years. If you had to meet him, you would realise that he is just one of many boys caught in society's superficial web.

I urge us all to take serious note.  
Jarrod Cronje is an addiction recovery coach at Harmony Retreat, Greytown. He is passionate about treatment in the addicted community as well as the development of preventative education among youth. Feel free to contact him at Harmony at 073 989 9803 or 033 417 2227 or e-mail him at jarrod.cronje@gmail.com Client confidentiality applies.

**- The following article contains vital information on drug and alcohol abuse. It takes courage to confront these issues so I encourage you to take the time to read through this series carefully. What questions do you have? What problems are you facing? Are you a concerned parent? Are you a school in need of a drug-prevention strategy? Do you need help? Break the denial and make contact with me.**

## OUR READERS WRITE

### PLAYING FOR THE POUND

IN the good old days, to don a Springbok rugby jersey was the highest accolade a player could earn. When a new cap was given his jersey in the change room, he pulled it over his shoulder with pride. Big, burly men were reduced to tears. But sadly, that doesn't seem the case in the present day of South African rugby. The English pound or the euro seem to be the draw cards. And who can blame the multitude of players now plying their trade in the UK, France, Italy and Japan?

With the rand trading at over 19 to one English pound, more and more top-class players are chasing the pot of gold.

Sadly, this is going to have a devastating effect on SA rugby. Heyneke Meyer now has the inevitable task of selecting a squad to match Australia, New Zealand and the Argentinians in the forthcoming Tri Nations, and then there is the World Cup just around the corner.  
**MIKE BRADBURY Pelham**

## Black lives matter

IN the U.S. African-Americans are justifiably outraged at the seemingly routine violence perpetrated against them by U.S. law-enforcement officers who apparently shoot to kill for the flimsiest of reasons, and from what I have seen from TV footage, with no legal justification at all. Certainly not in self-defence.

There must have been, at a guess, six or seven highly publicised incidents like this, although I have no doubt that there are many more.

Because of what the average African-American perceives to be a reluctance or refusal on the part of the U.S.

prosecuting authorities to investigate and charge those officers responsible, the movement with the slogan "Black Lives Matter", has gained momentum.

This is not a demand for lynch-mob style justice. All the African-Americans are demanding is that these incidents be investigated, and that where the actions of the officers are found to be unjustified or unlawful, that they be prosecuted.

Omar Al-Bashir is accused of murdering hundreds of thousands of innocent African people (who incidentally are black, but does it matter

what colour they are?) and a warrant is issued for his arrest by the ICC. The South African government is a signatory to the ICC, knows about the warrant, Al-Bashir is in the country in the presence of government ministers, it has the opportunity to arrest him and to comply with its international obligations but does nothing and lets him depart the country, or in fact, connives to allow him to depart the country. It truly seems that in SA, black lives matter even less than they do in the U.S.

**JOHN CHRISTIE Pietermaritzburg**

## Why SA snubbed the ICC

SO finally the ANC reveals its real intentions under Jacob Zuma's presidency — it wants out of the ICC for the time when it loses an election and stays in power anyway.

Why else would the ANC wish to back out of this agreement and wish to increase our AU contributions to R700 million a year?

I mean, for that kind of money just

over 2,8 Nkandlas could be "securely upgraded" every year!

But we will be lucky to get away with an annual R700 million AU bill, as it costs over R3,6 billion to run the AU, and with over R2,07 billion coming from international donor nations, SA's cancelling of our ICC membership could inspire a significant drop or cancellation of interna-

tional AU funding.  
This will only show the Zuma-led ANC's real determination to stay in power by any means and at any cost. That is the only logical conclusion we can draw from our snubbing of the ICC to protect a leader with Omar al-Bashir's reputation!

**ROBERT NICOLAI Howick**

### NEVER AUSTRALIA

AS a South African, the only time I find myself supporting a national sports team other than my own team, is when that team is playing Australia.

This is especially true for cricket, where the manner in which they celebrate their on-field victories often suggests that they also practise the latter. My attitude is, of course, questionable, and at times leaves me feeling somewhat uncomfortable. Fortunately, it would now seem that I have been let off the hook by none other than the current captain of their cricket team. In an article featured in *The Witness* dated June 23, Michael Clarke is reported to have said that while he regretted telling an English cricketer that he, "should get ready for a broken f\*\*\*ing arm", he continued to say that the Australia cricket team has no plans to abandon their usual style in the field, as it is a big part of the Australian way. More's the pity.

**ROB DEMPSTER Pietermaritzburg**

## Change is the only constant

EDDIE CROSS

**T**HE pace of change has accelerated over the past two centuries and continues to accelerate as we travel through time into the future.

When my father was born, the world was still using the telegraph as the main means of communication, aircraft were in their infancy and the motor car still a local phenomenon. If you went on holiday it meant a long journey by road and even longer by sea. Wars were fought with soldiers and fixed bayonets slugging it out over bloody battlefields. Horses were still the main means of locomotion.

Today, we live in a world of instant communication — nothing escapes attention except many of the really important things.

But while our world has changed so much, in a very real sense, most of what makes up life on Earth has not changed. Humankind is still astonishing in its potential, we still make and enjoy music and art, and are still appalling in our moral and ethical despotism and capacity for evil.

What has changed and is probably here to stay, is our capacity to communicate instantly and across the globe. Nothing can be kept secret for long and if you commit a misdemeanour anywhere, you cannot be sure that it has not been observed, photographed and recorded.

On the down side of this growing trend is the increasing decline in direct, person-to-person communications and exchange. Just watch how your children behave when they are on their own — the smartphones come out, games are initiated or the Internet interrogated and perhaps an SMS conversation is held with a friend in the house next door.

The Internet is a phenomenon that is yet to be fully understood or appreciated. One thing is for sure, life can never be the same again and society, business and politics have no choice but to allow for the new situation.

But the changes are not only in the communications field. There are vast and rapid changes taking place in the financial sector and in business. In the financial world, nearly \$100 trillion of savings and international liquidity floats about in what we might call cyber space. Every day, billions of dollars must find a home, security is the first priority and if a country or a company or even an individual can create a reputation for being a secure recipient of these funds, the funds automatically flow towards such centres and away from those perceived to be less stable or secure.

So it becomes possible for the Asian Tigers to finance expansion and growth at a pace never seen before.

China is building cities the size of Johannesburg literally every month. When a country like Greece loses the confidence of the faceless people who control these funds, it is plunged immediately into a financial and fiscal crisis. Global markets see swings that would have caused global mayhem in the past but are now simply regarded as a curiosity. The price of petroleum swinging from \$120 a barrel to \$60 in a period of weeks changes global power relationships and drives the movement of resources on a scale that shakes the world.

No one, no matter how powerful, can ignore these changes. One consequence is that they are rapidly forcing compliance to norms and rules that resonate with international opinion and consensus. So we find the Chinese government replacing decades of radical Maoism with pragmatic capitalism and making it work so successfully that it is challenging the dominance of the major capitalist countries in the world economic system.

As Vladimir Putin is discovering, it's not the political leadership of the EU and the U.S. who threaten Russia with penalties arising from his maverick actions in the Ukraine, the markets and the money lenders are the real players in the power game. Adolf Hitler could never have got away with his demonic regime if this situation had existed in his era.

Maverick states like Zimbabwe, who flaunt the new consensus in global markets, do so to their detriment. They find themselves sanctioned, not only by a sanctimonious international community, but by the markets. Desperate for money to feed their delinquency, if they approach the markets to borrow, the markets demand a premium that would cripple most countries. Without money to support trade flows and to finance the rapid changes required in industry and commerce to meet the competition, such countries simply shrivel up and die.

The challenge of leadership in all spheres of activity is how to manage change. If change is the only constant then this should be a preoccupation for all of us.

Any business people who are not watching their competition and the changes taking place in their markets, will not last long. Politicians who do not watch the horizons of their worlds, run the risk of a crash landing. Individuals who live their lives as if nothing is ever going to change will be left behind and marginalised.

The key to success is not to be afraid of change but to welcome and embrace it as it takes place. Catching the wave at the right time is always exhilarating and rewarding. But to take advantage of these opportunities you need to recognise the basic fundamentals that do not change.

No matter how fast things move, the fundamentals of faith, confidence and integrity are essential tools for successful individuals and states.

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