

# Ex-S. Carolina football player admits drug use

By The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Former South Carolina football player Tommy Chaikin used bodybuilding anabolic steroids for three years and says they drove him to violence and nearly to suicide before last year's Clemson game, according to this week's issue of *Sports Illustrated*.

"I was sitting in my room at the Roost, the athletic dorm at the University of South Carolina, with the barrel of a loaded .357 Magnum pressed under my chin," the story, written by Chaikin and *SI's* Rick Telander, begins.

"My finger twitched on the trigger. I was in bad shape, very bad shape. From the steroids. It had all come down from the steroids, the crap I'd taken to get big and strong and aggressive so I could play this game that I love."

Chaikin said he had been having "anxiety attacks" for five months and said they had become "so intense that I couldn't stand them anymore. I'd lost control of everything."

Chaikin, a 6-foot-1, 250-pound de-

fensive lineman from Bethesda, Md., lettered from 1984-87 after redshirting in 1983. He said he didn't pull the trigger because his father, who had flown to Columbia, S.C., for the game, knocked on the door and took him to Sibley Memorial Hospital in Washington, D.C.

In the waiting room, Chaikin said he "started to have spasms. My body was having a reaction to Stelazine, the drug that a psychiatrist had prescribed for me a few weeks earlier when I'd first come home from South Carolina to get some professional help."

Chaikin said that "suicide was always on my mind. Suicide and football."

Coach Joe Morrison, who took over the South Carolina program in 1983, refused comment on the story. "Coach Joe Morrison does not plan to have any comment on the story tonight," Sports Information Director Kerry Tharp said.

"What they're going to do," defensive line coach Jim Washburn said, "is Kerry Tharp is going to have press release tomorrow. I'll just wait

and we'll give a press release tomorrow."

Not immediately available for comment were Bob Marcum, who was athletic director during the period described by Chaikin, and University President James B. Holderman, who reportedly was out of town.

Chaikin weighed 185 when he first played football as a junior in high school. He said he built himself up to 200 pounds as a senior by lifting weights.

As a freshman at South Carolina, he "held a dummy for the scout team and got knocked around all fall. Already guys had asked me if I wanted to take steroids — they called the stuff "juice" — so I could beef up and fight back."

In the spring of 1984, Chaikin said, "I decided I was going to take steroids to get big and strong and aggressive. I finally broke down ... I saw how well the guys already on steroids were doing, maybe 30 of them at that time."

He said assistant coach Jim Washburn told him, "Do what you have to do, take what you have to take."

Chaikin said that "getting the stuff was no big deal ... I had a friend there, and I knew he could get me what I wanted or tell me where to go for it. He got me some steroids, and I told him I also wanted hGH, human growth hormone. He told me where I could get it."

Chaikin said he went from 210 pounds to 235 in eight weeks, taking 12 injections a month. In addition to muscle growth, he said he "got real bad acne on my back, my hair started to come out. I was having trouble sleeping, and my testicles began to shrink — all the side effects you hear about."

When he took his football physical that fall, a doctor told him he had developed high blood pressure and a heart murmur. But Chaikin said he "never heard a word about it from the coaches."

Chaikin also said he "snorted cocaine with a couple of other players one night. I'd say about a third of the players had used it occasionally. But some guys used it the night before games. One night some of the guys on the team took microdots of LSD."

"This was in 1984, and we didn't have to take drug tests yet. Even after the NCAA instituted drug tests in '86, they were a sham. A lot of guys would just say, 'Doc, I can't urinate in front of you,' and they'd go into a stall where they'd hidden a vial of someone else's urine, and pour that in the cup. Some guys would pour salt or vinegar into the cup, which was supposed to mask any traces of drugs. Even when guys tested positive, nothing happened to them."

Chaikin said in his junior year, "about 50 guys out of the 100 on the team were using steroids."

He said at one point that Keith Kephart, then South Carolina's strength coach, asked all the linemen who among them was taking a steroid called Anadrol.

"Kephart wanted guys to cut back on their intake. I don't remember him telling us to stop. I really think he cared, but he didn't think he could change us."

Kephart, now strength coach at Texas A&M, told *The Associated Press* that he had "noticed that a lot of the linemen were having problems

running and it got back to me via the grapevine, which is the way these things sometimes happen, that some of the kids were on steroids."

"I called a meeting immediately and I said, 'I don't know who you are or exactly what you're on, but get off of it.'"

"At that point, there was no NCAA involvement, no suspensions. This was not because of the NCAA, because they had not gotten involved."

"As far as the comment I made, I told him (Chaikin) to get off of them and leave them alone. That was 1985. I don't know if he's shaken them. I hope he's worked things out."

"As far as my involvement, I was trying to head off some possible problems. We were very, very emphatic about how we wanted our kids to perceive our mentality toward steroid use. It was our position for them not to get involved."

"We threw the used syringes into the waste cans in our rooms," Chaikin said. "I mean, we even had syringes sticking in the walls. Coaches would walk in and see the stuff, but nobody gave a damn."

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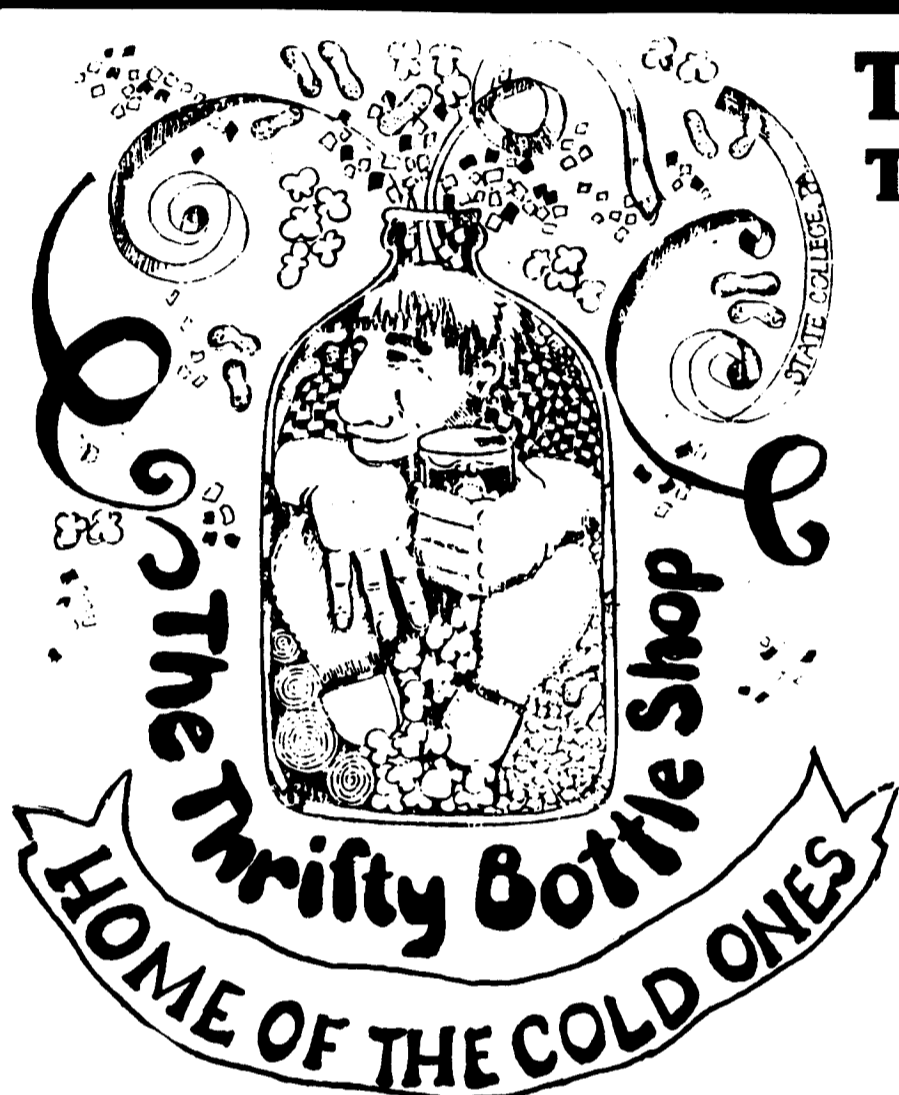
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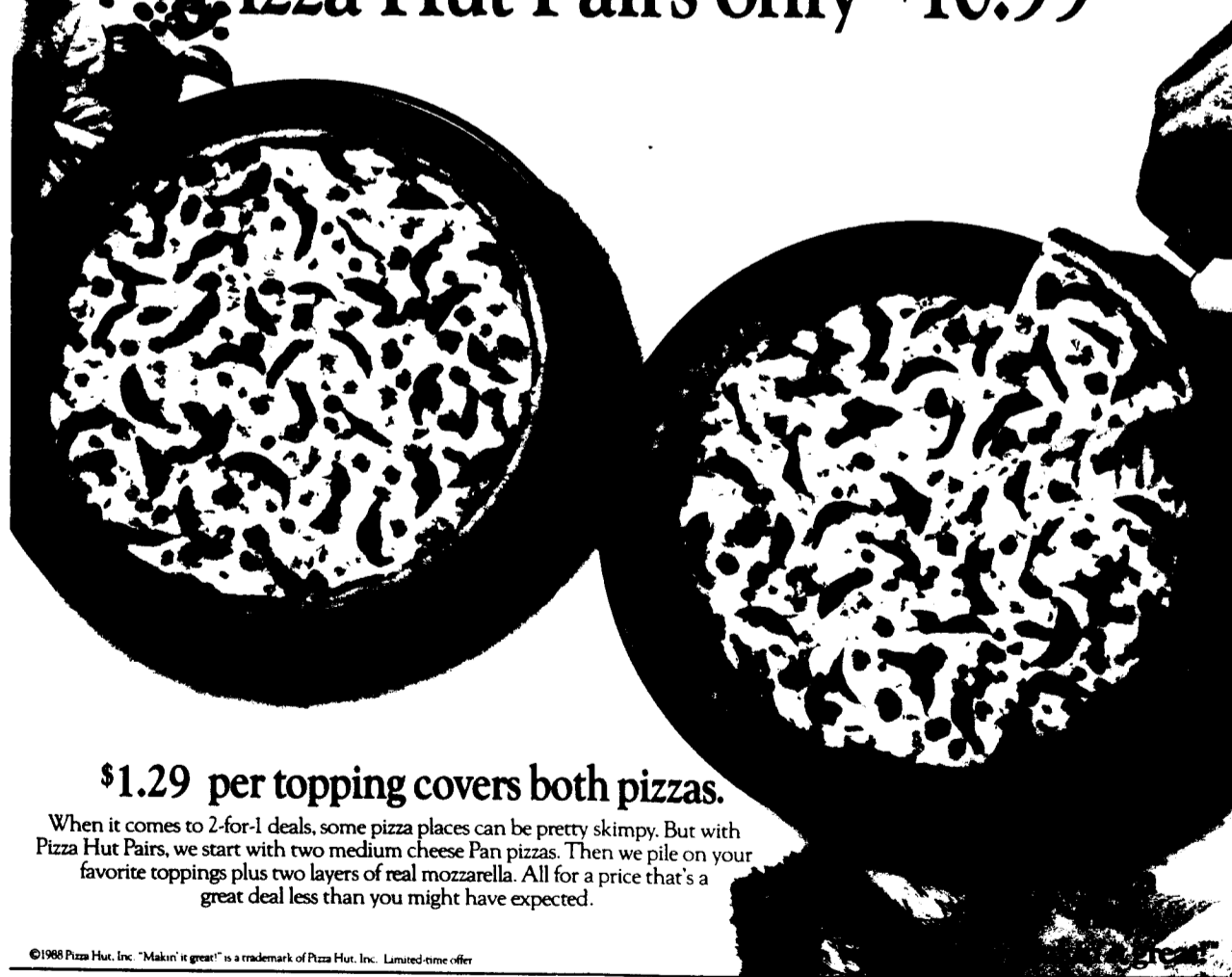
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