

Cannabis Use

The Facts

Lately there has been a lot of discussion and differing opinions concerning the use of Cannabis (blow, bhang, wacky backy). Should the BDFPA take a stronger view on the use of cannabis in our sport? Are we making a big fuss over nothing? What sort of punishment if any, a warning or a ban? There is a long list of arguments for and against. Many people aware of my profession as a Drugs and Alcohol worker understand my concerns regarding this issue - most of my working hours are spent with heroin, crack and alcohol clients. Cannabis may not be as severe as Class A drugs but nevertheless it



can still be problematic for many people. In writing this article my objective is to show the scientific facts surrounding the effects of Cannabis, the dangers a lifter may face whilst under the influence of cannabis prior to lifting in or out of competition and to enable members to make up their own mind as to how this relates to the I.O.C rules regarding drugs in sport (our sport!).

The Effects of Cannabis

The effects of Cannabis can be significantly dependant on the users mood but can also be determined by the type, the amount, the strength of the drug and how it is used. Cannabis is often taken for relaxation, giving the person a feeling of contentedness and peace, its mild sedative effect causes some users to become quiet and subdued whilst others become deeply reflective or introspective, a heightened sense of feeling and mild hallucinogenic properties are also reported. The current ongoing debate about whether to allow Cannabis to be available on prescription is due to its pain relieving properties (hence why many victims of cancer turn to cannabis).

Short term effects of Cannabis

These are numerous - I have only listed the effects related to powerlifting which could be dangerous. Problems with balance and co-

ordination – all powerlifters know the importance of balance and coordination. How can anybody safely perform a squat, bench or deadlift when not in full control of their body's movements. Short term memory problems – possibly leading to the lifter becoming disorientated and confused with simple instructions and commands. Paranoia, panic and anxiety – the lifter could make a number of mistakes, misjudgements and rash decisions which he would not have otherwise made. Feelings of nausea, sickness, dizziness (affecting balance) – no lifter will lift to their full potential when experiencing these symptoms. The lifter may black out whilst under strain of a heavy weight. This could result in injury to themselves and/or others. There are so many other situations which could occur as a result of the above short term side effects - I have mentioned but a few.

Medium long term side effects of Cannabis

Induced Psychotic state – Schizophrenia

Effect Mental state – ability – concentration

Feeling of tiredness – Unmotivated

Effects Performance – Mentally – knock on effect Physically

A person with a family history of mental illness should not in anyway use Cannabis as it may exacerbate or bring on an existing mental health problem as well as lead to other long term mental health problems. All Powerlifters understand the importance of mental concentration, focus and mental preparation. How many of us in the past have physically prepared ourselves for a competition ready to set new personal records, but on the day due to lack of mental energy or concentration lifted a lot less than was capable of.

All those out there who need a daily dose of puff remember that Cannabis will be traceable in the body up to 49 to 63 days.

DON'T BE A DOPE

Rasheed Patel