



my DIRTY *little* SECRETS

Steroids, Alcohol & God

the
Tony Mandarich Story

"Tony's triumph ... made for one of the most compelling and ultimately inspiring stories of my career."

Armen Keteyian
Chief Investigative Correspondent
CBS News

by Tony Mandarich, as told to Sharon Shaw Elrod

Praise for *My Dirty Little Secrets*

“Tony Mandarich’s book *My Dirty Little Secrets: Steroids, Alcohol and God* is heartbreaking and heartwarming at the same time. Brutally honest at times, and always straightforward, [this is] first and foremost a great book about the power we all hold within ourselves and everything we can achieve if we only decide to do the right thing. Unfailingly optimistic, but never preachy, this book should find a wide audience of those who are curious enough to reserve judgment until they learn all of the facts. I am not qualified to say how good of a football player Tony Mandarich ever was, but he is certainly a brave man and one who can walk with his head held high anywhere in this world.”

—Olivera Jackson-Baumgartner, *Reader Views*

“With the benefit of sober hindsight, Tony Mandarich has his pick of moments from a drug-fueled life that had him careening on a road to ruin. It is a chilling recollection, the chapters of both the book and his life in which Mandarich was destined for self-destruction. At least the story ends in redemption, both professionally—when he played clean and competently with the Indianapolis Colts after three years of exile—and personally, with a life dedicated to sobriety.”

—Rob Longley, *Toronto Sun*

“*My Dirty Little Secrets: Steroids, Alcohol, and God* is a testament that faith in a higher power can bring us to salvation and light. Tony’s story is touched by magic and brushes against the tragic. It’s a great human journey and a victory for the human spirit.”

—Jim Irsay, Owner, Indianapolis Colts,
Super Bowl® XLI Champions

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Book #5 in the Reflections of America Series

My Dirty Little Secrets - Steroids, Alcohol & God: The Tony
Mandarich Story.

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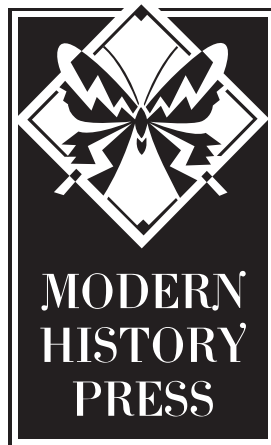
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—Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008)

This book is dedicated to my Big Brother, John,

&

to the still suffering alcoholics and drug addicts. There is Hope. All you have to do is get to the jumping off place and give it a chance. After all, what do you have to lose... besides your misery?

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You have all become part of my story! I look forward to the next chapters...

Tony Mandarich

Foreword

The rock legend Warren Zevon once said he lived a blessed life. The first part of his life was a drug-crazed, rock star existence living on the edge. The second part of his life was one of peace and contentment, a family man who found his serenity. Tony Mandarich's journey in life would be one that would resemble Warren Zevon's path. Tony was born big, 13 pounds and 13 ounces, setting a record at the local hospital where he was born. He came into the world large. He would grow big and strong, only to dream to grow even bigger and stronger.

When he saw Mark Bavaro's biceps bulging as an early collegian, Tony would watch from the sidelines and say, "I want to be even bigger and stronger." He would become bigger and stronger: a legend at Michigan State, a pancake artist, a destroyer at the point of attack. He didn't want to just block opponents, he wanted to destroy them. He wanted to embarrass them. He wanted to take away their will. He would become one of the most dominant collegiate offensive linemen ever to play the game.

I can still remember when I was general manager of the Indianapolis Colts in 1989. As the draft neared, Troy Aikman was at the top of the board with Deion Sanders and Tony Mandarich. However, the talk of Mandarich, his dominance at such a difficult "skill position" as left tackle seemed to carry the day in some people's minds. Tex Schramm told Jerry Jones before he turned over the reins to the Dallas Cowboys, "Take the quarterback. Take Aikman." The Cowboys did, even though most teams had Mandarich graded the highest on the board. The Green Bay Packers would select him at the number two pick in the whole draft. No one was surprised. Some wondered if he should have gone as number one!

There was a ghost in the machine. Young men often show a lot of bravado in their youth. Tony would listen to Guns N' Roses and

pump iron, unimaginable amounts of iron, record-setting type of lifting. He would even go out to California where the great lifters roamed. He wanted to compete against the strongest men in the world. What would it be like to train next to them? He had the feet. He had the speed. He had the strength. He had the tenacity. Sometimes offensive linemen lack that ferociousness but Tony could have played defense the way he attacked the line of scrimmage.

This ghost that lurked in the machinery would grow. If ghosts aren't dealt with, they always get stronger as we get older. That's just the nature of things. Eventually, these demons can become overpowering. They can take down even the strongest men. It takes a lot to break the will of a man, particularly a strong and proud man. Tony would enter the National Football League with high, high expectations. Greatness was expected and expected soon. He signed a huge, multi-million dollar contract that put his salary, on a per-year average, ahead of even the great, all-pro offense linemen, already veterans in the National Football League.

The pressure was too great; the demons grew and became stronger. And trouble lurked down the road for the big rookie. Rookies with high expectations and big salaries have it tough in the National Football League. The veterans wait for them. Mike Singletary once talked about preparing to go into the National Football League as a rookie. He was training with his trainer, showing fatigue, showing the lack of complete and utter desire to push it to the limit when the trainer stopped, looked at him and said, "Mike, there's a guy in Chicago who wears number 34. His name is Walter Payton. He will rip your heart out! Do you understand the level of preparedness you must endure to take on this challenge?" That's the type of difficulty rookies have coming into the league. Great players in their prime are waiting, tough veterans. The expectations are big and that makes the fall even bigger.

It's interesting in life, though, sometimes we're always focused on the answers. What are the right answers? How can we get them in our grasp? But the interesting thing is, the answers do not matter if you don't have the right questions. It's the right questions a wise

man always searches for. Tony would struggle and things would not work out for him with the Green Bay Packers. Like Bob Dylan once said, “And when finally the bottom fell out, I became withdrawn. The only thing I could do was to keep on keeping on, like a bird that flew.” Well, the bottom did fall out. And a difficult valley of suffering would lie ahead. The term “incomprehensible demoralization” is a very powerful phrase. Unfortunately, the words don’t truly convey that dark valley of suffering that some of us must go through. Tony would exit the National Football League and, as he contemplated his future, he would watch his brother die of cancer. These were very difficult times for Tony Mandarich.

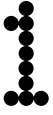
However, the real game is always the game of life. The real defining moments are played on a spiritual field. The spiritual field has many opposites that are counterintuitive to the fast lanes of life. On the spiritual field, surrender is the key. Acceptance is a virtue. Self-will has little currency on those spiritual fields of light. This is always where the great stories are written. They’re written at the crossroads. The crossroads are always defined simply by God saying, “Give me your hand. Surrender your will or you will perish.” This is the wonderment of Tony Mandarich’s story. Some of this journey is too sacred even to be discussed. How can we find the words to describe amazing grace? Grace is not earned or fought for; grace is accepted. Grace is always available for those of us who are in the valley of great suffering. Only we can choose it. One unique aspect defines our humanity: freedom of choice. That is what we find at the diverging crossroads of darkness and light. The greatest miracles happen under the radar. The greatest miracles are the ones that are simple and humble and quiet.

There would be a complete, psychic shift, a total rearrangement within my friend who I came to know and nicknamed, “Señor.” There is something so special about gentle giants; men that are so large and so strong but yet so gentle, compassionate and selfless. Tony would find his way to recovery; come back into the National Football League and play for the Indianapolis Colts and play very well. He would play against his old team, the Green Bay Packers. He

would play against the great, late Reggie White and hold his own. He would compete like a National Football League starting offensive lineman who you could count on to win with. His comeback would be short-lived but still very essential. Few athletes get the chance to come back, to play well, to make things right. Tony's story is a miraculous journey of courage. It's a testament that faith in a higher power can bring us to salvation and light.

There are many aspects of Tony's story that will interest you. Most of us can only dream of being so blessed with such physical skills and dominance to play the game of football at such a high level as Tony did. Many men fall, never to rise again in this life. However, Tony Mandarich did and found a new morning. Tony remains a very close, lifelong friend of mine. A bunker mate. A fellow traveler who has helped many other people along the way. We shared our Super Bowl® victory in February, 2007 over the Chicago Bears together. We met and prayed before the game and both of us knew that we were blessed. We both realize and understand that we are not human beings having a spiritual experience, but spiritual beings having a human experience. I hope Tony's story can help others realize that we have a choice. Maybe some young man will read this book and realize what it really means to be a man. We can grow into the person we always hoped to be. We can overcome adversity and rise from the ashes. Tony's story is touched by magic and also brushes against the tragic. It's a great human journey and a victory for the human spirit.

Jim Irsay
Owner of the Indianapolis Colts
Super Bowl® XLI Champions



The Rise



An electric current ran through me when I arrived at Michigan State in the fall of 1984. Not only did I love the energy in East Lansing, I made a vow to myself: This would be my launching pad into the NFL, a dream I'd cherished since childhood. I promised myself I would do whatever was necessary to become the best football player I could be.

The game was my entire life since childhood. I'd played pickup football with my friends in my neighborhood as a child and then, at White Oaks Secondary School in Oakville, Ontario, I played organized football with equipment for the first time. Pickup football was really more my style, because we made our own rules! I was always bigger than my friends, so I was usually in charge. I loved running, competing, and most of all, I loved *winning*. The thrill of knowing I was the best in my group of friends was where the electric current in me got its start.

My parents provided another impetus for the highly charged sense of competition I developed for the game. They were role models for my belief that I had to do something extraordinary to achieve what may feel or appear like insurmountable goals. The lesson they provided me came with a high price tag for them; in 1957, they escaped Yugoslavia (now Croatia) in the dark of the night because they refused to live under Communist rule any longer. Six months after their baby girl died because they couldn't afford the medical care she needed, they left their home, taking only a small 12 by 18 inch suitcase and the clothes they wore. After walking through Croatia and Slovenia, they forged the Mura River that separated Slovenia and Austria on a cloudy night, desperately hoping the

border guards with their rifles would not see them. It was their willpower and grit that finally got them to Canada as immigrants, determined to make a new life for themselves. Somewhere deep within me, I believed that if they could put their lives on the line to be free, I certainly could risk all I had to become a member of the National Football League.

Driven by my insane desire to be the best, I always sought *the edge*. My brother John, whom I revered, taught me that lesson. He said you had to have *the edge* over everyone else in order to reach your life goals. So, for me, the edge was always front and center in my plans. I sought a training regime and psychological stance that set me apart from other football players. I became unique and different because I trained differently, thought individually and prepared uncommonly. I put myself in the riskiest position possible because I fully intended to play in the NFL. Really good athletes, in any sport, are unique and different. I wanted to be the best. I wanted to become *extraordinary*.

Young and impressionable, I received a wake-up call during my first college game against Notre Dame in East Lansing. John and I had watched the Irish as kids, so I couldn't help feeling a sense of exhilaration as I thought: "Oh My God, this is THE Notre Dame! THE Notre Dame with Touchdown Jesus!" Now, I proudly wore Michigan State colors and would play against them.

Mark Bavaro added intimidation to my thoughts. Huge arms hung from the shoulders of the Notre Dame tight end; he resembled a gladiator. I weighed in at a measly 270 pounds, a stick of an offensive tackle. The mere sight of Bavaro delivered a wake-up call, the first of many that were going to happen over the next few years. I knew I had to get in the weight room to hang with the big boys. Big Time college football demanded I get serious.

Football became my twelve-month, round-the-clock pursuit. Friends went south for spring break, but I remained in East Lansing to work in the weight room. I believed championships and great players were made in the off-season. I was going to be the best player in football, whatever it took. So I spent January through April in

continuous workouts and additional training programs to get the edge I craved.

Buck Nystrom, MSU's offensive line coach, ran the off-season conditioning program that began every morning at 6 a.m., which meant a 5 a.m. wake up call for me. Nystrom had more passion for what he believed in than any coach I'd ever known. Ignoring the frigid conditions in East Lansing during the winter, I walked through the dark in the biting cold weather to Jenison Field House for the morning workouts.

I wanted to play football, so I followed the rules. At least, I followed the *obvious* rules. I didn't want to flunk out of MSU, nor did I want to get kicked out for not following rules for football players. I had no concept about addictions at that point in my life, so I had no idea that in spite of my efforts to conform, I was spiraling down into a deep, dark hole. I neither realized nor admitted to myself that becoming psychologically dependent on steroids and physically dependent on alcohol was breaking all the rules and would result in a fate worse than flunking out of college. After all, everyone went out for Thursday night beer, right? Doing steroids was permissible because it would get me into the NFL. All I had to do was keep it hidden, and that made it okay. I had all the answers.

So, on the surface I did what I thought was expected of me: I studied and trained faithfully. Late afternoons found the Spartan team back in the football building, lifting weights and working out again. Sometimes we would review training material and practice our position drills, even during the off-season. My first two years included dinner in the dorm and studying in the evenings. Tutors were hired for the team, and in the evening freshmen were required to attend study hall, where the tutors were available. Upperclassmen could use the services of tutors if they chose, but if your grade point fell below 2.0, the study hall was again required. I was bound and determined I wouldn't fall below this mark, and willing to do whatever it took. I majored in communications and relished the opportunity to explore the field of journalism. That knowledge later

enhanced my work as a Canadian television sports commentator and helped me to deal better with public life and the media.

During football season the routine changed. Freshmen still had study hall and all the players still had classes, twice daily practice and workouts, but the Friday nights before Saturday home games were a time filled with the tradition of decades of football at Michigan State. That night found the entire team in the Kellogg Center, an on-campus hotel where we stayed the night. Those evenings included a team dinner, team meetings and position meetings—all final preparations for the Saturday game. The curfew always came at 11:00 p.m. We each went to our room then—working, sometimes frantically, to contain the eagerness and anticipation we felt about the upcoming game. For me, Friday nights were always a preview of what I would finally have when I arrived at the door of the NFL. The anticipation of the game for me was anticipation of the NFL, and almost as exhilarating as playing on the field.

Then came Saturday mornings. As I woke up in my room in Kellogg, excitement began to grow. I went to breakfast—always scheduled at a time directly related to kickoff—feeling the thrill of the game building. Following breakfast, we showered and dressed in suit and tie. Then, several hours before kickoff, the time-honored ritual of walking from the Kellogg Center to the football field began. The contrast between game gear and suit and tie is striking, and the dissimilarity between the two was chosen on purpose: game gear is required to play the game; a suit and tie command respect, dignity and adulation. Those feelings were lost on none of us.

When we made that walk in formal attire, we always felt special, honored and respected. We'd be filthy and smelly and grimy in a few hours, but this was our time, our spotlight, during which we felt more important than anyone could possibly imagine.

Michigan State fans are passionate about football, and they let us know that every time we made that walk. Head coach George Perles led the walking parade through a tunnel of cheering fans that were hungry to see the Spartans win. The half-mile walk wove

through the beautiful trees on campus, which in the fall were heavy with their riot of yellow, red and orange leaves. Making the walk was a heady experience; I always felt a rush of pride, being part of a tradition that spanned so many years.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, I changed. I can say that now. I did not know it at the time. In retrospect, I think it probably began when I left home to spend my senior year of high school at Roosevelt High in Kent, Ohio. John and I had been talking about how to get to the NFL for years. When we were kids, we'd hurry to get our chores done on Saturdays, so we could watch college football at noon. Then on Sundays, we were glued to the television to watch the NFL game. Our shared dream was to play football in the NFL, hopefully together. We talked about what positions we would play, how we would work together on the field and how we would be the best brother-brother team ever seen in the NFL. We would have the whole world talking about us!

We knew we had better chances if we attended college in the United States. Kent State awarded John a scholarship to attend college there, and play football. During my junior year of high school in Oakville, we also talked about how to get me into a *big time* college football program. We decided my chances would improve if I attended my senior year of high school in the United States. We just had to convince our parents, and that wasn't easy. Our parents were 'hands on' parents. They had already lost a six-month old daughter, and they were determined to do everything in their power to help and protect us. They wanted us growing up 'right' and that meant going to church, serving as altar boys, no drinking, no drugs, and being watched over carefully so their strict (but loving) parental controls would ensure our safe journey into adulthood.

John was home for Christmas and New Year's of 1982-83. During Christmas dinner, John opened the discussion proposing my move to Ohio to live with him.

"Tony's really got talent and he'll have a lot better chance for a good U.S. university if he plays high school football in the States.

Colleges and universities don't recruit here, in Canada, like they do in the States." John laid out the rationale unemotionally.

Mom cried, "I can't let my boy go away. He's too young!" Dad agreed, but he also saw John's point. However, he wasn't going to argue with Mom, the matriarch of the family, at least not at first.

"But, Mom, the only thing I want to do with my life is play football," I protested, desperately needing her to give permission and equally desperately wanting to move to Ohio with John. I didn't want to leave Mom and Dad, but I *really* wanted to play football and get a jump-start to the pros. I wanted a life of my own. I wanted to fulfill my dream of being in the NFL. My parents wanted me to be what I wanted to be, but they were reluctant to let me go at the tender age of 16. They had already lost a daughter, and their oldest son had moved away. I was the only one left at home.

That discussion went on for several months. The final persuasive argument was their realization of what offered me the best opportunity; Dad finally convinced Mom to let me go, however reluctantly. She finally gave up trying to hold out against the three men in her family. My parents agreed my chances would improve immeasurably if I went to the United States for my senior year of high school.

John, only four years older than I, had to go to court in Kent to be appointed my legal guardian. And in August 1983, he and I drove from Oakville to Kent, Ohio, beginning our journey toward the goal of my NFL career. John told me we needed to seize the opportunity before it was too late. He guided and protected me and was as heavily invested in my becoming a NFL player as I was. I knew I was going to be the best NFL player ever. I would make sure everyone on the planet knew who Tony Mandarich was.

John Nemeč, the head coach at Kent Roosevelt High School, and his family welcomed me with open arms. They and the other coaches and their families became my instant extended family. Here I was, a Canadian, taking the place another kid from the United States would have had on that team, yet I was accepted just like the rest of the team members. I'm still amazed that they were so giving and

gracious to me. It helped make up for being away from Mom and Dad; I didn't get lonely like I otherwise might have. Even if I did, it's something I wouldn't admit. I've always felt the Nemecs didn't have to be so nice, but they were anyway, and I'll never forget that.

Again I put myself in a position most people don't normally choose. I left home and moved to Ohio with John; that was not a common thing in my culture or community. Families moved together because Mom or Dad got transferred; sixteen year-olds did not leave home for the sole purpose of getting a scholarship, improving exposure and aggressively seeking the opportunity to play big time college football. I could have gotten an education at home, but I craved more. That craving was so deep I could taste it.

My parents made a very tough decision, not only in allowing me to go live with John, but by permitting me to leave home and go live in another country, just like they'd done, but for very different reasons. It was tough saying goodbye to them, but I was so excited about the new path I was on. I had a gamut of mixed emotions. Part of me was glad to be gone because of all the strict rules my parents imposed on me—I hated rules. They often prevented expression of my rebellious nature. John had rules too, but he wasn't as strict. I was excited about the many opportunities ahead of me, but my primary thought was to play in the NFL, and I was on my way there. I didn't give any thought to the stability offered to most teens through parental control channels, but what teen does? I was singularly excited about being out from under those controls; I felt those rules impeded my creativity and movement into adulthood.

John made sacrifices for me, too. He was a college senior at Kent State, with an active social life, and suddenly he had a high school senior living with him in his apartment. That was a big sacrifice; he'd been on his own and finally away from parental rule for three years, and now... there was me. The silent question was all around him, "Your little brother lives with you?" John wanted me there for *my* benefit. That's the kind of guy he was; he was living out his role as the older brother, taking care of me. At that time I didn't fully realize the sacrifices he was making. As I think back, it touches my heart

when I realize how adamantly he wanted to help me get a football scholarship and get on the road to the NFL.

On the first drive from Canada to Kent, John casually revealed to me that he used steroids, and thought it was the *edge* to get to the NFL. He said everybody in the NFL was using them. His comments were casual; I could use them if I wanted to, and if I didn't, that would be okay too. He didn't coax, didn't encourage; he just told me what he'd chosen to do to try to attain the athletic edge he thought was so important – strength beyond what you can obtain with weights.

I clearly inherited my size from my parents, but John was my older brother, and I listened to everything he told me. He was my hero and I would do everything he suggested. If he thought I should consider steroids to increase my already-large body, then I'd do it. There was no second-guessing. He said you had to be the best in your position on the team, or you wouldn't make the NFL. We both sought the best, so I started doing steroids my last semester in high school. I wanted to be the best football player in the NFL, and I would do whatever it took to get there.

I played the entire season of my senior year at Kent Roosevelt High School. I played well, and there was a lot of talk about my future in a college or university in the States. I knew I'd made the right decision about living there my senior year. One day after practice, Coach Nemec announced to the team that the coaches were going to be filming several games. We all felt important and proud, but also curious. He explained they would be sending clips of some of us to colleges and universities for possible recruiting efforts. I wanted to go to Ohio State at the time, and secretly hoped they would get some of the clips to review. If there'd been a way to ensure OSU got my clips, I'd have done it in a minute. But I didn't have any way to be sure they got them, so I resorted to praying.

Toward the end of the season, I got a call from Nick Saban, who was the Ohio-area recruiter for Michigan State University. He'd seen a game film my coaches had sent out, and he said he wanted to see me play. I was almost giddy, but I held back because a guy like me

would never admit to the inner excitement—guys just didn't express feelings like that. I felt honored someone would travel from East Lansing just to watch me play football. My dreams were starting to become reality. Maybe I'd even get to visit the MSU campus. I began doing some computing... It was only a five-hour drive from there to my home in Ontario, and if I went there I would be able to see my parents more often. Maybe East Lansing would be a better place to go to college than Ohio? I could hardly contain my excitement. When he arrived, Nick told me all about MSU and said they wanted me to come to MSU for a visit. When I went to visit, they said they were interested in me playing there and offered me a scholarship. I was ecstatic! A full scholarship and only five hours from home! I could live with this deal! It was exactly what I dreamed of; I was on my way to becoming the best football player in the NCAA, and I was willing to do whatever it took.

Like all young players, I needed mentoring, and Nick knew that. He began working with me on his first visit to Kent Roosevelt High School. He was a defensive back coach at that time, and he began providing me with the counsel and direction I needed for succeeding in both college and on the university football field. There's an unspoken expectation of recruiting coaches in college football; they take players they recruit under their wings and look out for them during their college career. I was grateful for his willingness to be there for me. I actually did miss my parents, even if they did have rules I didn't like. The coaches make sure their recruits go to classes, stay out of trouble and do what's in their best interests and ultimately, the interests of the football program. I will always be the rebellious second child and I needed the help Nick had to offer. He knew me well; he knew if he didn't place an invisible guard over me, I would play out my archetypical role of being the rebel and he would have trouble on his hands.

I liked Nick. On my recruiting visit to MSU I met, and immediately liked, George Perles, who was the head coach at the time. I was told that the team was in a rebuilding process. MSU hadn't won the Big 10 Championship since 1966, and that was their

goal. That appealed to my strong need to win. I wanted to be part of the winning team—I wanted to be able to brag I won the Big 10 Championship. They knew they needed to make lots of changes, and they talked with me about the ones that I'd be interested in. They told me that of the offensive linemen on the current team, I'd be close to the top in the position. I knew enough about other college teams, so that really impressed me and got my attention. I'd be down much farther on the ladder in my position (offensive lineman) at most other Big 10 schools. Few freshmen play in the starting lineup, but my chances to be a starter my sophomore year were better at MSU than at the other colleges I visited. Those other colleges already had well-established linemen and it would be tougher to break into their entrenched systems, and I *really* wanted to play. Besides, East Lansing was only a five-hour drive home. I'd been away from home since August, and I always miss Mom and Dad when I'm away from them. I didn't think I would, but I really did.

I looked at and was courted by several other colleges... University of Michigan, UCLA, University of Maryland, and a number of mid-America schools (Kent State, Akron, Ohio University, Central Michigan, East Michigan, Western Michigan, Bowling Green). Once I visited East Lansing, though, I fell in love with the town and MSU. I was impressed with what George and Nick said about where they were going. They were a "blue collar" team, not pretentious, and they were definitely well aware of the fact that they had to work to get where they wanted to be. I appreciated that; that's how I grew up. I came from a working class immigrant family, where values were placed on hard work and climbing up the ladder. Nobody in my family started at the top. I'd also been invited to visit the University of Michigan, but the recruiter was arrogant. He bragged about the U of M team and came off too superior and too proud. He told me the University of Michigan had a flag on the moon. I didn't care about flags on the moon; I just wanted to play football and get a good education.

In February 1984, after the football season was over, I spent a lot of time training in the gym in Kent. I trained 12 months a year.

At one point, I was working on the bench press and couldn't get beyond 315 pounds. Part of it was a mental block, which was related to the number of plates on the bar; three big plates on each end just *looked* like too much to lift. I complained to John about not being able to lift 315 pounds, and he said steroids would probably help. I reminded myself my main goal in life was to get to the NFL, so I told him I wanted the pills. He gave me what would be considered a very mild and small cycle of a steroid called *Dianabol*, a small blue pill (which should not be confused with Viagra). I did an eight-week cycle. Within the first month, I surpassed 315 pounds on the bench press. My strength increased significantly, probably due both to the Dianabol and because psychologically, I *believed* I was stronger. I believe I reached the next level of athletic competency faster. In retrospect, I honestly don't know which was stronger, the steroid or my belief that I was stronger.

A miserable and life-changing episode stands out in my mind from that period of time. It was a Friday night in February. We were training at the gym in Kent, and my brother and his then-lifting partner, known as ET because he was so out of this world, were working out. I was exhausted from the week of school and even though I was at the gym, I wasn't working out.

John asked, "Why aren't you working out?"

I replied, "I'm tired and just want a ride home after you and ET are done."

John and ET flew into a rage and lashed out at me, "You are an undisciplined and lazy motherf***er. If you think you're gonna be successful playing big time college football, then you're gonna get your ass kicked at Michigan State!"

After their workout, they didn't allow me to ride home with them. I had to walk three miles through a blizzard, across town and campus, to get to our apartment. This gave me a lot of time to think about my life, my goals, and what I wanted to be. Looking back, I think that was an eye opener for me, something that began preparing me for big time college football. I began to realize I had to really get serious about building strength and endurance. I needed to do

whatever it took, and ignore fatigue—if I wanted to be the *best*. John was still my older brother, my hero; but he stopped taking care of me then, and I was really on my own. I had to make my own decisions and plan how I was going to be the best football player in the NFL.