

Valium, amphetamines used on UNC football team, players tell newspaper

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Darvasette, a weak form of Darvon, is a pain reliever stronger than aspirin.

Dr. Joseph DeWalt, UNC sports medicine director and team physician, at first told the *Times* he gave players three to four Valium tablets at a time.

But when told that most players interviewed said the number was eight, he replied: "Well, I couldn't say for sure that I never gave out eight. The number varies."

Dr. Robert Lindsay, the other UNC team physician until his retirement last year, told the *Times* that although he had dispensed Valium to players and written prescriptions for the drug in his office, he could not be certain how many.

Several players also told the *Times* that when they complained about pain, the team physician rarely examined them before dispensing Valium or Darvasettes.

"The doctor would just take your word for it," Mark Gaines, a former UNC football player said. "He had sympathy for us."

DeWalt disagreed with Gaines and other players about examinations before dispensing the pills.

"I always examine the player before I dispense any Valium or Darvasette," he said.

Gaines, now a bartender in Blacksburg, Va., was kicked off the team in 1974 after being caught with marijuana. That year, he and other players said, was "a big year" for Valium abuse.

"If four or five guys would get a handful that day, we'd go back to the dorm and have a party," Gaines said.

DeWalt, a team physician for the last 10 years, said in an interview with the *Times* that he was never aware of any Valium abuse.

"Valium never has been much of a problem on this team," DeWalt said. "I know these boys pretty well, and I think if they were abusing drugs I'd know it."

Lindsay also said he has no knowledge of Valium abuse.

While DeWalt admitted to the *Times* that several players habitually asked him for the pills, he said he restricted the use of them.

"So when a defensive end asks me for some Valium, I usually give him Tylenol (an aspirin substitute available without prescription) or tell him to come back Monday," he said. "Actually, I'd like to use Valium more than I do now."

DeWalt said he restricts the use of Valium "because the boys know it made them feel good. I'm not naive enough to think that they won't go out after games and have a beer or two."

UNC players told the *Times* that mixing beer or hard liquor with Valium has been common practice during leisure time.

"It has the same effect as swigging four or five beers," one player said. "You'd take all eight pills at once and then take a couple of beers, and you'd feel like floating through air."

Valium is the most prescribed drug in the country, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Medical authorities also say it has become one of the most abused drugs.

A federal study conducted recently in Utah revealed that of 900 deaths found to involve Valium, 360 were tied specifically to a mixture of alcohol and Valium.

DeWalt, however, defends the use of Valium.

"Most of the players I give it to are linebackers and running backs," DeWalt told the *Times*. "They take the most of the contact, and they need the drug more for sleep."

Several UNC players said that two years ago, they received the drug merely by asking for it.

"You'd just tell the doctor you're hurting, and he'd give you something," Roger Schonosky, a former defensive lineman who dropped out of school in 1975, told the *Times*.

"A lot of them (pills) were for sleep, but a lot of guys would just say 'My back hurts' and get the pills to abuse them," another player said.

UNC players also told the *Times* that amphetamines have been used by some athletes who think the drugs will improve their performance.

In affidavits and interviews, the players — many of whom asked not to be identified for fear of reprisals — explained the abuse to the *Times*.

Most players said heavy use of drugs among football players occurred between 1970 and 1975. But members of Carolina's 1977 Atlantic Coast Conference championship football team told the *Times* they have seen speed used by five to seven members of their team.

Sources also told the *Times* that at least one member of the 1977 team was a dealer in drugs such as speed.

Sources said the dealer's identity is common knowledge among players and players can easily purchase drugs from him. Neither sources nor players would identify the dealer, saying they were afraid of physical harm.

According to the sources, the present dealer succeeded another football player who graduated in 1977. They said the chain of dealers began at least three years earlier.

Gaines told of drug selling on his team.

"There was no big thing about it," Gaines told the *Times*. "Each hit cost 75 cents. If you wanted some, you'd just go to the person and he'd give you some."

"I am not naive enough to think there was no experimenting going on. There was a time when there was a lot of that. But in those cases I found out about, there was a separation of players from the team."

— Bill Dooley

"When I was there, speed was pretty common. A few of us used to take two or three hits of speed at practice to see who could last the longest.

"I remember the Maryland game in 1973. It was a big game and the turning point of the season. A lot of the guys took speed because it was so important." (The Tar Heels lost the game, 23-3).

Players interviewed by the *Times* gave two major reasons for taking speed.

"The players think it will help them play better for one thing," one player explains. "And they also take it to keep from dragging in the fourth quarter."

"I can see why they do it," another player said. "Some guys think they need something extra, especially for the big game."

But players say speed has declined in use on the team.

"It's used a whole lot less than it used to be," said Bill Perdue, a former UNC defensive end and a 1976 graduate. "I'd say only 10 guys took it in 1975 out of the whole traveling squad." (Normally, a traveling squad consists of 40 to 50 players.)

But players are not the only ones who will acknowledge abuse of speed.

"I know about six years ago there was a small group of players using amphetamines," DeWalt told the *Times*. "But they were discovered and removed from the team."

One speed incident DeWalt remembers well is the collapse of a player after a game in 1970.

"He was a very good player that had played a lot and never had any problems. But this particular game, he couldn't stay on the field. He said he couldn't breathe."

"Then after the game, he collapsed and was unconscious. Finally, his girlfriend told us he had been shooting speed in his arm before the game."

"To this day, we don't know what was wrong. I know that other kids played under the influence of amphetamines, but without any reaction."

DeWalt said, however, that he knew of no abuse in the past three years.

"It was mostly the older players who were doing drugs, and they're leaving," one player said.

Former Tar Heel head coach Bill Dooley, who resigned in January to accept the head coaching and athletic director jobs at Virginia Tech, when first contacted by the *Times*, said he knew of no drug abuse ever on his team.

"I had a strong policy against all that and to my knowledge, it just didn't go on," he said. "That's the only comment I will make."

But in a second telephone interview, Dooley told the *Times* there had been drug abuse on the team:

"I am not naive enough to think there was no experimenting going on. There was a time when there was a lot of that. But in those cases I found out about, there was a separation of the players from the team."

"I didn't remove very many players from the standpoint of those years and what was going on in college campuses."

Dooley refused to discuss any specific players who were involved in any drug cases because "I just don't think that's the right thing to do. I don't think it's the kind of thing to put in a newspaper."

Head trainer John Lacey told the *Times* he had never seen any drug abuse and that he would never recognize it, if he did see it.

UNC players said they felt the coaches knew what was going on, one player said. "But they usually tried to persuade players to stop rather than punishing them."

UNC players agreed in interviews with the *Times* that drug abuse, at least in collegiate athletics, is on the wane.

And a major reason for that, they said, is the new type of players.

"It was mostly the older players who were doing drugs, and they're leaving," one player said.

"I'm ashamed to say it, but the freshmen now are higher quality players than we were," one former player said. "They're clean-cut and not the type that's into drugs. I don't think drug abuse will ever leave, but I do think it's fading."

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