

Opinion: Doping has more repercussions than we think

By Alexander Nevsky

A spotlight was shone this month on the harmful practice of steroid use during Lance Armstrong's interview with Oprah Winfrey, where he admitted to using performance-enhancing drugs in all seven of his Tour de France victories.

For an adult, the use of steroids is dangerous, but for youth who are still growing and developing, steroid use can be devastating. In 1993, a top Russian TV Channel shot and aired a documentary, introducing me as natural, drug-free, bodybuilder. Since that initial exposure and publicity, I have used every interview and public appearance to articulate my anti-steroid message and have parlayed it into a 20-year, international anti-steroids campaign.

Article Tab: In this July 24, 2005 file photo, Luke Armstrong, rear right, tries to touch the winner's trophy held by his father, Lance Armstrong, after Armstrong won his seventh straight Tour de France cycling race, in Paris. During the second part Friday, Jan. 18, 2013, of Oprah Winfrey's interview with Armstrong, Armstrong talked about talking with Luke after his son had defended him concerning doping allegations.

It is well-documented, through reputable medical studies, that anabolic steroids can cause many serious health risks, including kidney failure, liver damage and high risk of stroke and heart attack (even in young people). While adults can be expected to be informed about these potential dangers, younger users are unlikely to fully understand, or give credence to, the grave consequences.

With that in mind, I decided to produce a full length

documentary film, "Mr. Universe," to promote my international anti-steroid campaign. An ancillary goal of the documentary is to clean up the sport of bodybuilding, which has suffered dramatically from steroid scandals.

The president of the World Fitness Federation/World Bodybuilding Federation, Edmundas Daubaras, is working with international anti-drug organizations to bring doping tests to all bodybuilding contests and competitions. Executive Vice President Robert Madrid is also coordinating the anti-steroid message of the WFF/WBBF in the United States.

I have a strong hope and wish that young athletes today will not repeat the mistakes of Lance Armstrong, and other prominent sports stars, who literally "took the wrong road" and stand to lose one of the most valuable gifts of all: their health.

Alexander Nevsky was crowned Mr. Universe in 2012. This column first appeared in the Orange County Register.