

## Youth Sports and Supplements...Do They Mix?

By Jack Roller

**Y**our young athlete comes home all excited about his future in sports. However, it requires some major adjustments and certain commitments from him.

He is asking for your support. Your reaction with the advice you give could be one of your most important decisions as a parent!

He is telling you he must add bulk and muscle strength or no college will ever be interested in him. It is such a competitive world out there. They are cutting the amount of scholarships so Dad, please help me with this.

Your response may be...Son, you know about the great professional football player named Lyle Aljado taking anabolic steroids for years and dying from brain cancer. Of course his response is ...But Dad, this stuff I'm taking is perfectly safe because it is all natural. You inquire ...How do you know this and what about long term effects of loading up on these supplements? But Dad, creatine comes in lots of different brands and can be purchased in health stores. All the kids are taking it. I know what you are thinking, but they never proved that those three wrestlers deaths were caused by creatine. It is sold in stores

**I have a golden rule when it comes to my kids. It does not matter if it is prescribed by a doctor, coach or my best friend. Whether it is a drug, snake oil, magic potion or whatever, I will always read the warning label.**

and that makes it safe ...right?

This is where you need to stop and do some research. Talk to his coach but remember he may have ulterior motives. His knowledge may not be much better than yours. The best thing is to go online and form your own opinion. Talking to a doctor may not be your answer. If he did not graduate in the last five years, he had practically no training in nutrition. It boils down to the fact that if it is not toxic and invasive to your body (a drug), chances are your doctor will know nothing about it. He will classify it as another "snake oil" or state it will just make expensive urine.

Creatine is a naturally occurring body substance for muscle contractions and facilitates energy. Manufacturers say that increasing creatine in the system will make bigger and more explosive muscles. It is very popular in sports like football, hockey, lacrosse and wrestling. Is it possible that

the muscles could grow and put undue stress on tendons and ligaments? No matter how many athletes are taking creatine, several facts are clear ...It is very controversial... No one knows how safe it is ... No studies exist on it's long term effects!

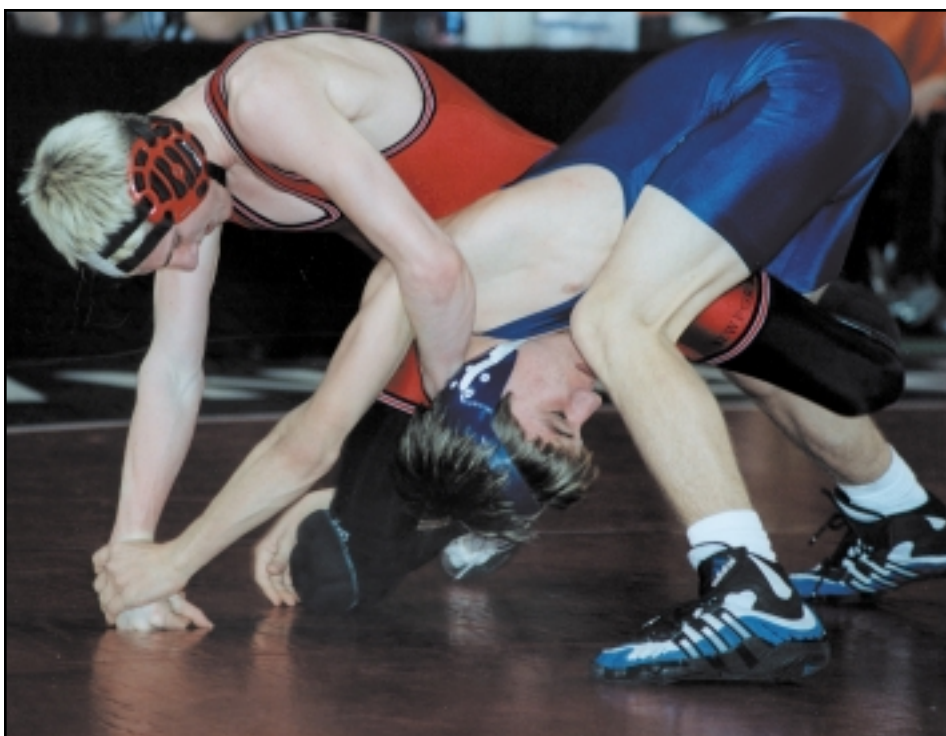
Like cigarette companies years ago, the manufacturers of creatine have a very desirable market to target ... our kids! They are definitely easily swayed. Their main goal is to gain that muscle mass and strength. They will almost always choose the shortcut of drugs or supplements over hard work.

This writer predicts that all doctors will be forced to educate themselves in the field of nutraceuticals and other forms of vitamins and nutrients. Modern medicine as we know it and it's barbaric methods will make drastic changes in the next five years. They will be forced to face facts and change with the times.

Keep in mind a few more facts. Last year the NCAA stopped all it's schools from giving athletes creatine. Pac 10 commissioners and the National Federation of State High School Associations have taken similar actions.

What is safe for kids and what is not? We know that anabolic steroids are extremely dangerous. Does creatine and other dietary supplements like androcterdion (banned by the NFL, NCAA and the International Olympic committee) and ephedrine (banned by the NCAA) fall into this same danger zone? I guess time will tell. However, I feel that risking our most valuable commodity, our kids, is just too much of a gamble!

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119 lb. Sean Stumphf (red), Newport Grizzlies, stretches Cory Elliff, Eatonville, in their opening AA match at the Mat Classic XIV. Elliff won with a pin at 5:30. Mat Classic XIV, the 2002 Washington State High School Championships.

magic potion or whatever, I will always read the warning label. If you stop and think about it, you may not know if you are pregnant or have a brain tumor! Be sure, beware, and read those warning labels. You can bet your life there is a reason for such a warning!

In summary, get all the facts, take all the precautions, show lots of interest and be sure you let your children know that you are thrilled that they want your opinion. The advise you give will be taken seriously and not without diligent effort on your part on giving the most knowledgeable recommendations possible.

I hope you do not think I am against nutritional supplements. I recommend them regularly. There are about 1600 nutritional companies. Lots of them have very good products. There may not be a lot of difference in one over the other. Pick the one that is right for your loved one and proceed cautiously.

I feel very strongly in the following advise regardless of age.

1. We should all build our immune system first. This will help our bodies fight things from common colds to all serious diseases such as cancer, anthrax, etc.

2. Watch out for our fast food world! Today we are getting only two out of the

eight common sugars (not table sugars) that we were getting before World War II. The so called green harvest (picking green and shipping from far off to our grocery) is causing most of our major illnesses. These phytochemicals are essential to optimal health.

3. Get your hormone system in control. We have 87 hormones which control thought fluency, hearing, vision, etc. These hormones decline after age twenty so beware. Certain products can control these hormones naturally. Many believe the lack of such hormones can cause serious diseases such as diabetes which is running rampant today.

4. Take a good megadose vitamin. This is essential when you are losing weight. Weight loss results in harmful free radicals being released in your body. This could cause serious damage and major disease could follow.

In my 20+ years of being a wrestling parent, coach, state director, and national tournament director, I have seen it all! I have seen all types of fanatic parents. Some good, some bad. These parents are worse than any fanatic you will ever encounter for they are playing with their child's life.

In my eight years as Oklahoma Kids State director, my main goal was to stop child

abuse. One form of the abuse I wanted to stop was the weight pulling of our youngsters. As I have stated before, most of these parents are running scared thinking they are doing the best for their wrestler by teaching them not to get better but to accept being a loser at his own weight and sucking down to get away from Johnny Bad Boy.

I say follow my above four steps and let your athlete compete at his God given natural weight. If a child cannot have an occasional candy bar like all the other kids, trust me, his wrestling career will be short lived!

As for the young athlete talking to his dad about supplementation, I certainly hope you are better prepared after this article. I hope that you have grasped that the main requirement of a concerned parent is to gain knowledge through proper research before giving the advise. If you were going to make a stock investment, purchase a home, or a new vehicle, I am sure you would take the time to do the research. Let's assume that your child is of equal importance to you and proceed diligently.

I do not claim to be an expert on nutrition. I would rather you think of me as a concerned friend who would be glad to answer any questions you may have. Feel free to contact me at 918-366-4411.

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